

The Holy Bible:

New European Version

With commentary by Duncan Heaster

Carelinks Publishing

PO Box 152, Menai Central, NSW 2234 Australia
PO Box 3034, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 0ZA England
P.O. Box 1049, Sumner WA 98390 U.S.A.

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Preface

The New European Version isn't so much a fresh translation as largely a re-mediation into modern English of existing traditional translations, especially the KJV and ASV. It attempts to provide a text which is in outline terms familiar to those who have been used to those traditional Bible versions, and yet which is sensitive to the needs of those for whom English is a second language. Another intention of this version is to provide a modern English text which is available for use with far more liberal copyright and usage restrictions than those attached to many other modern English versions. Any wishing to reprint or quote at length from the New European Version are welcome to contact the publishers. The New European Version and commentary, along with the reduced version of *Bible Basics* at the end of this volume, are copyright Duncan Heaster, but requests for usage will usually be freely granted; audio files of parts of the N.E.V. being dramatically read by Steve Gretton are obtainable free from our website n-e-v.info. This edition of the N.E.V. is not for sale and its production and distribution is funded entirely by voluntary donations.

The New European Version was first released as just the New Testament with commentary, and copies are available from the publishers. This is intended as a tool for evangelization, and therefore the commentary is somewhat more basic than that in the Old Testament. The Old Testament commentary uses the abbreviation "s.w." to mean "same original Hebrew word translated as"; and "LXX" to refer to the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament which is often quoted in the New Testament. Some of the comments use renderings other than that found in the N.E.V. text.

This edition is bound up with a reduced version of *Bible Basics*, a full copy of which is available from the publishers. If you have any comments or questions on that book or the commentary, please forward to the publishers. Next to each chapter there are dates. These are to enable the Bible to be read daily according to the *Bible Companion* reading tables, designed by Robert Roberts in the 19th century and well used by very many believers since then. Reading according to this plan enables the Old Testament to be read once and the New Testament twice in the course of a year. There are three portions to be read each day; the first portion begins in Genesis in January, the second portion begins in the Psalms in January, and the third is from the New Testament, beginning in Matthew in January.

Free copies of the New European Version are currently available from the Publishers and will be mailed worldwide on request whilst funding lasts; donations to enable this can be made to “Carelinks” and sent to the publishers, or see www.carelinks.net for more information.

Carelinks Ministries pray earnestly that this volume and the distribution of it will play a part in the spreading of the Gospel worldwide before Christ returns.

Carelinks Publishing,
P.O. Box 152, Menai Central, NSW 2234 AUSTRALIA

P.O. Box 3034, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 0ZA ENGLAND

P.O. Box 1049, Sumner WA 98390 U.S.A.

www.carelinks.net
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info@carelinks.net

CONTENTS

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	1	Ecclesiastes	1127
Exodus	98	Songs of Solomon	1141
Leviticus	178	Isaiah	1151
Numbers	237	Jeremiah	1247
Deuteronomy	320	Lamentations	1359
Joshua	392	Ezekiel	1369
Judges	443	Daniel	1470
Ruth	493	Hosea	1500
1 Samuel	500	Joel	1514
2 Samuel	559	Amos	1519
1 Kings	614	Obadiah	1530
2 Kings	672	Jonah	1532
1 Chronicles	729	Micah	1536
2 Chronicles	782	Nahum	1544
Ezra	850	Habakkuk	1548
Nehemiah	870	Zephaniah	1552
Esther	898	Haggai	1557
Job	913	Zechariah	1560
Psalms	966	Malachi	1576
Proverbs	1084		

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew	1583	1 Timothy	1958
Mark	1642	2 Timothy	1965
Luke	1681	Titus	1970
John	1746	Philemon	1973
Acts	1793	Hebrews	1975
Romans	1853	James	1994
1 Corinthians	1878	1 Peter	2000
2 Corinthians	1903	2 Peter	2007
Galatians	1920	1 John	2012
Ephesians	1929	2 John	2018
Philippians	1938	3 John	2019
Colossians	1944	Jude	2020
1 Thessalonians	1950	Revelation	2022
2 Thessalonians	1955		

Bible Basics: Reduced Version .2051

GENESIS

CHAPTER 1 Jan. 1

The Record of Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty; darkness was on the surface of the deep and God's Spirit was hovering over the surface of the waters. ³ God said, Let there be light, and there was light. ⁴ God saw the light, and saw that it was good. God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. There was evening and there was morning, one day. ⁶ God said, Let there be an expanse in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. ⁷ God made the expanse, and divided the waters

which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse sky. There was evening and there was morning, a second day. ⁹ God said, Let the waters under the sky be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called seas. God saw that it was good. ¹¹ God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with its seed in it, on the earth; and it was so. ¹² The earth sprouted vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with its seed in it, after their

1:2 Moses wrote Genesis, presumably during the 40 years wandering. He therefore wrote it in a context – of explaining things to Israel as they stumbled through that wilderness, wondering who they were, where they came from, where they were headed. This explains why there are so many links within the Pentateuch – e.g. the Spirit “flutters” over the waters, just as God like an eagle [a symbol of the Spirit] “flutters” over Israel in bringing about their creation as a nation (Dt. 32:1). The point is, what God did at creation, He can do at any time in re-forming our lives into a new creation. Those baptized into Christ are “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). This process of making us new means that the creation of life, the huge expenditure of energy out of God which happened at the natural creation, is ongoing in our lives today.

The earth being “without form and void” uses a phrase elsewhere used to describe the judgment that has come on an order of things (Jer. 4:23; Is. 24:10; 34:11). It may be, therefore, that there was a previous creation on earth which was destroyed in judgment. Hence the command to “replenish the earth” (:28).

1:12 God created matter. All that exists was made by Him; and by faith we believe that things which now exist were not made from what already existed apart from God. The Genesis record of creation, however, emphasises how God brought order out of chaos. He brought this present world of beauty and order out of a darkness that brooded upon a sea, and from an earth that was “without form and void”, the Hebrew images behind the words implying ‘a chaos’. The references to the earth and sea ‘bringing forth’ (here and :24) use a Hebrew word which means ‘to let something which is within to come out’. The present world was created by a re-organization of things which

kind; and God saw that it was good.

¹³ There was evening and there was morning, a third day. ¹⁴ God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of sky to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; ¹⁵ and let them be for lights in the expanse of sky to give light on the earth; and it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of sky to give light to the earth, ¹⁸ and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. ²⁰ God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of sky. ²¹ God created the large sea

creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind. God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. ²³ There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. ²⁴ God said, Let the earth produce living creatures after their kind, livestock, creeping things, and animals of the earth after their kind; and it was so. ²⁵ God made the animals of the earth after their kind, and the livestock after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind. God saw that it was good.

The Creation of Man

²⁶ God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish

existed in some form before. This means that when our own lives, or the collective life of God's people, appears to be in chaos – then we can in faith reflect that God has brought beautiful order out of chaos, and He can likewise powerfully bring order to what seems hopeless.

1:26 Let us – The Hebrew construction here is a ‘communicative plural’, implying God conferring with His council. To assume that God is speaking to Jesus here is a desperate assumption. The Bible doesn’t teach that Jesus literally existed before His birth. The Hebrew word *elohim* translated “God” here literally means ‘mighty ones’, and here refers to the Angels. The Angels were the agents of creation (Job 38:7). The word *elohim* is translated “Angels” by many translations in Ps. 8:5. The Hebrew construction used here has been described as a ‘plural of deliberation’, whereby an individual may use a plural to describe his or her decision. Take David’s words in 2 Sam. 24:14: “Let *us* fall into the hand of the Lord... but let not *me* fall into the hand of man”. Ezra 4:18 has a King saying: “The letter you sent unto *us* has been plainly read before *me*”. In Is. 6:8 we read the same of God Himself: “Whom shall I [singular] send, and who will go for *us*?”. This would enable us to better understand God’s decision making in 11:7: “Go to, let *us* go down, and there confound their speech. So “Let *us* make man...” may refer to God’s personal self-deliberation in making human beings; to a Semitic reader of the original, it would emphasize the vast passion which

of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

²⁷ God created man in His own image. In God's image He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. ²⁹ God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree, which bears fruit yielding seed. It will be your food. ³⁰ To every animal of the earth, and to every bird of the sky, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food; and it was so. ³¹ God saw every-

thing that he had made, and, behold,

it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

CHAPTER 2 Jan. 1

The heavens and the earth were finished, and all their vast array.

² On the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. ³ God blessed the seventh day, and made it holy, because He rested in it from all His work which He had created to make.

The Garden of Eden

⁴ This is the history of the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵ No plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain on the earth. There was not

9

9

God Almighty put into this decision. And it therefore follows that He passionately wishes to have a very definite purpose with us, that He *so* loves us, and wishes only our eternal good.

In our image, after our likeness – We aren't in God's mental likeness, because His thoughts are so far above our thoughts (Is. 55:9). But the "our" refers to the Angels, and whenever they appear on earth, they have appeared in human form. God is a real, actual person, existing in Heaven but everywhere present by His Spirit. Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the angels. James 3:9 speaks of "...men, which are made in the similitude of God". Our creation in the image of God means that we can infer something about the real object of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous of which we cannot conceive. Ezekiel saw God enthroned above the cherubim, with the silhouette of "the likeness of a man" (Ez. 1:26; 10:20); it is God Himself who is located above the cherubim (2 Kings 19:15). All this has a practical import; because we are in the image of God, because it is imprinted on every part of our bodies, we must give that body to God, just as men were to give the penny which had Caesar's image on it to Caesar (Lk. 20:25). The Hebrew word *tselem*, 'image' is in modern Hebrew 'photograph'. God is personal and He has a concrete, actual form and being.

a man to cultivate the ground, ⁶ but a mist went up from the earth, and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Yahweh God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. ⁸ Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground Yahweh God made every tree to grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the middle of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it was parted, and became four headstreams. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pison: this is the one which flows through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good. There is aromatic resin and

the onyx stone. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon: the same river that flows through the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris: this is the one which flows east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ Yahweh God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it. ¹⁶ Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die.

The Creation of Woman

¹⁸ Yahweh God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.

¹⁹ Out of the ground Yahweh God formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the sky, and brought

2:7 The ‘soul’ refers to the person, body or self. ‘Save Our Souls’ (S.O.S.) clearly means ‘Save us from death!’ The ‘soul’ is therefore ‘you’, or the summation of all the things that make up a person. It is understandable, therefore, that many modern versions of the Bible rarely use the word ‘soul’, translating it instead as ‘you’ or ‘the person’. The animals which God created are called “living creatures... every living thing that moves” (1:20,21). The Hebrew word translated “creatures” and “living thing” here is *nephesh*, which is also translated ‘being’; for example here: “...and man became a living being”. Thus man is a ‘soul’ or ‘living being’, just as the animals are ‘souls’ or ‘living beings’. The only difference between mankind and animals is that man is mentally superior to them; he is created in the image of God (1:26), and some men are called to know the Gospel through which the hope of immortality is opened up to them (2 Tim. 1:10). As regards our fundamental nature and the nature of our death, there is no difference between man and animals.

2:17 The serpent was a beast of the field which God had made (3:1). Yet out of the ground [Heb. *adamah* – earth, soil] God formed all the beasts of the field, including the serpent. So the serpent was likewise created by God out of the ground – it wasn’t a pre-existing agent of evil. Note the snake, as one of the beasts of the field, was “very good” (1:31) – hardly how one would describe the serpent according to the orthodox reasoning.

them to the man to see what he would call them. Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field; but for man there was not found a helper suitable for him. ²¹ Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² He made the rib, which Yahweh God had taken from the man, into a woman, and brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh! She will be called ‘woman’, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴ Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh. ²⁵ They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

CHAPTER 3 Jan. 2

The Serpent and the Temptation of Adam and Eve

Now the serpent was more subtle than any animal of the field which Yahweh God had made. He said to the woman, Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’ ² The woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die’. ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, You won’t surely die, ⁵ rather God knows that in the day you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took

2:21 Woman was created from the side of Adam, not from his head nor from his feet.

2:24 *Cleave* – Mt. 19:5,6 interpret this as meaning that God “joins together” man and woman in marriage; not simply at the wedding, but throughout their life experience together. It’s therefore going against God’s work to break apart what He has tried to join together.

3:1 The serpent was an animal, created by God. The words ‘satan’, ‘lucifer’ and ‘devil’ don’t occur in the entire book of Genesis. Adam, and not the serpent, was the means by which sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). The Bible doesn’t teach that the satan exists as a personal being who sinned in Heaven and came to earth.

3:3 Eve had been told by Adam that they must not even touch it, although this is not what God had told Adam (2:16,17 cp. 3:2,3). Adam turned to Eve and as it were wagged his finger at her and said ‘Now you see that tree over there in the middle, *don’t you even touch it* or else there’ll be trouble, O.K.’. She didn’t *understand*, he didn’t *explain* that it was forbidden because it was the tree of knowledge, and so she was deceived into eating it – unlike Adam, who understood what he was doing (1 Tim. 2:14). *Why* didn’t Adam tell her more clearly what God had said? Maybe he was disillusioned with the wife God gave him; he didn’t have intercourse with her as he had been asked, he separated from her so that she was alone with the snake. 3:12 seems to reflect more than a hint of resentment against Eve and God’s provision of her.

of its fruit, and ate; and she gave some to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loin-cloths. ⁸ They heard the voice of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden.

The Punishments for Sin

⁹ But Yahweh God called to the man, and said to him, Where are you?

¹⁰ The man said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

¹¹ God said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? ¹² The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. ¹³ Yahweh God said to the woman, What is this you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. ¹⁴ Yahweh God said to the serpent, Because you have done

this, you are cursed above all livestock, and above every animal of the field. On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel. ¹⁶ To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bear children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. ¹⁷ To Adam He said, Because you have listened to your wife's voice, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it', cursed is the ground for your sake. In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will yield thorns and thistles to you; and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face will you eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. ²⁰ The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ Yahweh God made coats of skins for Adam and for his wife, and

3:15 The descendant of the woman was to be a specific individual – Jesus. He was literally “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). He was the son of Mary, although God was His Father. Thus He was the descendant of the woman but not the descendant of a man, as He had no human father. This descendant of the woman was to be temporarily wounded by sin, the serpent – “you shall bruise his heel”. A snakebite on the heel is normally a temporary wound, compared to the permanence of hitting the snake / sin on the head, which Jesus did in His death.

3:21 Sin results in death (Rom. 6:23), i.e. a pouring out of the blood, which carries the life. For this reason the Israelites were expected to pour out blood each time they sinned, to remind them that sin resulted in death. "... according to the law (of Moses) almost all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). Because of this, Adam and Eve's covering of themselves with fig leaves was unacceptable; instead, God killed a lamb (Rev.13:8) to provide skins to

clothed them. ²² Yahweh God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand, and also take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever... ²³ Therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed Cherubs at the east of the garden of Eden, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

CHAPTER 4 Jan. 2

The History of Cain and Abel

The man knew Eve his wife. She conceived, and gave birth to Cain, and said, I have gotten a man with Yahweh's help. ² Again she gave birth, to Cain's brother Abel. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a cultivator of the ground. ³ As time passed, it happened that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh from the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel also brought some of the firstborn of his flock and of its fat. Yahweh respected

Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He didn't respect Cain and his offering. Cain was very angry, and the expression on his face fell. ⁶ Yahweh said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why has the expression of your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will it not be lifted up? If you don't do well, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is for you, but you are to rule over it. ⁸ Cain said to Abel, his brother, Let's go into the field. It happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and killed him.

The Punishment of Cain

⁹ Yahweh said to Cain, Where is Abel, your brother? He said, I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper? ¹⁰ Yahweh said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² From now on, when you cultivate the ground, it won't yield its strength to you. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the

cover their sin (:7,21). Similarly, Abel's sacrifice of animals was accepted rather than Cain's offering of vegetables, because he appreciated this principle that without shedding blood there could be no forgiveness and acceptable approach to God (4:3-5).

3:24 The cherubim have Angelic associations. They were to keep "the way" to the tree of life, whereas the keeping of the way is later said to be in the control of Angels – e. g. in 18:19 the Angels decide Abraham will keep "the way of the Lord", implying they were the ones guarding it.

4:10 In Rev. 6:9, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith. To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain. There is no immortal soul, we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, remains in the memory of a loving Father.

land. ¹³ Cain said to Yahweh, My sin is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me out this day from the surface of the ground. I will be hidden from your face, and I will be a fugitive and a wanderer in the land. It will happen that whoever finds me will kill me. ¹⁵ Yahweh said to him, Therefore whoever slays Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold. Yahweh appointed a sign for Cain, lest any finding him should strike him. ¹⁶ Cain went out from Yahweh's presence, and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. ¹⁷ Cain knew his wife. She conceived, and gave birth to Enoch. He built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad; Irad became the father of Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of

Lamech. ¹⁹ Lamech took two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal, who was the father of all who handle the harp and pipe. ²² Zillah also gave birth to Tubal Cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron. Tubal Cain's sister was Naamah. ²³ Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice. You wives of Lamech, listen to my speech, for I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for bruising me. If Cain will be avenged seven times, truly Lamech seventy-seven times. ²⁵ Adam knew his wife again. She gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for God has appointed me another child instead of Abel, for Cain killed him. ²⁶ There

4:16 "Went out" is the language of Judas going out (Jn. 13:30), Cain "went out", as did condemned Zedekiah in the judgment of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:4; 52:7). Esau went out from the land of Canaan into Edom, slinking away from the face of his brother Jacob, sensing his righteousness and his own carnality (36:2-8). Even in this life, those who leave the ecclesia 'go out' after the pattern of Judas, condemning themselves in advance of the judgment by their attitude to the ecclesia (1 Jn. 2:19 cp. Acts 15:24). The unrighteous flee from God now, as they will then (Hos. 7:13). The ungrateful servant "went out" and condemned his brother – thus condemning himself (Mt. 18:28).

4:26 The early chapters of Genesis highlight the fact that there were these two sorts of people; the descendants of Seth called themselves "by Yahweh's name" and comprised the righteous "sons of God", the seed of the woman. By contrast, the descendants of Cain are described as being associated with murder and instituting polygamy (:19,23), the art of weapon production (:22) and entertainment (:21). The names of these people imply that at this time they started an alternative, apostate, system of worship to replace the true worship of God, which angered God; e.g. Cain named a city after Enoch, whose name means "dedicated"; Irad means "eternal city"; Mehujael means "God combats"; Lamech means "Overthrower" (of the truth?). The sons of God marrying the daughters of men in 6:2-4 would therefore describe the inter-marriage of these two lines, so that only Noah and his family were the "seed of the woman" at the time of the flood.

was also a son born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call themselves by Yahweh's name.

CHAPTER 5 Jan. 3

The Descendants of Adam

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in God's likeness. ² He created them male and female, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. ³ Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he became the father of sons and daughters. ⁵ All the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, then he died. ⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived after he became the father of Enosh eight hundred and seven years, and became the father of sons and daughters. ⁸ All the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, then he died. ⁹ Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived after he became the father of Kenan, eight hundred and fifteen years, and became the father of sons and daughters. ¹¹ All the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, then he died. ¹² Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived after he became the father of Mahalalel eight

hundred and forty years, and became the father of sons and daughters; ¹⁴ and all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, then he died. ¹⁵ Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived after he became the father of Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and became the father of sons and daughters. ¹⁷ All the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, then he died. ¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after he became the father of Enoch eight hundred years, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²⁰ All the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, then he died. ²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after he became the father of Methuselah for three hundred years, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²³ All the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God snatched him away. ²⁵ Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived after he became the father of Lamech seven hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²⁷ All the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, then he died. ²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son, ²⁹ and he

named him Noah, saying, This same will comfort us in our work and in the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Yahweh has cursed.³⁰ Lamech lived after he became the father of Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and became the father of sons and daughters.³¹ All the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, then he died.³² Noah was five hundred

years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

CHAPTER 6 Jan. 3

The Background to the Flood

It happened that when men began to multiply on the surface of the land, and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took for themselves wives

5:29 *Shall comfort us* – Did Noah’s parents expect Noah to be the child who would do all the hard menial work for them, so that they would suffer less from the curse placed upon the ground in Eden? This might explain why Noah had children when he was 500, far older than others of his time (:28,32 – Noah’s father had had his first children at 182; Seth had his first child at 105;6; Enos at 95;9; Cainan at 70, :12; Mahaleel at 65, :15; Jared at 162, :18; Enoch at 65, :21; Methuselah at 187, :25); 6:18 implies that Noah only had three sons, whereas for people with such long life spans we’d have expected him to have had far more than that. He only had three children – for he prepared the ark to save “his house” (Heb. 11:7) and 7:1 is quite clear: “Go into the ark, you and all your household” – his whole household was his wife, three sons and their wives. Period. Perhaps we get the picture of a man who was the underdog, the farm worker, the sidekick of the family, whose own family life was delayed and limited by this background. Perhaps he turned to alcohol for comfort (hence 9:21). But it was he whom God chose to save, he alone who was righteous in that generation which perished. It was the quiet, broken man who was saved. The Hebrew word for “Comfort” occurs later, when we read how God “repented” that He had made man (6:6,7). Lamech’s desire for ‘comfort’ was fulfilled but not as he imagined; not through his son being his personal slave, but rather in God changing His mind about humanity and making a new start. We get what we desire, in essence; and so we need to desire the right things.

5:32 *500 years old* – The flood came when Noah was 600 (7:11), yet he spent 120 years preparing it (6:3). So it’s possible that he wasn’t married when the call came to build the ark; he’d have explained his life mission to his wife, and she’d have been his first convert. Alternatively, if he were already married at 480, they had many years of barrenness in their marriage. Given the long lifespans in those days, this would’ve been very hard to take. Yet he didn’t take another wife. He was “moved with fear”, ‘reverently apprehensive’ at what God told him, and prepared the ark in order to save his family (Heb. 11:7). Yet he began doing this before he had any children, and perhaps before he was married. He had faith that he would one day have a family, in accordance with God’s invitation to make an ark in which to save his family.

6:2 “Sons of God” is used concerning men, especially those who know the true God (Dt. 14:1; Hos. 1:10; Lk. 3:38; Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1). Lk. 20:35-36 says that the angels do not marry. See on 4:26.

of all that they chose. ³ Yahweh said, My Spirit will not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; yet will his days be one hundred twenty years. ⁴ There were aggressive men [*Nephilim*] in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. ⁵ Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ Yahweh was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him in His heart. ⁷ Yahweh said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the surface of the ground; man, along with animals, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them. ⁸ But Noah found favour in Yahweh's eyes.

God's Relationship with Noah

⁹ This is the history of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹ The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² God saw the earth, and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted His way on the earth. ¹³ God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make a ship of gopher wood. You shall make rooms in the ship, and shall seal it inside and outside with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you shall make it. The length of the ship will be three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶ You shall

6:3 *120 years* – Knowing the destruction that would come on all except Noah, God waited in the hope that more would be saved. He as it were hoped against His own foreknowledge that more would be saved (1 Pet. 3:20). Peter says in 1 Pet. 3:19 that Christ through His Spirit preached to the people of Noah's day. In 2 Pet. 2:5 he says that Noah was a preacher of, or [Gk.] 'by' righteousness to the people around him. Yet in 1 Pet. 3:19 Peter says that Christ preached to those same people through His Spirit. The resolution surely is that although Noah had never met the Lord Jesus, he lived according to the same Godly spirit as did Jesus; and this was his witness to his world. In this sense the spirit or disposition of Christ was found in all the Old Testament prophets (1 Pet. 1:11).

6:4 The Hebrew word for "aggressive men" or "giants" is also used to describe the sons of a man called Anak in Numbers 13:33. Freak human beings of unusual size or strength are sometimes born today, but it does not mean that their parents were angels. We are not specifically told that these men were the children of the "sons of God". "There were aggressive men... and also *after that*... the sons of God came in to the daughters of men".

6:5 The days of Noah are a type of the last days of AD70, and of the last days before Christ's return: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be" (Mt. 24:37).

make a roof in the ship, and you shall finish it leaving a cubit between the roof and the sides. You shall set the door of the ship in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third levels. ¹⁷ I, even I, do bring the flood of waters on this earth, to destroy all flesh having the breath of life from under the sky. Everything that is in the earth will die. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you- you shall come into the ship, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ Of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ship, to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds after their kind, of the livestock after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come to you, to keep them alive. ²¹ Take with you of all food that is eaten, and gather it to yourself; and it will be for food for you, and for them. ²² Thus Noah did. According to all that God commanded him, so he did.

CHAPTER 7 Jan. 4

The Preparations for the Flood

Yahweh said to Noah, Come with all of your household into the ship, for I have seen your righteousness before Me in this generation. ² You shall take seven pairs of every clean animal with you, the male and his female. Of the animals that are not clean, take two, the male and his female. ³ Also of the birds of the sky, seven and seven, male and female, to keep seed alive on the surface of all the earth. ⁴ In seven days, I will cause it to rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. Every living thing that I have made, I will destroy from the surface of the ground. ⁵ Noah did everything that Yahweh commanded him. ⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the land. ⁷ Noah went into the ship with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, in the face of the floodwaters. ⁸ Clean animals, animals that are not clean, birds, and everything that creeps on the ground ⁹ went by pairs to Noah into the ship, male and female, as God commanded Noah. ¹⁰ It

7:1 *All your household* – his entire family consisted of his three sons. He therefore had no daughters and it would seem that his sons had no children. This tiny family size must be significant – for in those long lived ages, most women would have likely had over 50 children. Again, it was the small, broken and despised who were chosen of God. It seems that Noah's daughters in law only started bearing after the flood.

7:7 *In the face of* – Seems to imply that he waited until the very last minute. It seems this was not due to any lack of faith, but rather because of the urgency and desperation he felt in appealing to others to come into the ark with him. He truly was a remarkable “preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). Our knowledge of this world's future means that as we walk the streets and mix with men and women, our heart should cry out for them, no matter how they behave towards us, and there should be a deep seated desire for at least some of them to come to repentance and thereby avoid the judgments to come.

happened after the seven days that the waters of the flood came on the earth. ¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep were burst open, and the sky's windows were opened. ¹² The rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.

The Flood

¹³ In the same day Noah, and Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, entered into the ship; ¹⁴ they, and every animal after its kind, all the livestock after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. ¹⁵ They went to Noah into the ship, by pairs of all flesh with the breath of life in them. ¹⁶ Those who went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God commanded him; and Yahweh shut him in. ¹⁷ The flood was forty days on the earth. The waters increased, and lifted up the ship, and it was lifted up above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters prevailed, and increased greatly on the earth; and the ship floated on the surface of the waters. ¹⁹ The waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth.

All the high mountains that were under the whole sky were covered. ²⁰ The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. ²¹ All flesh died that moved on the earth, including birds, livestock, animals, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. ²² All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was on the dry land, died. ²³ Every living thing was destroyed that was on the surface of the land, including man, livestock, creeping things, and birds of the sky. They were destroyed from the land. Only Noah was left alive, and those who were with him in the ship. ²⁴ The waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.

CHAPTER 8 Jan. 4

The End of the Flood

God remembered Noah, all the animals, and all the livestock that were with him in the ship; and God made a wind to pass over the earth. The waters subsided. ² The deep's fountains and the sky's windows were also stopped, and the rain from the sky was restrained. ³ The waters receded from the earth in going and returning. After the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. ⁴ The ship

7:23 Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him – Noah is the focus of salvation, but in him and with him his family were saved. Likewise our salvation is by being “in Christ”.

8:3 *In going and returning* – this is the language of the surges of huge tidal waves, caused by the underwater eruptions of the “fountains of the deep” being broken up (7:11; 8:2). Being in the ark must've been a very rocky ride; the boat would've been tossed and thrown most of the time. And so it is with our ride in Christ.

rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on Ararat's mountains. ⁵ The waters receded continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen. ⁶ It happened at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ship which he had made, ⁷ and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth, until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸ He sent out a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from the surface of the ground, ⁹ but the dove found no place to rest her foot, and she returned to him into the ship; for the waters were on the surface of the whole earth. He put out his hand, and took her, and brought her to him into the ship. ¹⁰ He stayed yet another seven days; and again he sent the dove out of the ship. ¹¹ The dove came back to him at evening, and, behold, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth. ¹² He stayed yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; and she didn't return to him any more.

Leaving the Ark

¹³ It happened in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth. Noah removed the covering of the ship, and looked. He saw that the surface of the ground was dried. ¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. ¹⁵ God spoke to Noah, saying, ¹⁶ Go out of the ship, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh, including birds, livestock, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply on the earth. ¹⁸ Noah went out, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹ Every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, whatever moves on the earth, after their families, went out of the ship. ²⁰ Noah built an altar to Yahweh, and took of every clean animal, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ Yahweh smelled the pleasant aro-

8:4 *Seventeenth day of the seventh month* – Israel left Egypt on the 14th day of Abib, the seventh month which became the first month in their new calendar; they likely crossed the Red Sea on the 17th day of that month. So perhaps it was on the very same day that the ark rested. Israel's passage through the Red Sea typified baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), just as Noah's passing through the flood waters did (1 Pet. 3:19-21). Note that this was the same day that the Lord Jesus was resurrected – He died at Passover, 14th Abib, and resurrected three days later, 17th Abib.

8:20 *Built an altar* – This was on Noah's initiative. There had been no altars stipulated previously. God had asked Noah to build an ark, and now Noah of his own volition builds an altar. As we mature in Christ, we no longer simply follow commands but take our own initiative in God's service. Noah's first reaction may have been to build a house for himself and his family; but he put God first and built an altar.

ma. Yahweh said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again strike everything living, as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

CHAPTER 9 Jan. 5

God's Covenant with Noah

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. ² The fear of you and the dread of you will be on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the sky. Everything that the ground teems with, and all the fish of the sea, are delivered into your hand. ³ Every moving thing that lives will be food for you. As the green herb, I have given everything to you. ⁴ But flesh with its life, its blood, you shall not eat. ⁵ I will surely require your blood of your lives. At the hand of every animal I will require it. At the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, I

will require the life of man. ⁶ Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood will be shed by man, for God made man in His own image. ⁷ Be fruitful and multiply. Increase abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it. ⁸ God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹ As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the livestock, and every animal of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ship, even every animal of the earth. ¹¹ I will establish My covenant with you: all flesh will not be cut off any more by the waters of the flood, neither will there ever again be a flood to destroy the earth. ¹² God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: ¹³ I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it will be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It will happen, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow will be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant, which

8:21 *Said in His heart* – We may never know in this life God's feelings in response to our sacrifices. We can touch the heart of God, we tiny mortals on earth...

9:6 As James 3:9; the fact humans are made in God's image means we should perceive the value and meaning of persons, from not killing to holding the door open for people... Defacing God's image earns death. In what ways can we destroy the image of God in others apart from by killing them? Any form of dehumanizing surely does the same. Because we are made in God's image, we should therefore not *kill* other humans. James says the same, in essence, in teaching that because we are in God's image, we shouldn't *curse* others. To curse a man is to kill him. That's the point of James' allusion to Genesis and to God as creator. Respect for the person of others is inculcated by sustained reflection on the way that they too are created in God's image.

is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters will no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ The rainbow will be in the cloud. I will look at it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth. ¹⁷ God said to Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.

Noah Gets Drunk

¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went out from the ship were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham is the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these, the whole earth was populated. ²⁰ Noah began to be a farmer, and planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank of the wine and got drunk. He was uncovered within his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Shem and Japheth took a garment,

and laid it on both their shoulders, went in backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were backwards, and they didn't see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵ He said, Canaan is cursed. He will be servant of servants to his brothers. ²⁶ He said, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem. Let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth. Let him dwell in the tents of Shem. Let Canaan be his servant. ²⁸ Noah lived three hundred fifty years after the flood. ²⁹ All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, then he died.

CHAPTER 10 Jan. 5

The Descendants of Noah's Sons

Now this is the history of the generations of the sons of Noah and of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. ² The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech,

9:25 Canaan – Noah thrice rails against Canaan (:26,27). Why, seeing that the shame had been done to him by Ham, Canaan's father? This seems a classic example of transference – people often focus their anger not against the one who has hurt them, but against that person's relative, family or cause. We should deal with persons directly, perceiving the value and meaning of the human person; and not deflect the relationship onto others as Noah appears to have done. The curses placed by Noah have no fulfillment [contrary to many racist and misguided attempts to force such a fulfillment]. The story ends with a huge spiritual anticlimax, although later reference to Noah shows that he was judged faithful overall.

9:29 And he died – In the myth of Utnapishtim, the one who survives the flood is turned into a hero and becomes a god. But Moses' inspired record is different. The flood account ends with Noah dying – not becoming a god. And Noah not only remains human, but he remains *very* human – because he goes out and gets drunk after he comes out of the ark. Moses' point is surely to show that real human lives really do intersect with Almighty God's work, words and actions.

10:2 This chapter lists 70 Gentile nations as being the descendants of Noah. The He-

and Tiras. ³ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ⁵ Of these were the islands of the nations divided in their lands, everyone after his language, after their families, in their nations. ⁶ The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush became the father of Nimrod. He began to be a mighty one in the land; ⁹ he was a mighty hunter before Yahweh. Therefore it is said, Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Yahweh. ¹⁰ The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

¹¹ Out of that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah ¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city). ¹³ Mizraim became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim,

¹⁴ Pathrusim, Casluhim (which the Philistines descended from), and

Caphtorim. ¹⁵ Canaan became the father of Sidon (his firstborn), Heth,

¹⁶ the Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite, ¹⁷ the Hivite, the Arkite, the Sinite, ¹⁸ the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were spread abroad. ¹⁹ The border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as you go toward Gerar, to Gaza; as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, to Lasha. ²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their languages, in their lands, in their nations. ²¹ To Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, to him also were children born. ²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arpachshad became the father of Shelah. Shelah became the father of Eber. ²⁵ To Eber were born two sons. The name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided. His brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan became the father of Almodad, Shel-

brew word *eretz* translated “land” is the same word translated “earth”. The flood was likely a flood of the land promised to Abraham rather than of the whole planet. These 70 descendants of Noah all lived within the Middle East rather than throughout the entire world. The original purpose of Genesis was to explain to the Israelites in the wilderness where they had come from and the context of the nations amongst whom they found themselves.

10:9 The Hebrew could mean “the mighty hunter against the Lord”. The Hebrew for ‘Nimrod’ is related to ‘Gibbor’, the title of Christ used in Is. 9:6. Nimrod appears to be a prototype anti-God and anti-Christ, and for this he was well known even then.

10:10,11 shows his characteristic of building cities in the Babylon/Assyria area. Seeing that “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Gen. 10:10), it is not unreasonable to assume that when “a man said to his neighbour, Come, let’s make bricks” to build the tower of Babel, this man was Nimrod (11:3).

10:25 *Earth divided* – Probably a reference to the division of the peoples recorded in 10:32 and then in chapter 11, rather than to plate tectonics.

eph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. ³⁰ Their dwelling was from Mesha, as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east. ³¹ These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their languages, in their lands, after their nations. ³² These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations. Of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

CHAPTER 11 Jan. 6

The Tower of Babel

The whole earth was of one language and of one speech. ² It happened, as they travelled east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they lived there. ³ A man said to his neighbour, Come, let's make bricks, and burn them thoroughly. They had brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴ They said, Come, let's build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth. ⁵ Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built. ⁶ Yahweh said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is what they begin

to do. Now nothing will be withheld from them, which they intend to do. ⁷ Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸ So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there on the surface of all the earth. They stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of all the earth. From there, Yahweh scattered them abroad on the surface of all the earth.

The Generations from Shem to Abram

¹⁰ This is the history of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood. ¹¹ Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and became the father of sons and daughters. ¹² Arpachshad lived thirty-five years and became the father of Shelah. ¹³ Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and became the father of sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber: ¹⁵ and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and became the father of sons and daughters. ¹⁶ Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of

11:15 The genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. Thus both Arpachshad and Shelah each lived 403 years after the births of the eldest sons; Shelah, Peleg and Serug were each 30 when their first sons were born. Abraham and Shem both had sons at 100 years old (:10). And it is the very nature of Christian fellowship that God has arranged that our human lives likewise have elements of amazing similarity of pattern.

Peleg. ¹⁷ Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and became the father of sons and daughters. ¹⁸ Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu. ¹⁹ Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²⁰ Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug. ²¹ Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²² Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor. ²³ Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²⁴ Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah. ²⁵ Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and became the father of sons and daughters. ²⁶ Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. ²⁷ Now this is the history of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Ha-

ran. Haran became the father of Lot. ²⁸ Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, who was also the father of Iscah. ³⁰ Sarai was barren; she had no child. ³¹ Terah took Abram his son, Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife. They went from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan. They came to Haran and lived there. ³² The days of Terah were two hundred five years. Terah died in Haran.

CHAPTER 12 Jan. 6

Abram and Lot Travel to Canaan

Now Yahweh had said to Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who

11:31 Terah and his family departed “to go into the land of Canaan”. These are the same Hebrew words as in the command to Abram: “Get you out of your country” (12:1). We can therefore conclude that Abram received this call to quit his country, but didn't obey it, until some unrecorded situation led his father to announce the family's emigration to Canaan. Abram was therefore very slow to obey the call. Note too that the command to Abram had been to leave his land and also his “relatives and... father's house”. This he didn't do – for he left Ur with his father and brothers, i.e. his kindred. His brother Haran died, and his father then died in Haran, where they temporarily lived on the way to Canaan. We see here how God seeks to almost make us obedient. And 15:7 records that it was God who brought Abram out of Ur – even though Abraham failed to rise up and be obedient in his own strength, God manipulated family circumstances to make him obedient to the call; and in essence He does this for us too.

bless you, and I will curse him who curses you. All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you. ⁴ So Abram went, as Yahweh had spoken to him. Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran. ⁵ Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls whom they had gotten in Haran, and they went to go into the land of Canaan. Into the land of Canaan they came. ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. The Canaanite was then in the land. ⁷ Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, I will give this land to your seed. He built an altar there to Yah-

weh, who appeared to him. ⁸ He left from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to Yahweh and called on the name of Yahweh. ⁹ Abram travelled, going on further toward the south. ¹⁰ There was a famine in the land.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

Abram went down into Egypt to live as a foreigner there, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹ It happened, when he had come near to enter Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman to look at. ¹² It will happen, when the Egyptians will

12:3 Grammatically, this can be read as passive (“be blessed”) or reflexive “bless themselves” (as RSV), implying those blessed have to do something to appropriate the blessing. In this we see how God will play His part, but we must play our part. And yet the covenant in Gen. 15 was one way, unconditional, from God to us. It’s as if *His* part in our salvation is so much greater than our response. Yet there is still an obvious element of choice which we have to make. The way 12:1-3 is structured implies that Abraham receives an unconditional blessing, yet he therefore is to go forth and “be a blessing”. And it’s the same for us – and note how the “blessing” is interpreted as forgiveness in Acts 3:27-29. We are to forgive and generally bless others, in all forms of gracious generosity, as God has blessed us.

12:5 Abram had “gathered” much in the years of staying in Haran. According to Jewish tradition, Abraham stayed 23 years in Haran. All he had to go on was a word from the Lord which he’d received some years ago whilst living in Ur. There’s no reason to think that Angels regularly appeared to him and kept urging him to leave, or that he could read the Lord’s word in written form as we can. Presumably that one word which he received worked in his conscience, until he said to the family ‘Right, we’re quitting this nice life for a wilderness journey to some place I don’t know’. We can underestimate the power of ‘just’ one word from the Lord. We’re so familiar with possessing His entire word in written form that we can forget the need to be obedient to just one of those words, to the extent of losing all we once held dear.

12:6 God’s promise to Abraham was made more specifically at “the oak of Moreh” – a Canaanite shrine; and it’s emphasized that “the Canaanite was then in the land”. It’s as if God’s invitation to Abraham [as to us] to have a unique relationship with Him was made amidst the calls and presence of many other gods, and in the thick of the Gentile world.

see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; they will kill me, but they will save you alive. ¹³ Please say that you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that my soul may live because of you. ¹⁴ It happened that when Abram had come into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ The princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. ¹⁶ He dealt well with Abram for her sake. He had sheep, cattle, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. ¹⁷ Yahweh plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. ¹⁸ Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that you have done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’, so that I took her to be my wife? Now therefore, see your wife, take her, and go your way. ²⁰ Pharaoh commanded men concerning him, and they brought him on the way with his wife and all that he had.

CHAPTER 13 Jan. 7

Abram and Lot Separate

Abram went up out of Egypt: he, his wife, all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. ² Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. ³ He went on his journeys from the South even to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴ to the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first. There Abram called on the name of Yahweh. ⁵ Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. ⁶ The land was not able to bear them, that they might live together: for their substance was great, so that they could not live together. ⁷ There was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite lived in the land at that time. ⁸ Abram said to Lot, Please, let there be no strife between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are relatives. ⁹ Isn’t the whole land before you? Please separate yourself

13:9 Here Abraham gives Lot the choice as to what land he would like to live in. Lot was the orphaned nephew of Abraham – such magnanimity would’ve been unheard of in those societies, for the elder to give the junior dependent such a choice. The elder in the relationship would’ve chosen the best for himself, and that was that. Abraham’s unusual attitude in this matter was a direct outcome of his faith in the promise that the whole land really would one day be given to *him*. If we have the faith of Abraham... we won’t fight for our corner in this world. It’ll be *so* much easier to ‘let go’ as Abraham did, and take an attitude to material wealth and possessions which is radically counter-cultural in *our* societies. The way that Lot lifted up his eyes and looked around the land is matched by the way in which God then bids Abraham to likewise lift up his eyes and view the very same territory which Lot had just chosen (:10,14) – and was told that the land which Lot had chosen, along with all other land, would be Abraham’s eternally. When God told Abraham at this point “all the land which you

from me. If you go to the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if you go to the right hand, then I will go to the left.¹⁰ Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well-watered everywhere, before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Yahweh, like the land of Egypt, as you go to Zoar.¹¹ So Lot chose the Plain of the Jordan for himself. Lot travelled east, and they separated themselves the one from the other.¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, and Lot lived in the cities of the plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.¹³ Now the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinners against Yahweh.

Yahweh's Promises to Abram

¹⁴ Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot was separated from him, Now, lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward,¹⁵ for all the land which you see, I will give to you, and to your offspring forever.¹⁶ I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then your seed may also be numbered.¹⁷ Arise, walk through the

land in its length and in its breadth; for I will give it to you.¹⁸ Abram moved his tent, and came and lived by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to Yahweh.

CHAPTER 14 Jan. 7

The Rebellion against Chedorlaomer

It happened in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goiim,² that they made war with Bera, king of Sodom, and with Birsha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Admah, and Shemeber, king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar).³ All these joined together in the valley of Siddim (the same is the Salt Sea).⁴ Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year, they rebelled.⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer came, and the kings who were with him, and struck the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites in their Mount Seir, to Elparan, which is by the wilderness.⁷ They re-

see, I will give to you, and to your offspring forever" (:15), He was alluding to what He had initially told Abram back in Ur: "Get you out of... to the land that I will show (s.w. "see" in :15) you" (12:1). It was as if God was saying: 'Well Abraham, this is it. This is the land I told you about' – and yet the best of it has now been given to Lot! The whole thing could have seemed some kind of cruel, just as many of our life experiences do. Abraham had given up all, made a long and dangerous journey, to receive a land from God – and when he arrives there, the best of it is given to his younger relative. But God's purpose was to focus Abraham's faith upon the fact that he would *eternally* inherit this land. And so it is with many of the twists and turns of our lives which can appear nothing but cruel fate to the unbelieving observer.

turned, and came to En Mishpat (the same is Kadesh), and struck all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that lived in Hazazon Tamar. ⁸ The king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboi-im, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar) went out; and they set the battle in array against them in the valley of Siddim; ⁹ against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goyim, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings against the five. ¹⁰ Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell there, and those who remained fled to the hills. ¹¹ They took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food, and went their way. ¹² They took Lot, Abram's brother's son,

who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

Abram Rescues Lot from Chedorlaomer

¹³ One who had escaped came and told Abram, the Hebrew. Now he lived by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were allies of Abram. ¹⁴ When Abram heard that his relative was taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. ¹⁵ He divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and struck them, and pursued them to Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. ¹⁶ He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative, Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. ¹⁷ The king of Sodom went

14:13 God never let go of Abraham, even when Abraham didn't readily obey what God required of him. He was told to "walk through the land in its length and in its breadth; for [because] I will give it unto you" (13:17). But Abraham didn't willingly do this – because perhaps he doubted that he would be given it. It's like saying to a child: 'Come and look at this! I am going to give it to you!', and the child doesn't even want to look. In this context we read of how Abraham "*lived by the oaks of Mamre*" – that's stressed twice (13:18; 14:13). Instead of travelling around in his land to see it, he tried to settle down. But God brought circumstances into his life which made him travel around the length and breadth of Canaan – thus Abraham had to pursue Lot's captors "unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus" before he recovered Lot (:15). Hobah is in the far north east of Canaan – Abraham had to go all the way there from Mamre in the centre of Canaan. For unknown reasons, Abraham also lived in Beersheba for a while (22:19); he had a meeting with the local rulers at Shaveh, near Jerusalem (:17); and at the time of 16:14 Abraham was near Kadesh Barnea, in the very South of Canaan on the Egyptian border. One wonders whether the attraction of Egypt had led him there once more – in which case it was his own weakness which was used by God to ensure that he travelled to the very south of Canaan. Maybe the record includes all these geographical markers in order to demonstrate how Abraham did indeed travel around Canaan through providentially arranged circumstances, although not it seems as an act of direct obedience to the Divine command to do so.

out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸ Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ He blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. Abram gave him a tenth of all. ²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the people, and take the goods to yourself. ²² Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread nor a sandal strap nor anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'. ²⁴ I will accept nothing from you except that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their portion.

CHAPTER 15 Jan. 8

Yahweh's Covenant with Abram

After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, Don't be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward. ² Abram said, Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, since I go childless, and he who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? ³ Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed: and, behold, one born in my house is my heir. ⁴ Behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, This man will not be your heir, but he who will come out of your own body will be your heir. ⁵ Yahweh brought him outside, and said, Look now toward the sky, and count the stars, if you are able to count them. He said to Abram, So shall your seed be. ⁶ He believed in Yahweh; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. ⁷ He said to him, I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit

14:22 Abraham's belief in *God's* blessing of him is reflected in the way he is insistent to the King of Sodom that he will not take any of the spoil, lest anyone should think that man rather than God had blessed Abraham. It could be pointed out that this rather contrasts with his not returning to Pharaoh the things he gave him in return for Sarah becoming his wife (12:16). Perhaps Abraham later reflected upon his failure in this incident, realizing he'd not displayed faith in *God's* blessing of him... and learnt his lesson when the same temptation occurred in Gen. 14 to be made rich by the men of this world. Our stumbling response to the same Abrahamic promises often develops in the same way.

15:5 According to Jewish midrash, Abram and his father Terah were leading diviners of the stars in Ur. 'Terah' can mean 'brother of the moon', and Ur and Haran were noted centers of moon worship. In this case, the invitation to Abram to count the stars and discern there his future seed was a calling to reject his entire former world-view, to admit his helplessness in counting the stars, to throw himself upon God's grace rather than the strength of his own former education, wisdom, and inherited ability to discern the stars.

it. ⁸ He said, Lord Yahweh, how will I know that I will inherit it? ⁹ He said to him, Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. ¹⁰ He brought him all of these, and divided them in the middle, and laid each half opposite the other; but he didn't divide the birds. ¹¹ The birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. ¹² When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. Now terror and great darkness fell on him. ¹³ He said to Abram, Know for sure that your seed will live as foreigners in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them. They will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ I will also judge that nation, whom they will serve. Afterward they will come out with great wealth, ¹⁵ but you will go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation they will come here again, for the in-

iquity of the Amorite is not yet full. ¹⁷ It came to pass that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ In that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

CHAPTER 16 Jan. 8

Abram Seeks an Heir through Hagar

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. ² Sarai said to Abram, See now, Yahweh has restrained me from bearing. Please go in to my handmaid. It may be that I will obtain children by her. Abram lis-

15:10 The idea of the dead animals in this was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But here in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). The "blood of the covenant" doesn't mean that the blood of Jesus *is* or was the covenant; the covenant is a set of promises to us, namely the promises to Abraham and his seed. The blood of Jesus is the token of that covenant, the sign that this is all so utterly and totally true for each one of us. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is – that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom

16:2 "Abram listened to the voice of Sarai" is framed in the language of Adam hearkening to Eve's voice. We can only take this incident – and the less than honourable treatment of Hagar afterwards – to be another trough in Abraham's faith graph. All historical and cultural evidence from the time points to Abraham's action as being

tened to the voice of Sarai. ³ Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. ⁴ He went in to Hagar, and she conceived. When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. ⁵ Sarai said to Abram, This wrong is your fault. I gave my handmaid into your bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes. Yahweh judge between me and you. ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, Behold, your maid is in your hand. Do to her whatever is good in your eyes. Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face. ⁷ The angel of Yahweh found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. ⁸ He said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, where did you come from? Where are you going? She said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. ⁹ The angel of Yahweh said to her, Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands. ¹⁰ The angel of Yahweh said to her, I will greatly multiply your seed, that they will not be numbered for multitude. ¹¹ The angel

of Yahweh said to her, Behold, you are with child, and will bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because Yahweh has heard your affliction. ¹² He will be like a wild donkey among men. His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him. He will live opposite all of his brothers. ¹³ She called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, You, God, see me, for she said, Have I even stayed alive after seeing Him? ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi. Behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. ¹⁵ Hagar bore a son for Abram. Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

CHAPTER 17 Jan. 9

Yahweh Re-Affirms the Covenant Promises

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am God Almighty. Walk before Me, and be blameless. ² I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly. ³ Abram fell on his face. God talked with

most unusual. In the case of a barren wife, the man chose himself a second wife. It's almost unheard of in contemporary records for a man to have his wife choose him a woman to have a child by – let alone for it to be one of her slavegirls. This historical background provides a window into Abraham's faithful commitment to Sarah – for it's significant that he's not recorded as taking another wife. Instead, his fine faith and character slips up in a moment of weakness by giving in to Sarah for a moment.

16:13 The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide'. When Hagar said "You God see me", she was expressing her gratitude for His *provision* for her. The fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things.

him, saying, ⁴ As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you. You will be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ Neither will your name any more be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you. ⁷ I will estab-

lish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to your seed after you. ⁸ I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land in which you are travelling, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. I will be their God. ⁹ God said to Abraham, As for you,

17:5 Abram means ‘high / exalted father’, and can mean “he is of exalted ancestry”. Yet Abram’s name was changed. He was to be the father of a new family, as ‘Abraham’ implied, and to sever all connection with his human ancestry and family. The way ‘Abram’ was changed to ‘AbraHAM’ and ‘Sarah’ to ‘SarAH’ shows how God wishes to mix syllables of His Name with that of men. Jacob was changed to Isra-el, mixing God’s name with that of his father. This is indeed mutuality between God and man – and it demands so much. By baptism into the Name the same process happens to us.

17:5-11. Blessings of many children, a specific seed / son who would bring glory and blessing, and a name change... are all frequently found in records of wedding blessings. In making those promises to Abraham, in mixing the letters of His Name with that of Abram... Yahweh was entering a marriage covenant with Abraham the impotent, the childless, the humanly hopeless. And He does the very same for each of us who are baptized into that same Name and become recipients of the very same promises (Gal. 3:27-29). What was weird and *so* counter-instinctive was the token of the marriage covenant. Abraham was to mutilate his male generative organ as a sign that God would generate him a great seed and family. Our response to what God has promised us requires us to likewise respond in a counter-cultural and counter-instinctive way.

17:7 The Abrahamic covenant is made personally with every member of the seed in “their generations”. The records of the renewing of the covenant to Isaac and Jacob are but indicators that this is the experience of each one of the seed. This means that the covenant love of God and the promise of personal inheritance of the land is made personally, and confirmed by the shedding of Christ’s blood, to each of us. God promised Abraham that through Christ, his seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham’s multitudinous seed: “To be a God to... your seed...I will be their God”. The seed is Christ, and the “God” is Yahweh. In Rev. 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

17:8 The idea of eternal life is in the Old Testament as well as the new. The promise of eternal life on earth was given to Abraham and his seed, the Lord Jesus (Gal. 3:8), but applies to all of us who are baptized into Him (Gal. 3:27-29).

you will keep My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you.

Circumcision As a Sign of the Covenant

Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. It will be a token of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old will be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he who is born in the house, or bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your seed: ¹³ He who is born in your house, and he who is bought with your money, must be circumcised. My covenant will be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ The uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people. He has broken My covenant. ¹⁵ God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. Yes, I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations. Kings of peoples will come from her. ¹⁷ Then Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, A child shall be born to him who is one hundred years old! Sarah, who is ninety years old, shall give birth! ¹⁸ Abraham said to God, Oh

that Ishmael might live before you! ¹⁹ God said, No, but Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But My covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year. ²² When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. ²³ Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house, and all who were bought with his money; every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the same day, as God had said to him. ²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁵ Ishmael, his son, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁶ In the same day both Abraham and Ishmael, his son, were circumcised. ²⁷ All the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

CHAPTER 18 Jan. 9

Three Angels Visit Abraham and Sarah

Yahweh appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the

17:17 Abraham's exaltation here is referred to in Jn. 8:56 as Abraham rejoicing to see the day of Christ.

tent door in the heat of the day. ² He lifted up his eyes and looked, and saw that three men stood opposite him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth, ³ and said, My lord, if now I have found favour in your sight, please don't go away from your servant. ⁴ Now let a little water be fetched, wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ I will get a morsel of bread so you can refresh your heart. After that you may go your way, for this is why you have come to your servant. They said, Very well, do as you have said. ⁶ Abraham ran into the tent to Sarah, and said, Quickly prepare three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes. ⁷ Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a tender and good calf, and gave it to the servant. He hurried to dress it. ⁸ He took butter, milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them. He stood by them under the tree, and

they ate. ⁹ They asked him, Where is Sarah, your wife? He said, See, in the tent. ¹⁰ He said, I will certainly return to you when the season comes round. Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son. Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age. Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹² Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have grown old will I have pleasure, my lord being old also? ¹³ Yahweh said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Will I really bear a child, seeing I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for Yahweh? At the set time I will return to you, when the season comes round, and Sarah will have a son. ¹⁵ Then Sarah denied, saying, I didn't laugh, for she was afraid. He said, No, but you did laugh. ¹⁶ The men rose up from there, and looked toward Sodom. Abraham went with them to see them on their way. ¹⁷ Yahweh said,

18:2 *Three men* – Three Angels, who bore the Name of Yahweh (as in Ex. 23:21).

18:12 Sarah murmured that it was impossible for her to have "pleasure" in childbearing. She uses the word *ednah*, related to the word *Eden*. Yet in the events of Gen. 19, she sees how the land around Sodom that was once "like the garden of Eden" (13:10) is made barren and sowed with salt so that nothing could grow there (19:25; Dt. 29:23). She was being taught that God can give and take away fertility on a huge scale. God uses circumstances and experiences to teach us what is possible for us in His strength.

Sarah is commended for calling Abraham her "Lord" (1 Pet. 3:6). But she said it "within herself" whilst laughing at the improbability of God fulfilling His promise; yet in doing so, when she came to think of Abraham, in her heart she called him "my lord". So in the midst of her lack of faith in one respect, she also had a commendable attitude to Abraham. God searched her thoughts, He saw her wrong attitudes there deep in her heart, and He saw what was commendable there too; and through Peter He drags this out and reveals it to us all as an inspiration. We should have a similar positive attitude to others, discerning what's good in them even if it's surrounded by weakness.

Will I hide from Abraham what I do, ¹⁸ since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Yahweh may bring on Abraham that which He has spoken of him. ²⁰ Yahweh said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, ²¹ I will go down now, and see whether their deeds are as bad as the reports which have come to me. If not, I will know.

Abram Pleads with Yahweh to Save Sodom

²² The men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before Yahweh. ²³ Abraham drew near, and said, Will You consume the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous within the city? Will You consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Be it far from You to do things like that, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so

that the righteous should be like the wicked. May that be far from You. Shouldn't the Judge of all the earth do right? ²⁶ Yahweh said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. ²⁷ Abraham answered, See now, I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ What if there will lack five of the fifty righteous? Will You destroy all the city for lack of five? He said, I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there. ²⁹ He spoke to Him yet again, and said, What if there are forty found there? He said, I will not do it for the forty's sake. ³⁰ He said, Oh don't let the Lord be angry, and I will speak. What if there are thirty found there? He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. ³¹ He said, See now, I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord. What if there are twenty found there? He said, I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake. ³² He said, Oh don't let the Lord be angry, and I will speak just once more. What if ten are found there? He said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake. ³³ Yahweh went His way, as soon as He had finished communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

18:23 God is open to dialogue; but a telling example of the limitation of God's potential by men is in Abraham's request that God would spare Sodom for the sake of 50 righteous there. He then lowers the number to 40, and then finally to ten, assuming that surely Lot's family were righteous and would comprise ten righteous. If Abraham had left off praying at, say, forty... then this would have been the limit God set. But Abraham set the limit at ten. But what would have happened if he had gone further and asked God to save Sodom for the sake of one righteous man, i.e. Lot? My sense is that the Father would have agreed. But the city wasn't saved for the sake of the one man Lot, because Abraham limited God's desire to save by the smallness of his vision. His mercy will be upon us according as we hope in Him (Ps. 33:22).

CHAPTER 19 Jan. 10

Two Angels and Lot Confront the Wicked Sodomites

The two angels came to Sodom at evening. Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them. He bowed himself with his face to the earth,² and he said, See now, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, stay all night, wash your feet, and you can rise up early, and go on your way. They said, No, but we will stay in the street all night.³ He urged them greatly, and they came in with him, and entered into his house. He made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter.⁵ They called to Lot, and said to him, Where are the men who came in to you this night? Bring them out to us, that we may have sex with them.⁶ Lot went out to them to the door, and shut the door after him.⁷ He said, Please, my brothers, don't act so wickedly.⁸ See now, I have two virgin daughters. Please let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them what seems good to

you. Only don't do anything to these men, because they have come under the shadow of my roof.⁹ They said, Stand back! Then they said, This one fellow came in to live as a foreigner, and he appoints himself a judge. Now will we deal worse with you, than with them! They pressed hard on the man Lot, and drew near in order to break the door.¹⁰ But the men reached out their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door.¹¹ They struck the men who were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

Lot Abandons Doomed Sodom

¹² The men said to Lot, Do you have anybody else here? Sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whoever you have in the city, bring them out of the place:¹³ for we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown so great before Yahweh that Yahweh has sent us to destroy it.¹⁴ Lot went out, and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters, and said, Get up! Get out of this place, for Yahweh will destroy the city. But

19:3 The Angels who visited Lot in Sodom wanted initially to lodge in the street, but they were persuaded by Lot to change their plans. And who is to say that to some extent this isn't possible today, too?

19:14 Lot's sons in law "were to marry" his daughters. Christ perceived that they were marrying and giving in marriage the very day the flood came, and He pointed out the similarities with the Sodom situation (Lk. 17:27-29). Perhaps the very day of the double wedding, they had to leave? With all the build up to the wedding, Lot and his wife would so wanted to have stayed just another day to see the wedding of their two daughters. It is to the girls credit that they both left. But Lot's wife had invested so much in it emotionally that she just had to look back.

he seemed to his sons-in-law to be joking. ¹⁵ When the morning came, then the angels hurried Lot, saying, Get up! Take your wife, and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the sin of the city. ¹⁶ But he lingered; and the men grabbed his hand, his wife's hand, and his two daughters' hands, Yahweh being merciful to him; and they took him out, and set him outside of the city. ¹⁷ It came to pass, when they had taken them out, that one of them said, Escape for your life! Don't look behind you, and don't stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be consumed! ¹⁸ Lot said to them, Oh, not so, my lord. ¹⁹ See now, your servant has found favour in your sight, and you have magnified your grace, which you have shown to me in saving my life. I can't escape to the mountain, lest evil pursue me there, and I die. ²⁰ See now, this city is near to flee to, and it is a little one. Oh let me escape there (isn't it a little one?), and

my soul will live. ²¹ He said to him, Behold, I have granted your request concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²² Hurry, escape there, for I can't do anything until you get there. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. ²³ The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

The Destruction of Sodom

²⁴ Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah sulphur and fire from Yahweh out of the sky. ²⁵ He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew on the ground. ²⁶ But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. ²⁷ Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Yahweh. ²⁸ He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and looked, and saw that the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹ It happened, when God

19:26 This suggests the picture of the wife following behind Lot, filled with remorse at the loss of all she had held dear. Lk. 17:29-33 comments concerning not desiring our "stuff which is in the house" in the day of Christ's coming: "Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever (like her) shall seek (Greek: 'plot') to save his life shall lose it". We can infer from this that she plotted and schemed how to save her possessions – i.e. her 'life', seeing that for her, her life did consist of the abundance of the things which she possessed (Lk. 12:15). These feelings grew so strong that she paused to take a loving, wistful look at the city. The fire only fell after Lot was in Zoar; therefore the city was looking as it normally did. She was walking "behind him", so Lot would not have actually seen her turn into a pillar of salt. As he ceased to hear her footsteps behind him he must have guessed what had happened – but now the Angel's words seemed more vital to him: "Don't look behind you". Sodom was turned into an area of salt (Dt.29:23; Zeph.2:9); as Sodom was turned into salt by fire, so Lot's wife suffered the same punishment through a bolt of fire striking her and turning her too into salt. The unworthy of the last day will suffer the same punishment as the surrounding world which they failed to truly leave.

destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the middle of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

The Birth of Moab and Ammon

³⁰ Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to live in Zoar. He lived in a cave with his two daughters. ³¹ The firstborn said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in to us in the way of all the earth. ³² Come, let's make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve our father's seed. ³³ They made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father. He didn't know when she lay down, nor when she arose. ³⁴ It came to pass on the next day, that the firstborn said to the younger, Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine again tonight. You go in, and lie with him, that we may preserve our father's seed. ³⁵ They made their father drink wine that night also. The younger went and lay with him. He didn't know when she lay down,

nor when she got up. ³⁶ Thus both of Lot's daughters were with child by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸ The younger also bore a son, and called his name Ben Ammi. He is the father of the children of Ammon to this day.

CHAPTER 20 Jan. 11

Abraham in Philistine Country

Abraham travelled from there to-ward the land of the South, and lived between Kadesh and Shur. He lived as a foreigner in Gerar. ² Abraham said about Sarah his wife, She is my sister. Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken. For she is a man's wife. ⁴ Now Abimelech had not come near her. He said, Lord, will you kill even a righteous nation? ⁵ Didn't he tell me, 'She is my sister?' She, even she herself, said, 'He is my brother'. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands have I done this. ⁶ God said to him in the dream, Yes, I know that in

19:29 The prayers and loving spiritual concern of the faithful really can have an effect on the salvation of our weaker brethren. Abraham's prayer that Sodom would be saved if ten righteous were found there was unanswered; but God knew the real spirit of his prayer, that Lot should be saved, and that God's justice should be upheld in not destroying the righteous with the wicked. It was this which God recognized and answered, even though Abraham had not specifically verbalized those thoughts in prayer. Our true spiritual love for our brethren will likewise be heard in these last days.

20:3 Throughout the records of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his children there is continual repetition indicating how they tended to commit the same sins – e.g. going into Egypt and lying concerning their wives: 12:13; 20:3,13; 26:7. The sinfulness of sin is that our failures encourage our children to commit the same, and worse.

the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also withheld you from sinning against me. Therefore I didn't allow you to touch her. ⁷ Now therefore, restore the man's wife. For he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live. If you don't restore her, know for sure that you will die, you, and all who are yours. ⁸ Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ear. The men were very scared. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done things to me that ought not to be done! ¹⁰ Abimelech said to Abraham, What did you see, that you have done this thing? ¹¹ Abraham said, Because I thought, 'Surely the fear of God is not in this place. They will kill me for my wife's sake'. ¹² Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. ¹³ It happened, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her,

'This is your kindness which you shall show to me. Everywhere that we go, say of me, He is my brother'. ¹⁴ Abimelech took sheep and cattle, male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored Sarah his wife, to him. ¹⁵ Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before you. Dwell where it pleases you. ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold, it is for you an adorning of the eyes before all that are with you. In front of all you are reproved. ¹⁷ Abraham prayed to God. God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his female servants, and they bore children. ¹⁸ For Yahweh had closed up tight all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

CHAPTER 21 Jan. 11

The Birth of Isaac

Yahweh visited Sarah as He had said, and Yahweh did to Sarah as He had spoken. ² Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham called his son who was born to him, whom

20:16 Sarah was "reproved" by King Abimelech for going along with Abraham's lie about her not being his wife. And yet kings were reproved for her sake, and were not allowed to do anything harmful to her (Ps. 105:14)! And Abraham reproves Abimelech later – for something Abimelech claimed he had not done (21:25). The repetition of the word "reprove" is surely meant to indicate that here is an example of Abraham and Sarah being counted righteous because of their faith – when clearly they were not wholly righteous. Abraham, the man who had to be reproved, was used by God to reprove the man who had reproved him... it would have sounded very hypocritical to Abraham's neighbours. Yet the point was, that God saw him as being righteous.

20:18 This shows that we can suffer the effect of others' sins, whilst being personally innocent of the specific sin they committed – as has happened with the effect of Adam's sin.

Sarah bore to him, Isaac. ⁴ Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Sarah said, God has made me laugh. Everyone who hears will laugh with me. ⁷ She said, Who would have said to Abraham, that Sarah would nurse children! For I have borne him a son in his old age.

Hagar Is Thrown Out

⁸ The child grew, and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹ Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. ¹⁰ Therefore she said to Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son! For the son of this handmaid will not be heir with my son Isaac! ¹¹ The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son. ¹² God said to Abraham, Don't let it be grievous in your sight because of the boy, and because of your handmaid. In all that Sarah says to you, listen to her voice. For in Isaac

will your seed be called. ¹³ I will also make a nation of the son of the handmaid, because he is your seed. ¹⁴ Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder; and gave her the child, and sent her away. She departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. ¹⁵ The water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ She went and sat down opposite him, a good way off, about a bow shot away. For she said, Let me not see the death of the child. She sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. ¹⁷ God heard the voice of the boy. The angel of God called to Hagar out of the sky, and said to her, What ails you, Hagar? Don't be afraid. For God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸ Get up, lift up the boy, and hold him in your arm. For I will make him a great nation. ¹⁹ God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, filled the bottle with water, and gave the boy drink. ²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew. He lived

21:10 Her attitude in implying that Ishmael was not the seed is gently rebuked by God in his subsequent words to Abraham concerning Ishmael: "He is your seed" (:13). And yet Sarah's words are quoted in Gal. 4:30 as inspired Scripture! Here we see the wonder of the God with whom we deal, in the way in which He patiently bore with Sarah and Abraham. He saw through her anger, her jealousy, the pent up bitterness of a lifetime, and saw her faith. He worked through that screaming, angry woman to be His prophet. According to Gal. 4:30, God Himself spoke through her in those words, outlining a principle which has been true over the generations; that the son of the slave must be cast out, and that there must always be conflict between him and the true seed. Sarah in her time of child-birth is likened to us all as we enter the Kingdom, full of joy (Is. 54:1-4); and yet at that time she was eaten up with pride and joy that she could now triumph over her rival. And yet Sarah at that time is seen from a righteous perspective, in that she is a type of us as we enter the Kingdom. God's gracious counting of righteousness to Sarah and Abraham is repeated to us daily.

in the wilderness, and as he grew up he became an archer. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran. His mother took a wife for him out of the land of Egypt.

The Argument about Beersheba

²² It happened at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his army spoke to Abraham, saying, God is with you in all that you do. ²³ Now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son. But according to the kindness that I have done to you, you shall do to me, and to the land in which you have lived as a foreigner. ²⁴ Abraham said, I will swear. ²⁵ Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a water well, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. ²⁶ Abimelech said, I don't know who has done this thing. You didn't tell me, neither did I hear of it, until today. ²⁷ Abraham took sheep and cattle, and gave them to Abimelech. Those two made a covenant. ²⁸ Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. ²⁹ Abimelech said to Abraham, What mean these

seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves? ³⁰ He said, You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that it may be a witness to me, that I have dug this well. ³¹ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because they both swore there. ³² So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Abimelech rose up with Phicol, the captain of his army, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. ³³ Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and called there on the name of Yahweh, the Everlasting God. ³⁴ Abraham lived as a foreigner in the land of the Philistines many days.

CHAPTER 22 Jan. 12

Abraham Is Prepared to Offer Isaac

It happened after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! He said, Here I am. ² He said, Now take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go into the land of Moriah. Offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you of. ³ Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his don-

21:34 *Lived as a foreigner* – Alluded to in Heb. 11:9, which says that Abraham lived in the promised land as a foreigner. He is our example and spiritual father. His characteristics are to be seen in those who have been baptized into Christ and thus become Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:27-29). Although this earth where we live has been promised to us, it's our eternal inheritance which we will receive at Christ's return, yet we now live in our own land as if we're foreigners.

22:3 *Arose and went* – Abraham was progressively set up by God so that his spiritual growth would be an upward spiral. Initially, he was told to walk / go to a land which God would shew him (12:1); when he got there, he was told to "arise", and "walk" through that land of Canaan (13:17). Abraham, albeit in a faltering kind of way, did just this. But this was to prepare him for this test in the command to offer Isaac. His obedience this time isn't at all faltering. He "arises" and "goes" [s.w. "walk"] "unto

key, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place far off. ⁵ Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go yonder. We will worship, and come back to you. ⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. He took in his hand the fire and the knife. They both went together. ⁷ Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, My father? He said, Here I am, my son. He said, Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? ⁸ Abraham said, God will Himself provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. So they both went together. ⁹ They came to the place which God had told him of. Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, on the wood. ¹⁰ Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to kill his son. ¹¹ The angel of Yahweh called to him out of the sky, and said,

Abraham, Abraham! He said, Here I am. ¹² He said, Don't lay your hand on the boy, neither do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.

God's Promise to Abraham

¹³ Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and saw that behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham called the name of that place 'Yahweh Will Provide'. As it is said to this day, On Yahweh's mountain, it will be provided. ¹⁵ The angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time out of the sky, ¹⁶ and said, I have sworn by Myself, says Yahweh, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ that I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your seed greatly like the stars of the sky, and like the sand which is on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed will all the nations of the earth be

the place of which God had told him" to offer Isaac. This is exactly what he had been called to do in Ur – to arise and walk / go to a land / place which God would show him (12:1). Our obedience in one challenge of God leads us to obedience in others. Circumstances tend to repeat both within and between the lives of God's faithful. One experience is designed to lead us to another. Nothing in our lives is senseless chance. All is part of a higher plan for our spiritual good, in our latter end.

22:18 The blessing is defined as forgiveness of sins and salvation (Acts 3:26,26). We become "in" the seed by baptism into Christ, who is Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:8, 27-29). All that is true of Christ becomes true of us, if we are in Him. We all wish to be a blessing to others – we see people suffering from their sins, physically damaged by earthquakes, war, famine, and we wish to get out there and help them; yet we are limited by our life situation. By being in Christ, we can be a blessing for others by bringing them to the blessing of salvation and a place in God's Kingdom on earth.

blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba. Abraham lived at Beersheba.²⁰ It happened after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also has borne children to your brother Nahor:²¹ Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.²³ Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.²⁴ His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

CHAPTER 23 Jan. 12

Abraham Buys a Burial Place for Sarah

Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life.² Sarah died in Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for

her.³ Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke to the children of Heth, saying,⁴ I am a stranger and a foreigner living with you. Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.⁵ The children of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,⁶ Hear us, my lord. You are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the best of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb. Bury your dead.⁷ Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.⁸ He talked with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he has, which is in the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me for a possession among you of a burying-place.¹⁰ Now Ephron was sitting in the middle of the children of Heth. Ephron the Hittite answered

23:3 Abraham was promised eternal inheritance of the land (17:8) – but he didn't receive any of it in this life, he even had to buy a plot of land to bury his wife. This point is emphasized in the New Testament because it implies a future resurrection and eternal inheritance for Abraham (Acts 7:5; Heb. 11:13,39,40). Hence we have this laboured account of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah. Not only is the presence of the children of Heth highlighted (23:3,5,7,10,11,12,13,16,18), but the record of Abraham's words demonstrates his appreciation that he was only passing through: "*Entreat for me to Ephron... the cave... which he has... for the full price... me for a possession... amongst you...* Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land... and the field... in all of its borders" (23:9-17 AVmg.). The mention of the borders really rubs it in. Not only was the land promised to Abraham, but he was politically more powerful than the children of Heth; he could have annexed it for himself at ease. The children of Heth were willing to give it to him for free anyway (23:11). Yet the realization by Abraham of his present position, the humility created by faith, shines through the narrative. This earth is ours, eternally. But we like Abraham live in it as foreigners – for the moment.

Abraham in the hearing of the children of Heth, even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, ¹¹ No, my lord, hear me. I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the children of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead. ¹² Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land. ¹³ He spoke to Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if you will, please hear me. I will give the price of the field. Take it from me, and I will bury my dead there. ¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ¹⁵ My lord, listen to me. What is a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver between me and you? Therefore bury your dead.

Arrangements for Inheriting the Burial Place

¹⁶ Abraham listened to Ephron. Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the current merchants' standard. ¹⁷ So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field,

that were in all of its borders, were deeded ¹⁸ to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. ¹⁹ After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (that is, Hebron), in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ The field, and the cave that is in it, were deeded to Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the children of Heth.

CHAPTER 24 Jan. 13

Abraham's Concern about a Wife for Isaac

Abraham was old, and well stricken in age. Yahweh had blessed Abraham in all things. ² Abraham said to his servant, the elder of his house, who ruled over all that he had, Please put your hand under my thigh. ³ I will make you swear by Yahweh, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live. ⁴ But you shall go to my country, and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac. ⁵ The servant said to him, What if the woman isn't willing to follow me to this land? Must I bring your son again to the land

24:4 It must be significant that Abraham told his servant to take Isaac a wife from "my country... my relatives" and not from the people "among whom I live". There were none of Abraham's country or kindred, which he had been commanded to leave, living anywhere near him. He had truly and fully obeyed the command to separate from them! As with many Christian youngsters today, the avoidance of marrying those in the surrounding world just seemed too much to ask. But Abraham knew that a way would be made. As God had *taken* Abram from Ur and Haran and Lot, so God would *take* a woman from there, suitable for Isaac. Faithful parents should do all they can to ensure their children marry within the family of faith.

you came from? ⁶ Abraham said to him, Beware that you don't bring my son there again. ⁷ Yahweh, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my birth, who spoke to me, and Who swore to me, saying, 'I will give this land to your seed', He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. ⁸ If the woman isn't willing to follow you, then you shall be clear from this my oath. Only you shall not bring my son there again. ⁹ The servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. ¹⁰ The servant took ten camels of his master's camels, and departed, having a variety of good things of his master's with him. He arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ He made the camels kneel down outside the city

by the well of water at the evening time, the time that women go out to draw water. ¹² He said, Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ Behold, I am standing by the spring of water. The daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ Let it happen, that the young lady to whom I will say, 'Please let down your pitcher, that I may drink', and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels drink'—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.

Rebekah's Choice

¹⁵ It happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son

24:7, 8 Abraham told his servant that God would use His Angel so that his mission to find a suitable wife for Isaac would surely succeed. He speaks as if success is certain, and yet he recognizes the possibility that the woman may not be "willing to follow you". We should have the same positive, hopeful attitude in our enterprises for God, expecting success rather than failure. The Angel prepared in prospect for the success of the mission; but it still depended upon the woman's freewill. The whole incident can be read as typical of the search, through the preaching of the Gospel, for the bride of Christ. The preacher of the Gospel, represented by Abraham's servant, must go ahead believing that he will succeed (:40,41), just as the shepherd searches for the sheep until he finds it.

24:14 To water even a few camels was a few hours work. It was impossible that a traveller requesting a cup of water would then be offered to have his camels watered. This would have to be from God.

Your servant... my master – The servant was aware that his master was also a servant, of God. We shouldn't think of those 'above us' as being too far above us – for as we are to them, so should they be to God. And it's our standing before Him which is all important.

24:15 He spoke his prayer out loud. In the private, online worlds in which we live, it's no bad practice to say our prayers out loud, however quietly. This verse is surely alluded to by Jesus when He taught that we should pray knowing that God knows our

of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher on her shoulder. ¹⁶ The young lady was very beautiful to look at, a virgin, neither had any man known her. She went down to the spring, filled her pitcher, and came up. ¹⁷ The servant ran to meet her and said, Please give me a drink, a little water from your pitcher. ¹⁸ She said, Drink, my lord. She hurried, and let down her pitcher on her hand, and gave him drink. ¹⁹ When she had done giving him drink, she said, I will also draw for your camels, until they have done drinking. ²⁰ She hurried, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again to the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. ²¹ The man looked at her amazed, remaining silent, to know whether Yahweh had made his journey prosperous or not. ²² So it happened, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, ²³ and said, Whose daughter are you? Please tell me. Is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in? ²⁴ She said to him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor. ²⁵ She said moreover to him, We have

both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. ²⁶ The man bowed his head, and worshiped Yahweh. ²⁷ He said, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His loving kindness and His truth toward my master. As for me, Yahweh has led me in the way to the house of my master's relatives. ²⁸ The young lady ran, and told her mother's house about these words. ²⁹ Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban. Laban ran out to the man, to the spring. ³⁰ It happened, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, This is what the man said to me, that he came to the man. Behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. ³¹ He said, Come in, you blessed of Yahweh. Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. ³² The man came into the house, and he unloaded the camels. He gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. ³³ Food was set before him to eat, but he said, I will not eat until I have told my message. He said, Speak on.

needs before we ask Him (Mt. 6:8) – before we've finished our prayer, the answer has sometimes come along. See on :63.

24:21 The servant had asked for this to happen, and it did. And he can't believe the prayer has been answered – rather like the believers praying for Peter's release, who disbelieved it could be him knocking at the door (Acts 12:15). We are *so* similar. It is in those moments that we realize just what a momentous thing it is, to ask something of God, to be performed on this earth. And to realize it actually happened. He did it, for me, a little ant crawling on the surface of a small planet that is hurtling through space, in a remote part of His universe...

Abraham's Servant Makes a Speech

³⁴ He said, I am Abraham's servant.

³⁵ Yahweh has blessed my master greatly. He has become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, and camels and donkeys.

³⁶ Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when she was old. He has given all that he has to him.

³⁷ My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live,' ³⁸ but you shall go to my father's house, and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son'. ³⁹ I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not follow me?'

⁴⁰ He said to me, 'Yahweh, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you, and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my son of my relatives, and of my father's house.

⁴¹ Then will you be clear from my oath, when you come to my relatives. If they don't give her to you, you shall be clear from my oath'.

⁴² I came this day to the spring, and said, 'Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, if now You do prosper my way which I go—⁴³ behold, I am standing by this spring of water. Let it happen, that the maiden who comes out to draw, to whom I will say, Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink, ⁴⁴ and she will tell me, Drink, and I will also draw for your camels—let her be the woman whom Yahweh has appointed for my master's son'. ⁴⁵ Before I had finished speaking in my heart,

behold, Rebekah came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. She went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink'. ⁴⁶ She hurried and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'. So I drank, and she also gave the camels a drink. ⁴⁷ I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him'. I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her hands. ⁴⁸ I bowed my head, and worshiped Yahweh, and blessed Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. ⁴⁹ Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. If not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

I Will Go

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel answered, The thing proceeds from Yahweh. We can't speak to you bad or good. ⁵¹ Behold, Rebekah is before you. Take her, and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as Yahweh has spoken. ⁵² It happened that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth to Yahweh. ⁵³ The servant brought out jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and her mother. ⁵⁴ They ate and drank, he and the men who were with him, and stayed all night. They rose up in the

morning, and he said, Send me away to my master. ⁵⁵ Her brother and her mother said, Let the young lady stay with us a few days, at least ten. After that she will go. ⁵⁶ He said to them, Don't hinder me, since Yahweh has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master. ⁵⁷ They said, We will call the young lady, and ask her. ⁵⁸ They called Rebekah, and said to her, Will you go with this man? She said, I will go. ⁵⁹ They sent away Rebekah, their sister, with her nurse, Abraham's servant, and his men. ⁶⁰ They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and let your seed possess the gate of those who hate them. ⁶¹ Rebekah arose with her ladies. They rode on the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah, and went his way. ⁶² Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he lived in the land of the South. ⁶³ Isaac went out to pray in the field at the evening. He lifted up his eyes, and

saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. ⁶⁴ Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel. ⁶⁵ She said to the servant, Who is the man who is walking in the field to meet us? The servant said, It is my master. She took her veil, and covered herself. ⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. He loved her. Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

CHAPTER 25 Jan. 14

The Genealogy of Abraham and Keturah

Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah. ² She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan became the father of Sheba, and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher,

24:56 Abraham's servant said that he walked 'before Yahweh' (:40), reflecting how he felt that he was following an Angel. He therefore urges Bethuel: "Don't hinder me, since Yahweh has blessed my way". He felt he was on a roll, being led onwards by the Angel – and he didn't want anything to interrupt that. The sensitive believer will perceive similar situations, time and again, as we seek to follow the leading of the Angel / cherubim before whom we walk. If we walk in step with the Angel, success is assured.

24:58 Rebekah immediately says "I will go" (Heb. *elek*) – just as Abraham had been called to "go" from Ur (*lek*, 12:1); "and he went" (*wayyelek*, 12:4). This would seem to suggest an undesigned similarity of character between the family members. Our response to the call of God should be immediate, like the disciples immediately leaving their nets.

24:63 The same thing happened as in :15 – a man was walking alone, grieving for his mother and praying – presumably for a wife to fill that gap. And the answer to that prayer had already been prepared for quite some time before he had made that request.

Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. ⁵ Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac, ⁶ but to the sons of Abraham's concubines, Abraham gave gifts. He sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, to the east country. ⁷ These are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸ Abraham gave up the spirit, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people. ⁹ Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre, ¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth. Abraham was buried there with Sarah, his wife. ¹¹ It happened after the death of Abraham that God blessed Isaac, his son. Isaac lived by Beer Lahai Roi.

The Genealogy of Ishmael

¹² Now this is the history of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bore to Abraham. ¹³ These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to the order of their birth: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth, then Kedar, Adbeel,

Mibsam, ¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶ These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their villages, and by their encampments: twelve princes, according to their nations. ¹⁷ These are the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years. He gave up the spirit and died, and was gathered to his people. ¹⁸ They lived from Havilah to Shur that is before Egypt, as you go toward Assyria. He lived opposite all his relatives.

The Birth of Esau and Jacob

¹⁹ This is the history of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham became the father of Isaac. ²⁰ Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife. ²¹ Isaac entreated Yahweh for his wife, because she was barren. Yahweh was entreated by him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her. She said, If it be so, why do I live? She went to inquire of Yahweh. ²³ Yahweh said to her, Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples will be separated from your body. The one people will be stronger than the other people. The elder

25:8 As the reward will only be given at the judgment on Christ's return, it follows that the righteous and wicked go to the same place when they die, i.e. the grave. There is no differentiation made between them in their deaths. Righteous Abraham was "gathered to his people" (or ancestors) on death; they were unbelieving idolaters (Josh. 24:2).

25:23 God loves to work through the weak, the despised, the last, or in this case, the younger.

will serve the younger. ²⁴ When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red all over, like a hairy garment. They named him Esau. ²⁶ After that, his brother came out, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel. He was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Jacob Supplants Esau as Firstborn

²⁷ The boys grew. Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field. Jacob was a perfect man, living in tents. ²⁸ Now Isaac loved Esau, because he ate his venison. Rebekah loved Jacob. ²⁹ Jacob boiled stew. Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. ³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am famished. Therefore his name was called Edom. ³¹ Jacob said, First, sell me your birthright. ³² Esau said, Behold, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me? ³³ Jacob said, Swear to me first. He swore to

him. He sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils. He ate and drank, rose up, and went his way. So Esau despised his birthright.

CHAPTER 26 Jan. 14

The Promises Repeated to Isaac

There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, to Gerar. ² Yahweh appeared to him, and said, Don't go down into Egypt. Live in the land I will tell you about. ³ Live in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you. For to you, and to your seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ I will multiply your seed as the stars of the sky, and will give to your seed all these lands. In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My requirements, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.

25:26 Isaac is presented as delaying parenthood until he could have children by a believing woman.

25:27 By grace, righteousness has to be imputed to us. This happened to Jacob; he didn't make it to the spiritually perfect / mature status with which he is credited right at the beginning. Job is an identical case; he is labelled "perfect" at the beginning, but at the end of his spiritual growth, he confessed his imperfection. Jacob is described as "perfect" at a time when he had not even accepted Yahweh as his God (28:21). God counts His beloved children as being far more righteous than they are. The mechanism by which He now does this is through our baptism into Christ, whereby we are counted as if we are Him. Being counted perfect is therefore not simply the bias and ridiculous favoritism of a doting, unrealistic, Divine parent.

25:30 Jacob's behaviour here was wrong. It's alluded to in a negative way by Paul when he says that we should eagerly feed even our enemy (Rom. 12:20). Jacob should have believed God's promise, that he as the younger would be the more blessed (:23), rather than trying to obtain the birthright in his own strength.

Isaac at Gerar

⁶ Isaac lived in Gerar. ⁷ The men of the place asked him about his wife. He said, She is my sister, for he was afraid to say, My wife, lest, he thought, the men of the place might kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to look at. ⁸ It happened, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was caressing Rebekah his wife. ⁹ Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, surely she is your wife. Why did you say, ‘She is my sister?’ Isaac said to him, Because I said, ‘Lest I die because of her’. ¹⁰ Abimelech said, What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us! ¹¹ Abimelech commanded all the people, saying, He who touches this man or his wife will surely be put to death. ¹² Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year one hundred times what he planted. Yahweh blessed him. ¹³ The

man grew great, and grew more and more until he became very great. ¹⁴ He had possessions of flocks, possessions of herds, and a great household. The Philistines envied him. ¹⁵ Now all the wells which his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. ¹⁶ Abimelech said to Isaac, Go from us, for you are much mightier than we. ¹⁷ Isaac departed from there, encamped in the valley of Gerar, and lived there.

Controversy about Wells

¹⁸ Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father. For the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham. He called their names after the names by which his father had called them. ¹⁹ Isaac’s servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. ²⁰ The herdsmen of Gerar argued with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, The water is ours! He called the name of the well Esek,

26:6 Isaac chose to live in Gerar, right on the border of Egypt – as close as he could get to the world, without crossing the line. And he thought nothing of denying his marriage to Rebekah, just to save his own skin (:7). So it seems Isaac had some marriage problems; the record speaks of “Esau his son” and “Jacob (Rebekah’s) son” (27:5,6). The way Jacob gave Isaac wine “and he drank” just before giving the blessings is another hint at some unspirituality (27:25). And yet Isaac is counted as one of the faithful fathers; he was made strong out of his weakness, just as we are.

26:11 The Abimelech kings appear far more gracious and honourable than the Abraham family who wandered in and out of their territory; the way Abimelech threatens his own people with death if they touch Isaac or his wife, after Isaac had been deceitful to him, is an example. Yet it was not the nice people of the world, but this wandering, spiritually struggling family whom God loved and worked with.

26:12, 13 God hugely blessed Isaac materially right after Isaac’s failure of faith and selfish disloyalty in his marriage. Material blessing isn’t therefore immediately given or withheld on the basis of our righteousness.

because they contended with him.²¹ They dug another well, and they argued over that, also. He called its name Sitnah.²² He left that place, and dug another well. They didn't argue over that one. He called it Rehoboth. He said, For now Yahweh has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.²³ He went up from there to Beersheba.²⁴ Yahweh appeared to him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham your father. Don't be afraid, for I am with you, and will bless you, and multiply your seed for My servant Abraham's sake.²⁵ He built an altar there, and called on the name of Yahweh, and pitched his tent there. There Isaac's servants dug a well.²⁶ Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his army.²⁷ Isaac said to them, Why have you come to me, since you hate me, and have sent me away from you?²⁸ They said, We saw plainly that Yahweh was with you. We said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between us and you, and let us make a covenant with you,²⁹ that you will do us no harm, as we have not touched you, and as we have done to you nothing but good, and have sent you away in peace'. You are now the blessed of

Yahweh.³⁰ He made them a feast, and they ate and drank.³¹ They rose up some time in the morning, and swore one to another. Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.³² It happened the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had dug, and said to him, We have found water.³³ He called it Shibah. Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he took as wife Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite.³⁵ They grieved Isaac's and Rebekah's spirits.

CHAPTER 27 Jan. 15

Jacob Deceives Isaac

It happened, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said to him, My son? He said to him, Here I am.² He said, See now, I am old. I don't know the day of my death.³ Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison.⁴ Make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and that my soul may bless you before I die.⁵ Rebekah heard when Isaac

26:29 *You are now the blessed of Yahweh* – As if the surrounding people knew about the promises of blessing which Yahweh had made to His people, and they recognized that those promises were starting to have some level of fulfilment even then in the lives of Isaac and his family. In our lives too, God's promised future Kingdom blessings have a way of starting to come true even now (1 Tim. 4:8).

26:35 Isaac had waited a long time and his family had gone to great lengths so that he could marry a believer. He and Rebekah were understandably disappointed that their son chose to marry unbelieving women from the surrounding world.

spoke to Esau his son. Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. ⁶ Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, ⁷ ‘Bring me venison, and make me savoury food, that I may eat, and bless you before Yahweh before my death’. ⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you. ⁹ Go now to the flock, and get me from there two good young goats. I will make them savoury food for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ You shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death. ¹¹ Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. ¹² What if my father touches me? I will seem to him as a deceiver, and I would bring a curse on myself, and not a blessing. ¹³ His mother said to him, Let your curse be on me, my son. Only obey my voice, and go get them for me. ¹⁴ He went, and got them, and brought them to his mother. His mother made savoury food, such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Rebekah took the

good clothes of Esau, her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, her younger son. ¹⁶ She put the skins of the young goats on his hands, and on the smooth of his neck. ¹⁷ She gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. ¹⁸ He came to his father, and said, My father? He said, Here I am. Who are you, my son? ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, I am Esau your first-born. I have done what you asked me to do. Please arise, sit and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me. ²⁰ Isaac said to his son, How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son? He said, Because Yahweh your God gave me success. ²¹ Isaac said to Jacob, Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not. ²² Jacob went near to Isaac his father. He felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. ²³ He didn’t recognize him, because his hands were hairy, like his brother Esau’s hands. So he blessed him. ²⁴ He said, Are you really my son Esau? He said, I am.

27:11 What should Jacob have replied to his mother? It makes a good exercise to write out what he should’ve said.

27:12 *Deceiver* – The rare Hebrew word used here is found elsewhere in Jer. 10:15, 16, where it refers to a maker of idols. Again the record is forging the link between Jacob and paganism.

27:13 There are clear allusions here to Eve in Eden; the curse came about because of a hearkening to a woman’s voice. Jacob ought to have perceived the similarities of the situation; but he failed to. All human sin is in some way a living out of the Adam and Eve scenario; hence Paul in Romans presents Adam as everyman, and in so many Biblical records of sin (and in our own sins too) we can see similarities with what happened in Eden. We can therefore safely say that if we had been in Eden, we would’ve sinned likewise. The fact we suffer the effect of that sin is therefore not unjust.

27:24 As Jacob deceived his blind father, so he was himself deceived by Laban. “De-

Isaac Blesses Jacob

²⁵ He said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless you. He brought it near to him, and he ate. He brought him wine, and he drank. ²⁶ His father Isaac said to him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. ²⁷ He came near, and kissed him. He smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him, and said, Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Yahweh has blessed. ²⁸ God give you of the dew of the sky, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and new wine. ²⁹ Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers. Let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you. Blessed be everyone who blesses you.

Esau's Anger

³⁰ It happened, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ He also made savoury

food, and brought it to his father. He said to his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that your soul may bless me. ³² Isaac his father said to him, Who are you? He said, I am your son, your firstborn, Esau. ³³ Isaac trembled violently, and said, Who, then, is he who has taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before you came, and have blessed him? Yes, he will be blessed. ³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said to his father, Bless me, even me also, my father. ³⁵ He said, Your brother came with deceit, and has taken away your blessing. ³⁶ He said, Isn't he rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright. See, now he has taken away my blessing. He said, Haven't you reserved a blessing for me? ³⁷ Isaac answered Esau, Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brothers have I given to him for servants. With grain and new wine have I sustained him. What then will I do for you, my son? ³⁸ Esau said to his father, Have you

ceiving and being deceived" may allude to Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13). What goes around comes around.

27:29 *Lord over your brothers* – Isaac had apparently forgotten the Divine promise that the firstborn was to serve the younger. However, the blessing which Isaac was giving wasn't the same as the Divine blessing of Abraham's seed. All of the family seem to have forgotten the prime importance of God's blessing, and rated *human* blessing far higher. This can so easily happen to us. The Gospel is contained in the promises to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), and we need to continually remind ourselves of their paramount significance in our lives. There was no Divine inspiration in Isaac's blessings, he was not speaking from God's mouth to his sons, although the recording of them is inspired.

27:38 The way Esau lifted up his voice and wept is picked up in Heb. 12:17 as a warning to all those who would fritter away their spirituality for sensuality – for they will

but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, my father. Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. ³⁹ Isaac his father answered him, Behold, of the fatness of the earth will be your dwelling, and of the dew of the sky from above. ⁴⁰ By your sword will you live, and you will serve your brother. It will happen, when you will break loose, that you shall shake his yoke from off your neck. ⁴¹ Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him. Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then I will kill my brother Jacob. ⁴² The words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah. She sent and called Jacob, her younger son, and said to him, Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban, my brother, in Haran. ⁴⁴ Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away; ⁴⁵ until your brother's anger turn away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will

send, and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day? ⁴⁶ Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good will my life do me?

CHAPTER 28 Jan. 16

Jacob Sent to Laban

Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and commanded him, You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. ² Arise, go to Paddan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father. Take a wife from there from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. ³ May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a company of peoples, ⁴ and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you, and to your seed with you, that you may inherit the land where you travel, which God gave to Abraham. ⁵ Isaac sent Jacob away. He went to Paddan Aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, Rebekah's broth-

weep in the same way at the day of judgment, aching from the pain of what might have been. Esau was a type of those who will be rejected at the final judgment – they will beg with tears for a change of mind, but it will be too late. None of us will stand before Christ indifferent – we will all desperately wish for His blessing, and therefore our commitment to Him in this life should likewise be total.

27:46 Rebekah's apparent zeal against marriage out of the faith was really a cover for her desire to save her son from problems which he had only her to blame for. We really have to search our motives – for we do externally the right thing from quite wrong motives.

28:1 Here and in :7 we see the repeated emphasis on the need to marry within the household of faith.

28:4 Isaac perhaps now realized that the fatherly blessing over which there had been so much grief was irrelevant compared to God's blessing.

er, Jacob's and Esau's mother. ⁶ Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan Aram, to take him a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a command, saying, You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, ⁷ and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan Aram. ⁸ Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan didn't please Isaac, his father. ⁹ Esau went to Ishmael, and took, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife.

Jacob's Vision of the Ladder

¹⁰ Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He came to a certain place, and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² He dreamed. Behold, a stairway set upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven. Behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. ¹³ Behold, Yahweh stood above it,

and said, I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed. ¹⁴ Your seed will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you, and will keep you, wherever you go, and will bring you again into this land. For I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken of to you. ¹⁶ Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I didn't know it. ¹⁷ He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other than God's house, and this is the gate of heaven. ¹⁸ Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. ²⁰ Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me

28:12 Jacob's dreaming of a pagan ziggurat could indicate that subconsciously his mind was in pagan things rather than those of Yahweh. But God worked through that, and transformed the dream into a message from the true God. God with amazing patience works through our weaknesses, lack of faith and misunderstandings to bring us to Him as the one true God.

28:13 God made these unconditional promises to Jacob even though at that time Jacob had not accepted Yahweh as his God (:21), thus showing His grace. God in Christ has potentially forgiven every person their sins and promised them salvation – all they have to do is accept Him in faith. God takes the initiative in grace – He doesn't give us His promises as a 'Well done' for our showing faith in Him. He has taken the initiative and it is for us to respond. Jacob there in his unbelief, or agnosticism, with Angels ascending and descending upon him, was in fact a type of Christ (Jn. 1:51).

bread to eat, and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Yahweh will be my God, ²² then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, will be God's house. Of all that you will give me I will surely give the tenth to you.

CHAPTER 29 Jan. 16

Jacob Falls in Love

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the children of the east. ² He looked, and behold, a well in the field, and, behold, three flocks of sheep lying there by it. For out of that well they watered the flocks. The stone on the well's mouth was large. ³ There all the flocks were gathered. They rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again on the well's mouth in its place. ⁴ Jacob said to them, My relatives, where are you from? They said, We are from Haran. ⁵ He said to them, Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor? They said, We know him. ⁶ He said to them, Is it well with him? They said, It is well. See, Rachel, his daughter, is coming with the sheep. ⁷ He said, Behold, it is still the middle of the day, not time to gather the livestock together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them.

⁸ They said, We can't, until all the flocks are gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth. Then we water the sheep. ⁹ While he was yet speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she kept them. ¹⁰ It happened, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹ Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. ¹² Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son. She ran and told her father.

Jacob Marries Rachel and Leah

¹³ It happened, when Laban heard the news of Jacob, his sister's son, that he ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things. ¹⁴ Laban said to him, Surely you are my bone and my flesh. He lived with him for a month. ¹⁵ Laban said to Jacob, Because you are my brother, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what will your wages be? ¹⁶ Laban had two daughters. The name of the

28:21, 22 Jacob seems sceptical of God's promise – he says that if indeed God does what He promises, *then* Jacob will accept Yahweh as his God and give him a tithe. The offer of a tithe seems very mean – the God who has promised us so very much deserves our all, not just a tenth.

29:2 Meeting a future wife by a well at watering time is what happened to Moses and to Isaac (by proxy). Situations repeat between the lives of God's children and even within our own lives, because the same God is working through His Angels to some kind of pattern and formula in the lives of His children, even if the complete algorithm is currently hid from our understanding.

elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and attractive. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel. He said, I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter. ¹⁹ Laban said, It is better that I give her to you, than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me. ²⁰ Jacob served seven years for Rachel. They seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her. ²¹ Jacob said to Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her. ²² Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. ²³ It happened in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him. He went in to her. ²⁴ Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid to his daughter Leah for a handmaid. ²⁵ It happened in the morning that, behold, it was Leah. He said to Laban, What is this you have done to me? Didn't I serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me? ²⁶ Laban said, It

is not done so in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Fulfill the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you will serve with me yet seven other years. ²⁸ Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week. He gave him Rachel his daughter as wife. ²⁹ Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah, his handmaid, to be her handmaid. ³⁰ He went in also to Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. ³¹ Yahweh saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah conceived, and bore a son, and she named him Reuben. For she said, Because Yahweh has looked at my affliction. For now my husband will love me. ³³ She conceived again, and bore a son, and said, Because Yahweh has heard that I am hated, He has therefore given me this son also. She named him Simeon. ³⁴ She conceived again, and bore a son. She said, Now this time will my husband

29:17 As life worked out, it's apparent that Leah was the more faithful to Yahweh and her beauty queen sister wasn't so spiritually minded. But Jacob in his spiritual immaturity was attracted to Rachel after the flesh.

29:25 Why did Jacob only realize whom he had slept with the next morning? One is tempted to assume Jacob was drunk on his wedding night.

What is this – Very similar words and situation to Esau's cry of pain and disappointment at how Jacob had deceived him. It's not simply that what goes around comes around in a kind of measure for measure dynamic, but rather that God was seeking to educate Jacob as to how Esau must have felt at his behaviour, and to lead Jacob thereby to repentance.

29:33 *Has heard* – Yahweh noticed she was hated (:31) and read the situation as a prayer to Him. Sometimes we don't verbalize things in prayer, but God all the same perceives our situation as a prayer to Him.

29:34 Jacob was married to Leah but not "joined" to her, even though God's intention is to 'join' a married couple together (Mt. 19:6). It would seem Jacob like many people today resisted God's attempts to join a couple together.

be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons. Therefore his name was called Levi. ³⁵ She conceived again, and bore a son. She said, This time will I praise Yahweh. Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

CHAPTER 30 Jan. 17

Jacob's Children and Domestic Problems

When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister. She said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I will die. ² Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God's place, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb? ³ She said, Behold, my maid Bilhah. Go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, and I also may obtain children by her. ⁴ She gave him Bilhah her handmaid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵ Bilhah conceived, and bore Jacob a son. ⁶ Rachel said, God has judged me, and has also heard

my voice, and has given me a son. Therefore called she his name Dan. ⁷ Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, conceived again, and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ Rachel said, With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed. She named him Naphtali. ⁹ When Leah saw that she had finished bearing, she took Zilpah, her handmaid, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Leah said, How fortunate! She named him Gad. ¹² Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me happy. She named him Asher. ¹⁴ Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother, Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Please give me some of your son's mandrakes. ¹⁵ She said to her, Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes, also? Rachel said, Therefore he will

30:4 Jacob's sleeping with his wives' maids was contrary to the one man: one woman ideal of Genesis. But God tolerated it and used the children conceived as the founding pillars of His people Israel; He worked through the weakness of people rather than turning away in disgust and disappointment at their failures. God does the same with us, and we ought to have a similar hopeful patience in dealing with people who fail.

30:6 It seems that this was a case of Rachel trying to force God's hand rather than Him blessing her. Yet she eagerly interpreted events as meaning God was blessing her, just as we can – we too easily attach positive meaning to our poor behaviour.

30:8 Leah didn't fight back nor have any personal part in wrestling with Rachel; the wrestling was all in Rachel's mind. We can assume others are actively against us and even fighting against us when actually they are just innocent people in the situation they are in, and our wrestling is in fact against God and not them as persons. Jacob learnt the same lesson when he wrestled with the Angel in chapter 32.

30:11 Gad was the name of an idol, the god of luck or fortune. In this name choice we see the pagan influences in the family which God was trying to transform into His people.

lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes.¹⁶ Jacob came from the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, You must come in to me; for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes. He lay with her that night.¹⁷ God listened to Leah, and she conceived, and bore Jacob a fifth son.¹⁸ Leah said, God has given me my hire, because I gave my handmaid to my husband. She named him Issachar.¹⁹ Leah conceived again, and bore a sixth son to Jacob.²⁰ Leah said, God has endowed me with a good dowry. Now my husband will live with me, because I have borne him six sons. She named him Zebulun.²¹ Afterwards, she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.²² God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her, and opened her womb.²³ She conceived, bore a son, and said, God has taken away my reproach.²⁴ She named him Joseph, saying, May Yahweh add another son to me.

Jacob Increases His Wealth

²⁵ It happened, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, Send me away, that I may go to my own place, and to my country.²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service with which I have served you.²⁷ Laban said to him, If now I

have found favour in your eyes, stay here, for I have divined that Yahweh has blessed me for your sake.²⁸ He said, Appoint me your wages, and I will give it.²⁹ He said to him, You know how I have served you, and how your livestock have fared with me.³⁰ For it was little which you had before I came, and it has increased to a multitude. Yahweh has blessed you wherever I turned. Now when will I provide for my own house also?³¹ He said, What shall I give you? Jacob said, You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it.³² I will pass through all your flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted one, and every black one among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats. This will be my hire.³³ So my righteousness will answer for me hereafter, when you come concerning my hire that is before you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, that might be with me, will be counted stolen.³⁴ Laban said, Behold, let it be according to your word.³⁵ That day, he removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

30:16 Mandrakes were supposed to be aphrodisiacs. The record is framed to show how meaningless were these pagan beliefs – for if they had really worked, she would have had no need to order Jacob to sleep with her. God's patient working through their misunderstandings is seen later in how He worked through Jacob's belief in the myth of cattle bearing spotted offspring if they conceived in front of spotted rods (:37).

³⁶ He set three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. ³⁷ Jacob took to himself rods of fresh poplar, almond, plane tree, peeled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. ³⁸ He set the rods which he had peeled opposite the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs where the flocks came to drink. They conceived when they came to drink. ³⁹ The flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks produced streaked, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the streaked and all the black in the flock of Laban: and he put his own droves apart, and didn't put them into Laban's flock. ⁴¹ It happened, whenever the stronger of the flock conceived, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the flock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods; ⁴² but when the flock were feeble, he didn't put them

in. So the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. ⁴³ The man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

CHAPTER 31 Jan. 18

Jacob's Family Escape from Laban

He heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. From that which was our father's, has he gotten all this wealth. ² Jacob saw the expression on Laban's face, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. ³ Yahweh said to Jacob, Return to the land of your fathers, and to your relatives, and I will be with you. ⁴ Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock, ⁵ and said to them, I see the expression on your father's face, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ You know that I have served your father with all of my strength. ⁷ Your father

30:37-39 This was a pagan belief with no biological truth in it, but God still worked through it in order to bless Jacob; see on :16. The Lord Jesus did the same regarding the common belief that demons caused illness. His language went along with the idea, although the Bible is clear that demons don't exist and sickness is ultimately under God's control, in order to bring healing and blessing to those sick people. By doing so, He demonstrated that God's power is so far greater than that of demons that effectively, demons have no power and don't actually exist. God worked in the same way through the wrong ideas held by Jacob and his family.

30:43 *The man* – Stressing how Jacob humanly, in a fleshly sense, was blessed by God. Later on he must have reflected how this blessing was by Divine grace rather than because of any truth in the pagan beliefs of themselves, for afterwards he talks of how it was God who graciously gave him the extra cattle (31:9; 32:10).

31:5 *God of my father* – Jacob only spoke about Yahweh as his personal God towards the end of his life. At this stage he was still relating to Yahweh as the God of his father rather than seeing the personal reality of God as his personal God. Today God works in the same way, to transform for us the God of Sunday School Christianity into our personal Father.

has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God didn't allow him to hurt me. ⁸ If he said this, 'The speckled will be your wages', then all the flock bore speckled. If he said this, 'The streaked will be your wages', then all the flock bore streaked. ⁹ Thus God has taken away your father's livestock, and given them to me. ¹⁰ It happened during mating season that I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which leaped on the flock were streaked, speckled, and grizzled. ¹¹ The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob', and I said, 'Here I am'. ¹² He said, 'Now lift up your eyes, and behold, all the male goats which leap on the flock are streaked, speckled, and grizzled, for I have seen all that Laban does to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you vowed a vow to me. Now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your birth'. ¹⁴ Rachel and Leah answered him, Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? ¹⁵ Aren't we accounted by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also quite devoured our money. ¹⁶ For all the riches which God has taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do. ¹⁷ Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives on the camels, ¹⁸ and he took away all his livestock, and all his possessions which he had gathered, including

the livestock which he had gained in Paddan Aram, to go to Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan. ¹⁹ Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep; and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's. ²⁰ Jacob deceived Laban the Syrian, in that he didn't tell him that he was running away. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had. He rose up, passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.

Laban Meets Jacob

²² Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. ²³ He took his relatives with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey. He overtook him in the mountain of Gilead. ²⁴ God came to Laban the Syrian, in a dream of the night, and said to him, Take heed to yourself that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad. ²⁵ Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain, and Laban with his relatives encamped in the mountain of Gilead. ²⁶ Laban said to Jacob, What have you done, that you have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword? ²⁷ Why did you flee secretly, and deceive me, and didn't tell me, that I might have sent you away with mirth and with songs, with tambourine and with harp; ²⁸ and didn't allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now have you done foolishly. ²⁹ It is in the power of my hand to hurt you, but the God of your fa-

31:9 See on 30:43.

31:19 Teraphim were household gods – Rachel clearly believed in them passionately.

ther spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Take heed to yourself that you don’t speak to Jacob either good or bad’.

³⁰ Now you want to be gone, because you greatly longed for your father’s house, but why have you stolen my gods? ³¹ Jacob answered Laban, Because I was afraid, for I said, ‘Lest you should take your daughters from me by force’. ³² Anyone you find your gods with shall not live. Before our relatives, discern what is yours with me, and take it. For Jacob didn’t know that Rachel had stolen them.

³³ Laban went into Jacob’s tent, into Leah’s tent, and into the tent of the two female servants; but he didn’t find them. He went out of Leah’s tent, and entered into Rachel’s tent.

³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt about all the tent, but didn’t find them. ³⁵ She said to her father, Don’t let my lord be angry that I can’t rise up before you; for I’m having my period. He searched, but didn’t find the teraphim. ³⁶ Jacob was angry, and argued with Laban. Jacob answered Laban, What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? ³⁷ Now that you have felt around in all my stuff, what have you found of all your household

stuff? Set it here before my relatives and your relatives, that they may judge between us two. ³⁸ These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not cast their young, and I haven’t eaten the rams of your flocks. ³⁹ That which was torn of animals, I didn’t bring to you. I bore its loss. Of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. ⁴⁰ This was my situation: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹ These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. ⁴² Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty. God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked you last night.

Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant

⁴³ Laban answered Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine: and what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have borne? ⁴⁴ Now come, let

31:36 Jacob must have later reflected how this incident reflected God’s pure grace to him, and how self-righteous he had been. All the time in this record we are seeing God continuing to work with people through their weaknesses, to bring them to perceive and believe in Him as the God of all grace.

31:42 *Rebuked you* – There’s no evidence God actually did. Again we see a man attaching unwarranted meaning to events, assuming God was more pleased with him than He actually was. His wives made the same mistake in the obtaining and naming of their children.

us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be for a witness between me and you. ⁴⁵ Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. ⁴⁶ Jacob said to his relatives, Gather stones. They took stones, and made a heap. They ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ⁴⁸ Laban said, This heap is witness between me and you this day. Therefore it was named Galeed ⁴⁹ and Mizpah, for he said, Yahweh watch between me and you, when we are absent one from another. ⁵⁰ If you afflict my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; behold, God is witness between me and you. ⁵¹ Laban said to Jacob, See this heap, and see the pillar, which I have set between me and you. ⁵² May this heap be a witness, and the pillar be a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and that you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. ⁵³ The God of Abraham, and

the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us. Then Jacob swore by the fear of his father, Isaac. ⁵⁴ Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his relatives to eat bread. They ate bread, and stayed all night in the mountain. ⁵⁵ Early in the morning, Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them. Laban departed and returned to his place.

CHAPTER 32 Jan. 19

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² When he saw them, Jacob said, This is God's army. He called the name of that place Mahanaim. ³ Jacob sent messengers in front of him to Esau, his brother, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom. ⁴ He commanded them, saying, This is what you shall tell my lord, Esau: 'This is what your servant, Jacob, says. I have lived as a foreigner with Laban, and stayed until now. ⁵ I have

31:45 Raising up a pillar or standing stone was a pagan ritual which God later forbade for His people (Lev. 26:1 uses the same Hebrew word). Constantly we are being reminded how paganistic were Jacob's beliefs at this time.

31:53 The god of Nahor was a pagan deity (Josh. 24:2); Jacob instead swore by the One his father Isaac feared, Yahweh. Even though Jacob hadn't yet accepted Yahweh as his personal God, he recognized theoretically the truth of Yahweh as opposed to any other god; Yahweh was working to transform this theoretical knowledge into a practical, personal reality for Jacob.

31:54 Eating bread together was a sign of agreeing to a covenant. It is behind the idea of the breaking of bread service, whereby God and His children state their mutual belief in each other and acceptance of God's covenant with us – which is quite simply to save us from our sins and give us eternal life in His Kingdom because we are in Christ.

32:2 'Mahanaim' means 'two camps'. The army of Jacob's enemies was matched by an invisible army of Angels which were on Jacob's side, weak in faith as he was. We must remember that each life crisis, each time we seem hopelessly outnumbered, is in fact a Mahanaim situation for us.

cattle, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favour in your sight'.⁶ The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau. Not only that, but he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him.⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and was distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies;⁸ and he said, If Esau comes to the one company, and strikes it, then the company which is left will escape.⁹ Jacob said, God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh, who said to me, 'Return to your country, and to your relatives, and I will do you good',¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the loving kindnesses, and of all the truth, which You have shown to Your servant; for with just my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I have become two companies.¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he come and strike me, and the mothers with the children.¹² You said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which

can't be numbered because there are so many'.¹³ He lodged there that night, and took from that which he had with him, a present for Esau, his brother:¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,¹⁵ thirty milk camels and their colts, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.¹⁶ He delivered them into the hands of his servants, every herd by itself, and said to his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space between herd and herd.¹⁷ He commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau, my brother, meets you, and asks you, saying, 'Whose are you? Where are you going? Whose are these before you?'¹⁸ Then you shall say, 'They are your servant, Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord, Esau. Behold, he also is behind us'.¹⁹ He commanded also the second, and the third, and all that followed the herds, saying, This is how you shall speak to Esau, when you find him.²⁰ You shall say, 'Not only that, but behold, your servant, Jacob, is behind us'. For, he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.²¹ So the present

32:10 Staff – The Hebrew word for “staff” here suggests a magical, pagan stick associated with fertility, coming from a root meaning ‘to germinate’. The same word occurs when we read that Jacob put the animals before the “rods”; it seems this is an intensive plural for ‘the great rod’, i.e. his staff. Yet, fascinatingly enough, at the very point when Jacob leaves home to start his wilderness journey with only (in his eyes) his pagan staff to bring him good luck, God as it were takes a snapshot of him, and asks Israel to leave Egypt with a staff in their hands – a strange request, surely, unless it was intended to drive their minds back to Jacob, asking them to emulate his example. Jacob and idolatry go together. But now Jacob begins to realize that all he had in life was from God, and not from his staff.

passed over before him, and he himself lodged that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles with an Angel

²² He rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok.

²³ He took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone, and wrestled with a man there until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ When he saw that he didn't prevail against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled. ²⁶ The man said, Let me go, for the day breaks. Jacob said, I won't let You go, unless You bless me. ²⁷ He said to him, What is your name? He said, Jacob. ²⁸ He said, Your name will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you

have fought with God and with men, and have prevailed. ²⁹ Jacob asked him, Please tell me Your name. He said, Why is it that you ask what My name is? He blessed him there.

³⁰ Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, he said, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

³¹ The sun rose on him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped because of his thigh. ³² Therefore the children of Israel don't eat the sinew of the hip, which is on the hollow of the thigh, to this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

CHAPTER 33 Jan. 19

Jacob Meets Esau

Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. He divided the children between Leah,

32:24 *Wrestled* – The Angel came to Jacob with the desire to kill him, as Esau (whom the Angel represented) approached him in the same spirit. It was by Jacob's desperate clinging on to God, his pleading, his intense prayer (Hos. 12:4) that he changed God's intention, as did Moses later. We know from Hos. 12 that Jacob became aware that he was wrestling with an Angel, not just a man. His wrestling is therefore to be understood as prayer and pleading, although doubtless it started as a physical struggle with an unknown stranger, who he later recognized as an Angel. Jacob wrestled / struggled in prayer with the Angel. Jacob's night of wrestling is a cameo of the experience of all who would be counted among the Israel of God – for “there He spoke with us” (Hos. 12:4). The Bible presents prayer as a struggle, not something we do half asleep in the comfort of our beds (Job 33:13; Heb. 12:4; Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:12). Through this, Jacob learnt the real import of the promises. He realized that all his life, he had been wrestling with God, his Angel, and he now came to beg his God for the blessing of forgiveness, implying he had repented. The Hebrew for “wrestle” can mean both to wrestle and also to cling on to. He started wrestling, and ended up clinging on to the Angel, desperately begging for salvation and forgiveness. His great physical strength (remember how he moved the huge stone from the well, 29:2) was redirected into a spiritual clinging on to the promises of forgiveness and salvation. And this will be our pattern of growth too.

32:31 Jacob's limping would've reminded him for the rest of his life of his brokenness and dependence upon God's grace to walk life's journey.

Rachel, and the two handmaids.

² He put the handmaids and their children in front, Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph at the rear. ³ He himself passed over in front of them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. ⁴ Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, fell on his neck, kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ He lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with you? He said, The children whom God has graciously given your servant. ⁶ Then the handmaids came near with their children, and they bowed themselves. ⁷ Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves. After them, Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

⁸ Esau said, What do you mean by all this company which I met? Jacob said, To find grace in the sight of my lord. ⁹ Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which you have be yours. ¹⁰ Jacob said, Please no, if I have now found grace in your sight, then receive my present at my hand, because I have seen your face, as one sees the face of God, and you were pleased with me. ¹¹ Please take away my blessing that I brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have all things. He urged him, and he took it.

Jacob and Esau Part Company

¹² Esau said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before you. ¹³ Jacob said to him, My lord knows that the children are tender,

33:3 Jacob's new appreciation of the blessing of forgiveness is reflected by the way in which he effectively tells Esau that he is handing back to him the birthright, the physical blessings. The way he bows down seven times to Esau is rejecting the blessing he had obtained by deceit from Isaac: "Be master over your brothers, and let your mother's sons bow down to you" (27:29). His experience of the blessing of God's grace was sufficient for him, and he rejected all else. See on 33:11.

33:5 *Graciously given* – Jacob is beginning to understand that his blessings of family and wealth were a gift of God's grace and not achieved, as he had thought, as a result of his own hard work and pagan practices. The grace of the one true God is being subtly contrasted with the works-based mentality of paganism.

33:11 The Hebrew words translated "take (away)" and "blessing" are exactly the same as in 27:35,36, where Isaac laments that Jacob had *taken away* Esau's *blessing*, and *Esau repeats those same words*. Now Jacob is saying: 'I have experienced the true grace of God, I stand forgiven before Him, I saw His face in His representative Angel, I therefore have all things, so I don't want that physical, material, temporal blessing I swindled you out of'. This is why Jacob pointedly calls Esau his "Lord" in the record. He was accepting Esau as the firstborn. Because God had dealt graciously with him, he felt that he had "all things". All he needed was God's grace, and he had that. Rev. 21:7 appears to allude to Jacob by saying that he who overcomes [by wrestling?] shall inherit "all things". We are all to pass through Jacob's lesson; that material advantage is nothing, and God's grace is everything. Truly could Jacob later say, after another gracious salvation, that there God had been revealed to him [RV] in the experience of grace (35:7). See on 33:3.

and that the flocks and herds with me have their young, and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴ Please let my lord pass over before his servant, and I will lead on gently, according to the pace of the livestock that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord to Seir. ¹⁵ Esau said, Let me now leave with you some of the folk who are with me. He said, Why? Let me find favour in the sight of my lord. ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ Jacob travelled to Succoth, built himself a house, and made shelters for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. ¹⁸ Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan Aram; and encamped before the city. ¹⁹ He bought the parcel of ground where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. ²⁰ He erected an altar there, and called it El Eloe Israel.

CHAPTER 34 Jan. 20

Shechem Sleeps with Dinah

Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. ² Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her. He took her, lay with her, and humbled her. ³ His soul joined to

Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young lady, and spoke kindly to the young lady. ⁴ Shechem spoke to his father, Hamor, saying, Get me this young lady as a wife. ⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah, his daughter; and his sons were with his livestock in the field. Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶ Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to talk with him. ⁷ The sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it. The men were grieved, and they were very angry, because he had done folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; a thing which ought not to be done. ⁸ Hamor talked with them, saying, The soul of my son, Shechem, longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. ⁹ Make marriages with us, give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ You shall dwell with us, and the land will be before you. Live and trade in it, and get possessions in it. ¹¹ Shechem said to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favour in your eyes, and whatever you will tell me I will give. ¹² Ask me a great amount for a dowry, and I will give whatever you ask of me, but give me the young lady as a wife.

Jacob's Sons Take Revenge

¹³ The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with deceit, and spoke, because he had defiled Dinah their sister, ¹⁴ and

34:2 The story clearly shows the danger of young people from believing families mixing with unbelievers in an uncontrolled environment – what begins as curiosity can very quickly descend into serious failure with lifelong consequences.

said to them, We can't do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised; for that is a reproach to us. ¹⁵ Only on this condition will we consent to you. If you will be as we are, that every male of you be circumcised; ¹⁶ then will we give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us, to be circumcised, then we will take our sister, and we will be gone. ¹⁸ Their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. ¹⁹ The young man didn't wait to do this thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter, and he was honoured above all the house of his father. ²⁰ Hamor and Shechem, his son, came to the gate of their city, and talked with the men of their city, saying, ²¹ These men are peaceful with us. Therefore let them live in the land and trade in it. For behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. ²² Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people, if every male among us is circumcised, as they are

circumcised. ²³ Won't their livestock and their possessions and all their animals be ours? Only let us give our consent to them, and they will dwell with us. ²⁴ All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor, and to Shechem his son; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. ²⁵ It happened on the third day, when they were sore, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword, came upon the unsuspecting city, and killed all the males. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and Shechem, his son, with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. ²⁷ Jacob's sons came on the dead, and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks, their herds, their donkeys, that which was in the city, that which was in the field, ²⁹ and all their wealth. They took captive all their little ones and their wives, and took as plunder everything that was in the house. ³⁰ Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I being few in

34:16 Marriage out of the Faith reflects a lack of appreciation of covenant relationship. If Dinah had married Shechem, this would have been a covenant relationship which would have resulted in the people of God and the surrounding world becoming "one people" (:16,22). Through baptism, we are the seed of Abraham, we are *the* people of God, we have been selected to undergo a few years preparation now, so that when the Lord comes we may enter His Kingdom.

34:30 So true to our experience, even after the night of wrestling Jacob slipped back at times into the old way of thinking. His pathetic bleating here is a case of this: "*I* being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against *me* and slay *me*; and *I* shall be destroyed, *I* and *my* house". Just note all those personal pronouns. God had promised to go with him, and the whole tenor of all the promises was that there would

number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. ³¹ They said, Should he deal with our sister as with a prostitute?

CHAPTER 35 Jan. 20

Jacob Quits Pagan Gods

God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there. Make there an altar to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother. ² Then Jacob said to his household, and to all who were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, change your garments. ³ Let us arise, and go up to Bethel. I will make there an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. ⁴ They gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which were in

their hands, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. ⁵ They travelled, and a terror of God was on the cities that were around them, and they didn't pursue the sons of Jacob. ⁶ So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. ⁷ He built an altar there, and called the place El Beth El; because there God was revealed to him, when he fled from the face of his brother. ⁸ Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; and its name was called Allon Bacuth.

Jacob Is Renamed Israel

⁹ God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan Aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, Your name is Jacob. Your name shall

come a singular seed from the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who would become a great house, or nation. But in the heat of the moment, all this went out of the window. Our faith in the implications of God's promises to us – we who through baptism have the same Abrahamic promises made to us – can likewise easily become obscured by the immediate pressures of this world.

35:2 These household teraphim would have been the property deeds to Laban's property, but because of what God had promised him, Jacob was willing to resign all that hope of worldly advantage (:3). "Foreign gods" would've sounded strange to Jacob's family – the gods they worshipped would've been local Canaanite gods, yet Jacob speaks as if the local world around them was actually a foreign country. He thus shows how we who are in the family of faith should live even in our own land as if we are visitors from abroad in a foreign land (Heb. 11:13).

35:4 Jacob was outnumbered and surrounded by angry enemies, whom his sons had foolishly provoked. He turns to God and throws away all his human wealth, which he might have used to placate his angry enemies. And somehow, it all worked out for him – because there's no record that his enemies did in fact take revenge against the small and vulnerable Jacob family.

35:7 See on 33:11.

35:10 The record continues to sometimes refer to Jacob as "Jacob" rather than as "Israel". This reflects how Jacob didn't fully believe in nor accept that new name which

not be Jacob any more, but your name will be Israel. He named him Israel. ¹¹ God said to him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you, and kings will come out of your body. ¹² The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and to your seed after you will I give the land. ¹³ God went up from him in the place where He spoke with him. ¹⁴ Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He spoke with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it. ¹⁵ Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him Bethel.

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

¹⁶ They travelled from Bethel. There was still some distance to come to Ephrath, and Rachel travailed. She had hard labour. ¹⁷ When she was in hard labour, the midwife said to her, Don't be afraid, for now you will have another son. ¹⁸ It happened, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Benoni, but his father named him Benjamin. ¹⁹ Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem). ²⁰ Jacob set up

a pillar on her grave. The same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave to this day. ²¹ Israel travelled, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder. ²² It happened, while Israel lived in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. ²³ The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. ²⁴ The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵ The sons of Bilhah (Rachel's handmaid): Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶ The sons of Zilpah (Leah's handmaid): Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram. ²⁷ Jacob came to Isaac his father, to Mamre, to Kiriath Arba (which is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac lived as foreigners. ²⁸ The days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. ²⁹ Isaac gave up the spirit, and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. Esau and Jacob, his sons, buried him.

CHAPTER 36 Jan. 21

The Family of Esau

Now this is the history of the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). ² Esau took his wives from

God had given him. We are baptized into God's Name, and yet we too can doubt or forget the wonder of this, and likewise fail to identify ourselves as God identifies us.

35:11 Seeking to imitate God isn't always a recipe for an easy life now for us as humans. The Hebrew word translated "Almighty", *Shaddai*, is rooted in the word *shad*, meaning breast, and has the sense of fruitfulness. Thus "God said unto [Jacob], I am God Almighty [*shaddai*]: be fruitful [like me] and multiply". It seems Jacob sought to obey this by invitation to be like God by having a child in his old age by Rachel – and yet, perhaps due to her age, she died in that childbirth, in that seeking to imitate the Father.

36:2 It is again emphasized that Esau married outside of the family of faith. One rea-

the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon, the Hittite; and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon, the Hivite; ³ and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Adah bore to Esau Eliphaz. Basemath bore Reuel. ⁵ Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau, who were born to him in the land of Canaan. ⁶ Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, with his livestock, all his animals, and all his possessions, which he had gathered in the land of Canaan, and went into a land away from the presence of his brother Jacob. ⁷ For their substance was too great for them to dwell together, and the land of their travels couldn't bear them because of their livestock. ⁸ Esau lived in the hill country of Seir. Esau is Edom. ⁹ This is the history of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir: ¹⁰ these are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Adah, the wife of Esau; and Reuel, the son of Basemath, the wife of Esau. ¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² Timna was concubine to Eliphaz, Esau's son; and she bore to Eliphaz Amalek. These

are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. ¹³ These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. ¹⁴ These were the sons of Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. ¹⁵ These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, ¹⁶ chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek: these are the chiefs who came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. ¹⁷ These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah: these are the chiefs who came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. ¹⁸ These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah: these are the chiefs who came of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. ¹⁹ These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs. ²⁰ These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the chiefs who came of the Horites, the children of Seir in the

son for the extended genealogy of Esau in this chapter is perhaps to prove that, and to demonstrate that his children and descendants were also not in the family of faith (e.g. Edom, Amalek) – for some of the names here we encounter in later Scripture in a negative context.

36:6 The situation is similar to the division between Abraham and Lot for the same reasons (13:6). Esau should've learnt from that example, just as we should learn from Biblical precedent; for situations in our lives are so often a repetition of a situation which in essence has been recorded in the Bible.

land of Edom. ²² The children of Lotan were Hori and Heman. Lotan's sister was Timna. ²³ These are the children of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. ²⁴ These are the children of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he fed the donkeys of Zibeon his father. ²⁵ These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. ²⁶ These are the children of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. ²⁷ These are the children of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. ²⁸ These are the children of Dishan: Uz and Aran. ²⁹ These are the chiefs who came of the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, ³⁰ chief Dishon, chief Ezer, and chief Dishan: these are the chiefs who came of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir. ³¹ These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel. ³² Bela, the son of Beor, reigned in Edom. The name of his city was

Dinhabah. ³³ Bela died, and Jobab, the son of Zerah of Bozrah, reigned in his place. ³⁴ Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. ³⁵ Husham died, and Hadad, the son of Bedad, who struck Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. The name of his city was Avith. ³⁶ Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. ³⁷ Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth by the river, reigned in his place. ³⁸ Shaul died, and Baal Hanan, the son of Achbor reigned in his place. ³⁹ Baal Hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place. The name of his city was Pau. His wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. ⁴⁰ These are the names of the chiefs who came from Esau, according to their families, after their places, and by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth, ⁴¹ chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, ⁴² chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, ⁴³ chief Magdiel, and chief Iram. These are the chiefs

36:31 The fact there were kings in neighbouring Edom before there were kings in Israel shows the accuracy of the later record that the Israelites wanted to have a human king so as to be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8:5,20). Genesis 36 often mentions the various kings of the tribes surrounding the Israelites; it must've been unusual for a nation like Israel to have no king. The reason was that God was their true King. We too have no visible human leadership, the Lord Jesus is the head of the church and our God, the King of His people, is in Heaven and not on earth. But like the world around us, we can like Israel wish for a human, visible leadership. Yet this is a rejection of God as our true King.

36:33 Jobab is identified with the Job of the book of Job according to Jewish tradition. Several of the names we find here in Genesis 36 also occur in the book of Job. The books of the Bible aren't always in chronological order; it would seem that the book of Job is set in the times of the patriarchs. If the identification of Jobab with Job is correct, we can learn that even someone from an unspiritual background, a descendant of Esau, can still rise above it and become a believer, pleasing to God.

of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession. This is Esau, the father of the Edomites.

CHAPTER 37 Jan. 22

Joseph and His Dreams

Jacob lived in the land of his father's travels, in the land of Canaan. ² This is the history of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought an evil report of them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours. ⁴ His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him, and couldn't speak peaceably to him. ⁵ Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around, and bowed down to my sheaf. ⁸ His brothers said to him, Will you indeed reign over us? Or

will you indeed have dominion over us? They hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words. ⁹ He dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me. ¹⁰ He told it to his father and to his brothers. His father rebuked him, and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to you to the earth? ¹¹ His brothers envied him, but his father kept this saying in mind.

Joseph's Brothers Try to Kill Him

¹² His brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ Israel said to Joseph, Aren't your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them. He said to him, Here I am. ¹⁴ He said to him, Go now, see whether it is well with your brothers, and well with the flock; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. ¹⁵ A certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering delirious in the field. The man asked him, What are you looking for? ¹⁶ He said, I am

37:3 There seems to have been something unusual about the Lord's outer garment. The same Greek word *chiton* used in Jn. 19:23,24 is that used in the LXX here to describe Joseph's coat of many pieces. Josephus uses the word for the tunic of the High Priest, which was likewise not to be rent (Lev. 21:10).

37:9 It must have taken Joseph quite some courage to explain the dreams to his brothers; hence we read: "He dreamed... *and* told it". Jesus at age 30 must've had the same courage when He began His ministry. This is our struggle, to tell forth the things revealed to us.

searching for my brothers. Tell me, please, where they are feeding the flock. ¹⁷ The man said, They have left here, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan’. Joseph went after his brothers, and found them in Dothan. ¹⁸ They saw him afar off, and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill him. ¹⁹ They said one to another, Behold, this dreamer comes. ²⁰ Come now therefore and let’s kill him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, ‘An evil animal has devoured him’. We will see what will become of his dreams. ²¹ Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, Let’s not take his life. ²² Reuben said to them, Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him—that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father. ²³ It happened, when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colours that was on him; ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty. There was no water in it. ²⁵ They sat down to eat bread, and they lifted

up their eyes and looked, and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spices and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not let our hand be on him; for he is our brother, our flesh. His brothers listened to him. ²⁸ Midianites who were merchants passed by, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. They brought Joseph into Egypt. ²⁹ Reuben returned to the pit; and saw that Joseph wasn’t in the pit; and he tore his clothes. ³⁰ He returned to his brothers and said, The child is no more; and I, where will I go?

Jacob’s Sons Deceive Him

³¹ They took Joseph’s coat, and killed a male goat, and dipped the coat in the blood. ³² They took the coat of many colours, and they sent it to their father, and said, We have found this. Examine it, please, whether it is your

37:18 “When the husbandmen saw the son [=Jesus], they said among themselves (i.e. conspired), This is the heir; come, let us kill him” (Mt. 21:38). Mt. 21:38 is quoting the LXX here. Joseph is a type of Jesus in so many ways.

37:22 At least two of his ten persecutors were unhappy about what they were doing, and said so (:22,26; 42:22). Perhaps the whole group egged each other on to adopt an attitude none were totally happy with in their conscience; this is how group dynamics work once sinful, jealous behaviour becomes acceptable to the group in principle.

37:28 So similar to Christ’s betrayal for pieces of silver.

37:30 What do you think Reuben said to Jacob at the time of :35, to comfort him over his ‘dead’ son whom Reuben knew not to be dead? Do we always have to tell the truth to people in grief, or are we justified in simply seeing things from their perspective in order to comfort them?

37:32 As Jacob in his youth had deceived his father, so now his sons do to him.

son's coat or not. ³³ He recognized it, and said, It is my son's coat. An evil animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces. ³⁴ Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning. His father wept for him. ³⁶ The Midianites sold him into Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard.

CHAPTER 38 Jan. 23

Judah and His Sons

It happened at that time, that Judah went down from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. ² Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her, and went in to her. ³ She conceived, and bore a son; and he named him Er. ⁴ She conceived again, and bore a son; and she named him Onan. ⁵ She yet again bore a son, and named him Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bore him. ⁶ Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Yahweh. Yah-

weh killed him. ⁸ Judah said to Onan, Go in to your brother's wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her, and raise up seed to your brother. ⁹ Onan knew that the seed wouldn't be his; and it happened, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother. ¹⁰ The thing which he did was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and He killed him also. ¹¹ Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house, until Shelah, my son, is grown up; for he said, Lest he also die, like his brothers. Tamar went and lived in her father's house.

Judah and Tamar

¹² After many days, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers to Timnah, he and his friend Hirah, the Adullamite. ¹³ It was told Tamar, saying, Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep. ¹⁴ She took off of her the garments of her widowhood, and covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah

37:34 Jacob tore his clothes to connect with how Joseph, as he thought, had been torn (:33). This is a fine prefigurement of the (easily overlooked) pain of God the Father at the cross.

37:35 The Hebrew word *sheol* is translated in some Bibles as "hell", in others as "the grave". *Sheol* isn't a place where only bad people go after death – for Jacob and Joseph were believers, and are spoken of as being in *sheol*, simply meaning 'in the grave'.

38:1 Judah fell into sin whilst separate from his brothers. Keeping together with others in the family of faith is part of our armoury against sin.

38:10 Sins of omission are as bad as sins of commission.

was grown up, and she wasn't given to him as a wife. ¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought that she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ He turned to her by the way, and said, Please come, let me come in to you, for he didn't know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, What will you give me, that you may come in to me? ¹⁷ He said, I will send you a young goat from the flock. She said, Will you give me a pledge, until you send it? ¹⁸ He said, What pledge will I give you? She said, Your signet and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand. He gave them to her, and came in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ She arose, and went away, and put off her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. ²⁰ Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend, the Adullamite, to receive the pledge

from the woman's hand, but he didn't find her. ²¹ Then he asked the men of her place, saying, Where is the prostitute, that was at Enaim by the road? They said, There has been no prostitute here. ²² He returned to Judah, and said, I haven't found her; and also the men of the place said, 'There has been no prostitute here'. ²³ Judah said, Let her keep it, lest we be shamed. Behold, I sent this young goat, and you haven't found her. ²⁴ It happened about three months later, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has played the prostitute; and moreover, behold, she is with child by prostitution. Judah said, Bring her out, and let her be burnt. ²⁵ When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man, whose these are, I am with child. She also said, Examine, please, whose these are—the signet,

38:15 Tamar is listed in the New Testament genealogy of Jesus as one of His ancestors. Yet like many in His genealogy, she was somewhat non-standard – she had acted as a prostitute. The Lord Jesus had so many strange people in His gene bank, yet He never sinned. We can't therefore blame our sins on our ancestry or background situation.

38:19 Was Tamar right to have done this...?

38:24 Condemning others for sin when ourselves guilty is exactly what happened with David (2 Sam. 12:6). This phenomenon is because we realize on some level that we have sinned, and that sin must be punished. But if we don't admit our sin, we earnestly wish to punish that sin whenever it occurs in others. This explains the huge hypocrisy often observed in religious people. We can only guard against it by seriously confessing our sins, regularly, daily; and living a continually self-examined life.

38:25 Judah and his brothers sent Joseph's blood stained coat to Jacob. It's recorded that they invited their father to "Examine it, please, whether it is your son's coat or not. He recognized it..." (37:32,33). The very same Hebrew words are used in :25,26 in describing how Tamar sent to Judah saying "*Examine, please, whose these are...* And Judah *recognized* them and *said...*". The point of the similarities is to show how God sought to teach Judah how his father Jacob had felt. Note the parallels between the he-goat in 37:31 and the "kid of the goats" of :17-20; "and he refused to be comforted" of 37:35 is a designed contrast with how "Judah was comforted" (:12).

and the cords, and the staff. ²⁶ Judah recognized them and said, She is more righteous than I, because I didn't give her to Shelah, my son. He knew her again no more. ²⁷ It happened in the time of her travail that, behold, twins were in her womb. ²⁸ When she travailed, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, This came out first. ²⁹ It happened, as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out, and she said, Why have you made a breach for yourself? Therefore his name was called Perez. ³⁰ Afterward his brother came out, that had the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

CHAPTER 39 Jan. 24

Joseph and Potiphar

Joseph was brought down to Egypt. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the hand of the Ishmaelites that had brought him down there. ² Yahweh was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. He was in the house of his master the Egyptian. ³ His master saw that Yahweh was with him, and that Yahweh made all that he did prosper in his hand. ⁴ Joseph found favour in his sight.

He ministered to him, and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. ⁵ It happened from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Yahweh was on all that he had, in the house and in the field. ⁶ He left all that he had in Joseph's hand. He didn't concern himself with anything, except for the food which he ate. Joseph was well-built and handsome. ⁷ It happened after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. ⁸ But he refused, and said to his master's wife, Behold, my master doesn't know what is with me in the house, and he has put all that he has into my hand. ⁹ He isn't greater in this house than I, neither has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? ¹⁰ As she spoke to Joseph day by day, he didn't listen to her, to lie by her, or to be with her. ¹¹ About this time, he went into the house to do his work, and there were none of the men of the house inside. ¹² She caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me! He left his garment in her hand, and ran

38:30 This is part of a theme in Genesis of the firstborn not enjoying the full status of being firstborn – all part of God's preference to work with the underling and the weak.

39:6 There is an undoubted link between sexuality and spirituality (witness the typical meaning of the Song of Solomon). The Hebrew text here could suggest that it was Joseph's spiritually attractive personality that mesmerized Potiphar's wife; and what good living, socially aloof Christian office worker has not experienced the attention this attracts from colleagues of the opposite sex?

outside. ¹³ When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had run outside, ¹⁴ she called to the men of her house, and spoke to them, saying, Behold, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice. ¹⁵ It happened, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and ran outside. ¹⁶ She laid up his garment by her, until his master came home. ¹⁷ She spoke to him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought to us, came in to me to mock me, ¹⁸ and it happened, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and ran outside.

Joseph in Prison

¹⁹ It happened, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, This is what your servant did to me, that his wrath was kindled. ²⁰ Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound, and he was there in custody. ²¹ But Yahweh was with Joseph, and showed kindness to him, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²² The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever they did there, he was responsible for it.

²³ The keeper of the prison didn't look after anything that was under his hand, because Yahweh was with him; and that which he did, Yahweh made it prosper.

CHAPTER 40 Jan. 24

The Dreams of the Butler and Baker

It happened after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. ³ He put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. ⁴ The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he took care of them. They stayed in prison many days. ⁵ They both dreamed a dream, each man his dream, in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were bound in the prison. ⁶ Joseph came in to them in the morning, and saw them, and saw that they were sad. ⁷ He asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, saying, Why do you look so sad today? ⁸ They said to him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. Joseph said to them, Don't interpretations belong to God? Please tell it to me. ⁹ The chief cup-

40:7 The sensitive reader will perceive that Joseph had a strong fatherly image, even from a young age (see too 41:43; 45:8). The Lord Jesus likewise; hence He referred to the disciples as His children when they were in the same peer group. This is understandable in that He is the supreme manifestation of *the* sovereign Father.

bearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was in front of me, ¹⁰ and in the vine were three branches. It was as though it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters produced ripe grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

Joseph Interprets the Dreams

¹² Joseph said to him, This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. ¹³ Within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head, and restore you to your office. You will give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, the way you did when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ But remember me when it will be well with you, and please show kindness to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. ¹⁵ For indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. ¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, I also was in my dream, and behold, three baskets of white bread were on my head. ¹⁷ In the top basket there was all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head. ¹⁸ Joseph answered, This is its interpretation. The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ Within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from off you, and will hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from off you. ²⁰ It hap-

pened the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants, and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand; ²² but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer didn't remember Joseph, but forgot him.

CHAPTER 41 Jan. 25

The Dreams of Pharaoh

It happened at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river. ² Behold, there came up out of the river seven cattle, sleek and fat, and they fed in the marsh grass. ³ Behold, seven other cattle came up after them out of the river, ugly and thin, and stood by the other cattle on the brink of the river. ⁴ The ugly and thin cattle ate up the seven sleek and fat cattle. So Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ He slept and dreamed a second time: and behold, seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, healthy and good. ⁶ Behold, seven heads of grain, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. ⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy and full ears. Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. ⁸ It happened in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all of Egypt's magicians and wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. ⁹ Then the

chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, I remember my sins today. ¹⁰ Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, me and the chief baker. ¹¹ We dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. We dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. ¹² There was with us there a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard, and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams. To each man according to his dream he interpreted. ¹³ It happened, as he interpreted to us, so it was: he restored me to my office, and he hanged him.

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon. He shaved himself, changed his clothing, and came in to Pharaoh. ¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it. ¹⁶ Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It isn't in me. God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace. ¹⁷ Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood on the brink of the river: ¹⁸ and behold, there came up out of the river seven cattle, fat and sleek. They fed in the marsh grass, ¹⁹ and behold, seven other cattle came up after them,

poor and very ugly and thin, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for ugliness. ²⁰ The thin and ugly cattle ate up the first seven fat cattle, ²¹ and when they had eaten them up, it couldn't be known that they had eaten them, but they were still ugly, as at the beginning. So I awoke. ²² I saw in my dream, and behold, seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, full and good: ²³ and behold, seven heads of grain, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. ²⁴ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads of grain. I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me. ²⁵ Joseph said to Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one. What God is about to do, He has declared to Pharaoh. ²⁶ The seven good cattle are seven years; and the seven good heads of grain are seven years. The dream is one. ²⁷ The seven thin and ugly cattle that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty heads of grain blasted with the east wind; they will be seven years of famine. ²⁸ That is the thing which I spoke to Pharaoh. What God is about to do, He has shown to Pharaoh. ²⁹ Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. ³⁰ There will arise after them seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, ³¹ and the plenty will

41:9 Sins – The chief butler felt he had committed a very serious sin in allowing the busyness of daily life and his demanding job to make him simply forget Joseph's need and tragedy. Perhaps an intensive plural is being used here – as if to mean 'my very great sin'. To forget others' need due to the busyness of our lives is a great sin.

not be known in the land by reason of that famine which follows; for it will be very grievous. ³² The dream was doubled to Pharaoh, because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. ³³ Now therefore let Pharaoh look for a discreet and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt's produce in the seven plenteous years. ³⁵ Let them gather all the food of these good years that come, and lay up grain under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. ³⁶ The food will be for a store to the land against the seven years of famine, which will be in the land of Egypt; that the land not perish through the famine.

Joseph Is Exalted

³⁷ The thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. ³⁸ Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God? ³⁹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, Because God has shown you all of this, there is none so discreet and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and according to your word will all my people be ruled. Only in the throne I will be greater than you. ⁴¹ Pharaoh said to

Joseph, Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. ⁴² Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in robes of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck, ⁴³ and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had. They cried before him, Tender father! He set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without you shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁵ Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On as a wife. Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

Joseph Manages Egypt

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁷ In the seven plenteous years the earth produced abundantly. ⁴⁸ He gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was around every city, he laid up in the same. ⁴⁹ Joseph laid up grain as the sand of the sea, very much, until he stopped counting, for it was without number. ⁵⁰ To Joseph were born

41:45 *Zaphnath-paaneah* – 'Saviour of the world', or 'bread of life'. Christ was given a new name on ascension (Phil. 2:6-9; Rev. 3:12).

Joseph's wife had to forget all about her pagan past (:45 = Ps. 45:10 = Dt. 21:13), especially her father's house. Joseph alluded to what she had gone through when he spoke of how he too had forgotten all his past suffering and his father's house (:51). What a pair they were! Both had broken free of their pasts and were dedicated to the new life together. As such they typify the relationship between Christ and His bride.

two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, bore to him. ⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, For, he said, God has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. ⁵² The name of the second, he called Ephraim: For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. ⁵³ The seven years of plenty, that were in the land of Egypt, came to an end. ⁵⁴ The seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread, and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do. ⁵⁶ The famine was over all the surface of the earth. Joseph opened all the store houses, and sold to the Egyptians. The famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ All countries came into Egypt, to Joseph, to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

CHAPTER 42 Jan. 26

Jacob's Sons Meet Joseph in Egypt

Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to

his sons, Why do you look at one another? ² He said, Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy for us from there, so that we may live, and not die. ³ Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob didn't send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers; for he said, Lest perhaps harm happen to him. ⁵ The sons of Israel came to buy among those who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. ⁶ Joseph was the governor over the land. It was he who sold to all the people of the land. Joseph's brothers came, and bowed themselves down to him with their faces to the earth. ⁷ Joseph saw his brothers, and he recognized them, but acted like a stranger to them, and spoke roughly with them. He said to them, Where did you come from? They said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. ⁸ Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him. ⁹ Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed about them, and said to them, You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land. ¹⁰ They said to him, No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We are all one man's sons; we are honest men. Your serv-

41:51 *God* (this is important) made Joseph forget all his "toil", his mental sufferings. This was a miracle; no amount of steel-willed suppression of his past could have made Joseph paper over all the pain. But God did a psychological miracle upon him. Has God done the same to Christ now in His glory, as He will to us one day soon (Rev. 21:4)? Yet Christ will be factually aware of His sacrifice and the associated pain. God presumably did not obliterate Joseph's memory cells, but He made him "forget" the pain. This is surely what God has done to Christ, and what He will do to us: take away the pain on a psychological level whilst still leaving a factual awareness. Even now, God is ready and willing to do this.

ants are not spies. ¹² He said to them, No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land! ¹³ They said, We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more. ¹⁴ Joseph said to them, It is like I told you, saying, ‘You are spies!’ ¹⁵ By this you shall be tested. By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go out from here, unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one of you, and let him get your brother, and you shall be bound, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you, or else by the life of Pharaoh surely you are spies. ¹⁷ He put them all together into custody for three days. ¹⁸ Joseph said to them the third day, Do this, and live, for I fear God. ¹⁹ If you are honest men, then let one of your brothers be bound in your prison; but you go, carry grain for the famine of your houses. ²⁰ Bring your youngest brother to me; so will your words be verified, and you won’t die. They did so. ²¹ They

said one to another, We are certainly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he begged us, and we wouldn’t listen. Therefore this distress has come upon us. ²² Reuben answered them, saying, Didn’t I tell you, saying, ‘Don’t sin against the child’, and you wouldn’t listen? Therefore also, behold, his blood is required. ²³ They didn’t know that Joseph understood them; for there was an interpreter between them. ²⁴ He turned himself away from them, and wept. Then he returned to them, and spoke to them, and took Simeon from among them, and bound him before their eyes. ²⁵ Then Joseph gave a command to fill their bags with grain, and to restore each man’s money into his sack, and to give them food for the way. So it was done to them.

Jacob’s Sons Return to Canaan

²⁶ They loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed from there. ²⁷ As one of them opened his sack to give his donkey food in the lodging

42:17 The brothers suffer in prison for three days to prod their conscience about Joseph – typical of a three year tribulation of Israel in the last days to bring them to accept Christ? We get the impression that Joseph changed his plans for them several times; he recalled them when already on their journey etc. Does this show that he hastened the day of revelation to them from purely emotional considerations – and will the Lord do the same with His Israel?

42:21 “The anguish of his soul” and pleas for deliverance were ignored by the brothers – typical of Christ’s ‘travail of soul’ (Is. 53:12), ignored by Israel (Is. 53:1-4).

42:24 Joseph wept (this is recorded seven times in the record). He must have found it hard to prolong the agony of not revealing himself to them immediately; he was motivated by a desire to make them see the enormity of their sin, for their spiritual good rather than his own vindication – Joseph as a type of Christ makes his story prophetic. This is a stunningly deep prophecy of the intensity of Christ’s feelings, as the mighty Son of God, towards His wayward people in the last days. He was a man of sorrow in his mortal life, and will still have an element of this characteristic in the future.

place, he saw his money. Behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸ He said to his brothers, My money is restored! Behold, it is in my sack! Their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling one to another, saying, What is this that God has done to us? ²⁹ They came to Jacob their father, to the land of Canaan, and told him all that had happened to them, saying, ³⁰ The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly with us, and took us for spies of the country. ³¹ We said to him, 'We are honest men. We are no spies. ³² We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan'. ³³ The man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine of your houses, and go your way. ³⁴ Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I will know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. So I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land'. ³⁵ It happened as they emptied their sacks, that behold, each man's bundle of money was in his sack. When they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. ³⁶ Jacob, their father, said to them, You have bereaved me of my children! Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin away. All these things are against me. ³⁷ Reuben spoke to his father, saying, Kill my two sons, if I don't bring him to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him

to you again. ³⁸ He said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left. If harm happens to him along the way in which you go, then you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

CHAPTER 43 Jan. 26

Jacob's Sons Go to Egypt Again

The famine was severe in the land. ² It happened, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said to them, Go again, buy us a little more food. ³ Judah spoke to him, saying, The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you'. ⁴ If you'll send our brother with us, we'll go down and buy you food, ⁵ but if you'll not send him, we'll not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you'. ⁶ Israel said, Why did you treat me so badly, telling the man that you had another brother? ⁷ They said, The man asked directly concerning ourselves, and concerning our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' We just answered his questions. Is there any way we could know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?' ⁸ Judah said to Israel, his father, Send the boy with me, and we'll get up and go, so that we may live, and not die, both we, and you, and also our little ones. ⁹ I'll be collateral for him. From my hand will you require him. If I don't bring him to you, and set him before you, then

let me bear the blame forever,¹⁰ for if we hadn't delayed, surely we would have returned a second time by now.

¹¹ Their father, Israel, said to them, If it must be so, then do this. Take from the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry down a present for the man, a little balm, a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts, and almonds;¹² and take double money in your hand, and take back the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight.¹³ Take your brother also, get up, and return to the man. ¹⁴ May God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. ¹⁵ The men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and got up, went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw

Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal, and make ready; for the men will dine with me at noon. ¹⁷ The man did as Joseph commanded, and the man brought the men to Joseph's house. ¹⁸ The men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time, we're brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, attack us, and seize us as slaves, along with our donkeys. ¹⁹ They came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they spoke to him at the door of the house, ²⁰ and said, Oh my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food. ²¹ When we came to the lodging place, we opened our sacks, and behold, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. We have brought it back in

43:14 *God Almighty* – Jacob's perception of God was as very powerful, One who can give undeserved grace to men like Jacob's sinful sons. He uses a term he has not previously used: *El-Shaddai*, the Almighty El. Using new terms for God reveals a deepening of understanding of Him. We likewise will grow in our knowledge of Him through the trials of life.

43:14 In 35:11 God encourages Jacob, fearful he would lose all his family to attacks from neighbouring tribes, to be fruitful and multiply; because a nation "*shall* be from you, and kings *shall* come out of you". If he played his part, the promises would be fulfilled. But at the time it seems Jacob wanted to cut and run, forgetting about having any more children. "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved" sounds more like depressive fatalism than firm faith in the promises that his seed would eternally fill the earth. Our faith in the implications of God's promises to us likewise goes up and down, crushed at times by the immediacy of circumstances.

43:16 Joseph celebrates their repentance with a meal together, at which they sit in their proper places – typical of the marriage supper of the lamb, with each in his proper place (Lk. 14:10; 22:30; Rev. 19:9).

Slay... and make ready for the meal. This is the basis of the prodigal son parable (45:14,15 = Lk. 15:20); the father = Christ; prodigal = repentant Jews, wanting to be servants and nothing else.

our hand. ²² We have brought down other money in our hand to buy food. We don't know who put our money in our sacks. ²³ He said, Peace be to you. Don't be afraid. Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks. I received your money. He brought Simeon out to them. ²⁴ The man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet. He gave their donkeys fodder. ²⁵ They prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there.

Joseph Eats with His Brothers

²⁶ When Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves down to him to the earth. ²⁷ He asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he yet alive? ²⁸ They said, Your servant, our father, is well. He is still alive. They bowed down humbly. ²⁹ He lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin, his brother, his mother's son, and said, Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? He said, God be gracious to you, my son. ³⁰ Joseph hurried, for his heart yearned over his brother; and he sought a place to weep. He entered into his room, and wept there. ³¹ He washed his face,

and came out. He controlled himself, and said, Serve the meal. ³² They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians, that ate with him, by themselves, because the Egyptians don't eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. ³³ They sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth, and the men marvelled one with another. ³⁴ He sent portions to them from before him, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. They drank, and were merry with him.

CHAPTER 44 Jan. 27

Joseph Tries to Convict His Brothers of Their Sin

His house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in his sack's mouth. ² Put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, with his grain money. He did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. ³ As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys. ⁴ When they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, Up, follow after the men. When you overtake them, ask them, 'Why have you rewarded evil

43:34 The desperate desire of Joseph for them to relax with him and accept his forgiveness led him to make them drunk so as to ease their relationship (so the Hebrew implies). This otherwise unethical act reveals the earnestness of his desire for them to be relaxed with him and open themselves to him. The Lord will have the same basic desire with us at the judgment.

44:5 As Joseph claimed to use his cup in order to discern people, so the Lord Jesus

for good? ⁵ Isn't this that from which my lord drinks, and by which he indeed divines? You have done evil in so doing'. ⁶ He overtook them, and he spoke these words to them. ⁷ They said to him, Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing! ⁸ Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again to you out of the land of Canaan. How then should we steal silver or gold out of your lord's house? ⁹ With whoever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondservants. ¹⁰ He said, Now also let it be according to your words: he with whom it is found will be my bondservant; and you will be blameless. ¹¹ Then they hurried, and each man took his sack down to the ground, and each man opened his sack. ¹² He searched, beginning with the eldest, and ending at the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey, and returned to the city.

¹⁴ Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there. They fell on the ground before him. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, What deed is this that you have done? Don't you know that such a man as I can indeed divine? ¹⁶ Judah said, What will we tell my lord? What will we speak? Or how will we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants. Behold, we are my lord's bondservants, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is found. ¹⁷ He said, Far be it from me that I should do so. The man in whose hand the cup is found, he will be my bondservant; but as for you, go up in peace to your father.

Judah Pleads with Joseph

¹⁸ Then Judah came near to him, and said, Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and don't let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even as Pharaoh. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?' ²⁰ We said to my

uses His cup to know His people. Our attitude to Him at the breaking of bread service reflects us to Him. He closely watches our hearts as we take His cup.

44:13 The repetition of circumstance in our lives is not only to teach us, but to make sure that we learnt the lesson – for what teacher doesn't give pupils exercises to practice the theory they've learnt? It seems that Joseph, acting on God's behalf and as a type of Christ, manipulated circumstances so that his brothers would have *deja vu* experiences. Thus he sets things up to tempt them with freedom if they again betray their younger brother (Benjamin) and are thoughtless to their father's pain. The united, frank and open response of the brothers (:13,16,17) showed how they had indeed learnt their lesson.

44:18 "You are even as Pharaoh" reflects something of Christ's relationship with God. He isn't God Himself personally, but He performs all the functions of God. See on 50:19.

44:20 *Is dead* – The brothers had repeated that lie so many times that they came to believe it. This is the problem with lying and denial of sin – we end up believing it.

lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loves him’. ²¹ You said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him’. ²² We said to my lord, ‘The boy can’t leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die’. ²³ You said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will see my face no more’. ²⁴ It happened when we came up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ Our father said, ‘Go again, buy us a little food’. ²⁶ We said, ‘We can’t go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down: for we may not see the man’s face, unless our youngest brother is with us’. ²⁷ Your servant, my father, said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons: ²⁸ and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I haven’t seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol’. ³⁰ Now therefore when I come to your servant my father, and the

boy is not with us; since his life is bound up in the boy’s life; ³¹ it will happen, when he sees that the boy is no more, that he will die. Your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to Sheol. ³² For your servant became collateral for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I don’t bring him to you, then I will bear the blame to my father forever’. ³³ Now therefore, please let your servant stay instead of the boy, a bondservant to my lord; and let the boy go up with his brothers. ³⁴ For how will I go up to my father, if the boy isn’t with me?—lest I see the evil that will come on my father.

CHAPTER 45 Jan. 27

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

Then Joseph couldn’t refrain himself before all those who stood before him, and he cried, Cause everyone to go out from me! No one else stood with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² He wept aloud. The Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. ³ Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph! Does my father still

45:1 That Joseph could not refrain himself implies he planned to drag out the process of spiritually refining his brothers, but his love for them caused him to cut it short: “For the elects sake the days shall be shortened” by Christ (Mt. 24:22). The same Hebrew word is used in Is. 42:14 about how God can no longer refrain Himself in the last days. Joseph as a type of Christ means that his brothers also have significance. The brethren meeting Joseph at the end has many echoes of the judgment seat of Christ. The whole purpose of the painful process which led up to that meeting was for the benefit of the brethren, to make them realize the enormity of their sin and the greatness of Joseph’s grace. Likewise the judgment is for our benefit; the outcome is known to God beforehand. Does the (emphasized) emotionalism of Joseph at this time indicate anything about Christ’s attitude then?

live? His brothers couldn't answer him; for they were terrified at his presence. ⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, please. They came near. He said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ Now don't be grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are yet five years, in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. ⁸ So now it wasn't you who sent me here, but God, and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry, and go up to my father, and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me. Don't wait. ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you will be near to me, you, your children, your children's children, your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will nourish you; for there are yet five years of famine; lest you come to poverty, you,

and your household, and all that you have'. ¹² Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. You shall hurry and bring my father down here. ¹⁴ He fell on his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. ¹⁵ He kissed all his brothers, and wept on them. After that his brothers talked with him.

The Plans to Bring Jacob to Egypt

¹⁶ The report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brothers have come. It pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. ¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, Tell your brothers, 'Do this. Load your animals, and go, travel to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸ Take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land'. ¹⁹ Now you are commanded: do this. Take wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. ²⁰ Also, don't concern yourselves

45:4 The brothers slunk away from Joseph's physical presence, as the rejected will at the final judgment (1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.). This suggests that those accepted at the judgment seat will go through all the emotions of the rejected; they will realize that rejection is what they deserve. Those who judge (condemn) themselves now in their self-examination will not be condemned then. No wonder both Joseph and the Lord Jesus will need to persuade their brethren that actually, it's all OK, God's love is greater than the barriers created by our sins.

45:7 *A great deliverance* – Heb. 2:3 "that great salvation" through Christ. Israel saved and all the surrounding world also blessed with deliverance from the famine – this scenario will be repeated in the last days. The judgments are to make Israel repent, but in that time of trouble the whole world suffers.

about your belongings, for the good of all of the land of Egypt is yours. ²¹ The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. ²² He gave each one of them changes of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing. ²³ He sent the following to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and provision for his father by the way. ²⁴ So he sent his brothers away, and they departed. He said to them, See that you don't quarrel on the way. ²⁵ They went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan, to Jacob their father. ²⁶ They told him, saying, Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt. His heart fainted, for he didn't believe them. ²⁷ They told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them. When he saw the wagons which Joseph had

sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob, their father, revived. ²⁸ Israel said, It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.

CHAPTER 46 Jan. 28

Jacob and His Family Migrate to Egypt

Israel travelled with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. ² God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob! He said, Here I am. ³ He said, I am God, the God of your father. Fear not to go down into Egypt, for there I will make of you a great nation. ⁴ I will go down with you into Egypt. I will also surely bring you up again. Joseph will close your eyes. ⁵ Jacob rose up from Beersheba, and the sons of Israel carried Jacob, their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶ They took their livestock, and

45:20 The news that Joseph was alive and glorified was received rather like that of Christ's resurrection: initial disbelief, but then the family of Jacob who believed it, rose up and left all they had to go to be with Joseph; God's people in AD70 and the last days are likewise bidden leave their stuff and go to be with Christ (cp. Lk. 17:31), remembering the lesson of Lot's wife who was more concerned with her "stuff" than leaving it all once the day of the Lord finally came.

45:24 The wonder that was ahead of them should have made petty differences disappear. The same should be true within the family of God now.

46:3 Jacob's nervousness of going down into Egypt was due to his recollection of Abraham and Isaac's tales of spiritual woe concerning it. God appeared to Jacob concerning this, with the words: "Jacob, Jacob... fear not to go down into Egypt" (46:2,3). The double repetition of a name is usually a rebuke; but for what? Possibly for still being influenced in his spirituality by the specter of his forefathers, rather than personally reflecting on the implications of God's word to Abraham, that his seed would have to live in a Gentile land for a period before they could be led into the promised land (15:13).

their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt—Jacob, and all his seed with him, ⁷ his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and he brought all his seed with him into Egypt. ⁸ These are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. ⁹ The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Palu, Hezron, and Carmi. ¹⁰ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. ¹¹ The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ¹² The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. ¹³ The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron. ¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahl-eel. ¹⁵ These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty-three. ¹⁶ The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷ The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and Serah their sister. The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. ¹⁸ These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah, his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob, even sixteen souls. ¹⁹ The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰ To Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath,

the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. ²¹ The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Hup-pim, and Ard. ²² These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen. ²³ The son of Dan: Hushim. ²⁴ The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. ²⁵ These are the sons of Bil-hah, whom Laban gave to Rachel, his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob: all the souls were seven. ²⁶ All the souls who came with Jacob into Egypt, who were his direct descend-ants, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were sixty-six. ²⁷ The sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls. All the souls of the house of Jacob, who came into Egypt, were seventy.

Joseph Meets Jacob

²⁸ He sent Judah before him to Joseph, to show the way before him to Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. ²⁹ Joseph prepared his chariot, and went up to meet Israel, his father, in Goshen. He presented himself to him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. ³⁰ Israel said to Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive. ³¹ Joseph said to his brothers, and to his father's house, I will go up, and speak with Pharaoh, and will tell him, 'My brothers, and my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. ³² These men are shep-

46:29 At the end, Jacob as it were had come to repentance. Joseph falls on his neck and weeps for him, just as the Father does to the repentant prodigal.

herds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have'.³³ It will happen, when Pharaoh summons you, and will say, 'What is your occupation?'³⁴ that you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we, and our fathers:' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.

CHAPTER 47 Jan. 28

Jacob's Family Settle in Egypt

Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brothers, with their flocks, their herds, and all that they own, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.² From among his brothers he took five men, and presented them to Pharaoh.³ Pharaoh said to his brothers, What is your occupation? They said to Pharaoh, Your

servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers.⁴ They said to Pharaoh, We have come to live as foreigners in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks. For the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.⁵ Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, Your father and your brothers have come to you.⁶ The land of Egypt is before you. Make your father and your brothers dwell in the best of the land. Let them dwell in the land of Goshen. If you know any able men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock.⁷ Joseph brought in Jacob, his father, and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, How many are the days of the years of your life?⁹ Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of

47:9 Jacob speaks of his life as a "pilgrimage", using the same word used about Abraham and Isaac (17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1). Thus he showed his connection with them; they became in *spiritual not just emotional terms* the centre of his thinking. Jacob speaking of how his life had been a "pilgrimage" shows that he realized that this life was only a series of temporary abodes. The same word is translated "stranger" with reference to the patriarchs' separation from the tribes around them (17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1). Jacob's attitude that the things of this life were only temporary, that we are only passing through, is identified in Heb. 11:10-16 as an indicator that Jacob shared the faith of Abraham and Isaac

At 130, Jacob seems to have felt that the fact he had not lived as long as his father and grandfather had, indicated that he had not received so much blessing as they had; he saw length of years *in this life* as being significant, rather than allowing the prospect of future eternity make present longevity fade into insignificance. And yet in his final 17 years, he grew quickly; he was not spiritually idle in those last 17 years of retirement. For at the very end he could say that his blessings had exceeded the blessings of his ancestor (49:26).

my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. ¹⁰ Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. ¹¹ Joseph placed his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Raamses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹² Joseph nourished his father, his brothers, and all of his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

Joseph Wisely Manages the Famine

¹³ There was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. ¹⁴ Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁵ When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For our money fails. ¹⁶ Joseph said, Give me your livestock; and I will give you food for your livestock, if your money is gone. ¹⁷ They brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the donkeys; and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock for that year. ¹⁸ When that year was ended, they came to him the second year, and said to him, We will not hide from

my lord how our money is all spent, and the herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants to Pharaoh. Give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land won't be desolate. ²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe on them, and the land became Pharaoh's. ²¹ As for the people, he moved them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end of it. ²² Only he didn't buy the land of the priests, for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and ate their portion which Pharaoh gave them. That is why they didn't sell their land. ²³ Then Joseph said to the people, Behold, I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh. Behold, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. ²⁴ It will happen at the harvests, that you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four parts will be your own, for seed of the field, for your food, for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. ²⁵ They said, You have saved our lives! Let us find favour in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. ²⁶ Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth. Only the land of the priests alone didn't become Pharaoh's.

Jacob's Desire to Be Buried in Canaan

²⁷ Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they got themselves possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly. ²⁸ Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years. ²⁹ The time drew near that Israel must die, and he called his son Joseph, and said to him, If now I have found favour in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please don't bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but when I sleep with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. He said, I will do as you have

said. ³¹ He said, Swear to me, and he swore to him. Israel bowed himself on the bed's head.

CHAPTER 48 Jan. 29

Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons

It happened after these things, that someone said to Joseph, Behold, your father is sick. He took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² Someone told Jacob, and said, Behold, your son Joseph comes to you, and Israel strengthened himself, and sat on the bed. ³ Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful, and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your

48:3 *God Almighty* – Jacob's perception of the power of God, this one Almighty *El*, is growing. Ex. 6:3 says that Yahweh appeared to Jacob "by the name of God Almighty", so presumably this Name was declared to Jacob at the vision in Bethel; for this, Jacob says, was when God primarily "appeared" to him. And yet he is only recorded as using this name 50 years later. It took 50 years for the fact that God really is *all* mighty to sink in, and for him to come out with this publicly.

48:4 Jacob's *personal* grasp of the wonder of the promises at the end is revealed here. God never actually said all this to Jacob; Jacob is quoting the promise to Abraham of 17:8 and *applying it to himself*. And with us too, a personal grasp of the wonder of it all, that it really applies to *me*, is a mark of that final maturity we aim to achieve.

He seems to have perceived the spiritual danger his children were in, living in the luxury of Egypt. The promises of being fruitful and being given a land were being fulfilled, in a primary sense, in Israel's experience in Egypt (cp. 47:27). Joseph was *given* the *land* of Egypt (41:41), using the same words as in 45:18 and here, concerning how the true *land* – of Canaan – had been *given* to Abraham's children. Jacob's children were given a *possession* in Egypt (47:11), and therefore Jacob emphasized that their *real* possession was the eternal inheritance of Canaan, not Egypt (:4; 49:30; 50:13). Thus Jacob at the end realized the importance of warning God's people against the world, against the temptation of feeling that God's present material blessing of us with a foretaste of His Kingdom means that in fact we lose our enthusiasm for the *true* Kingdom, in its real, material sense. Like Paul in his final flourish of 2 Timothy, Jacob saw the need to warn God's people, to point them away from the world, and towards the future Kingdom. Jacob saw that his people, like him in his earlier life, would be tempted to see God's promises on an altogether too human and material level.

seed after you for an everlasting possession'. ⁵ Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, will be mine. ⁶ Your issue, whom you become the father of after them, will be yours. They will be called after the name of their brothers in their inheritance. ⁷ As for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some distance to come to Ephrath, and

I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem). ⁸ Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? ⁹ Joseph said to his father, They are my sons, whom God has given me here. He said, Please bring them to me, and I will bless them. ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he couldn't see. He brought them near to him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. ¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, I never thought I would see your face, and behold, God has let me see your seed also. ¹² Joseph

48:5 At the very end, Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons as the firstborn is seen as an act of faith (Heb. 11:21). Yet on another level, Jacob was taking the blessings away from the firstborn who was the son of the wife he disliked, and giving those blessings to the son of his favourite wife, who was not the firstborn. This was quite contrary to the will of God as expressed in Dt. 21:17. At best we can say that God allowed one principle to be broken to keep another (although what other?). At worst, Jacob was simply showing favoritism, and yet at the same time he foresaw in faith the Messianic suggestions in Joseph's experience, and therefore made Joseph's sons the firstborn. God saw the good in Jacob at this time, and counted this to him, and recognized and worked with Jacob's decision to make "the son of the hated" the firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1), even though this may have been contrary to God's highest intentions. Likewise God worked through Jacob's pagan use of poplar rods and mandrakes. The way Jacob insisted on blessing Ephraim as the firstborn again seems to show some kind of favoritism and a desire to see his grandson living out his own experience, i.e. the younger son who fought his way up and received the blessings as opposed to the rightful heir. Ephraim becomes a code-name for apostate Israel throughout the prophets. And yet God accepted Jacob's preferential blessing of Ephraim and repeated this in Dt. 33:17. We learn from this at the very least that human motivations are sometimes hopelessly mixed.

48:8 There was a unity, a mutuality, between Jacob and God at the end. No longer did he see God as someone else's God, not even just his father's God. The lessons of Jacob's name change were finally learnt. Thus he asks Joseph to bring his sons to him, so that he may bless them; but when he gives the blessing, he states that this is God blessing them (48:8,9,15,16); he saw God working through him.

48:11 Jacob's final appreciation of God's grace, the way He does far above what our works should deserve, is indicated by his comment that "I never thought I would see your (Joseph's) face: and behold, God has let me see your seed also". The Hebrew word translated "thought" is 74 times translated "pray", and only once "thought"; the idea is surely: 'I never prayed to see you again, I didn't therefore have the faith in the resurrection which I should have done, just as I didn't believe your mother could be

brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. ¹³ Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near to him. ¹⁴ Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his

hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ He blessed Joseph, and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, ¹⁶ the Angel who has ever redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the

resurrected when you spoke of her coming to bow before you (37:10); but God in His grace has done exceeding abundantly above all I asked or didn't ask for, and showed me not only your face in this life, but also your children'. God likewise does for us abundantly more than we pray for or imagine (Eph. 3:20), and our generosity to others should have this feature to it.

48:15 At age 130, Jacob mumbled to Pharaoh: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life", as if every day had dragged (47:9). But at the very end, 17 years later, he more positively speaks of the Angel that had redeemed him from all *evil*.

Jacob's reference to how Abraham and Isaac 'walked before' his God is a reference back to 17:1; 24:40. Jacob had meditated upon these records, in whatever form they were preserved, and now bubbled out with reference to them. Those same promises concerning the Lord Jesus and his Kingdom should become the centre of our thought as we reach spiritual maturity. "Let my name be named upon them (Joseph's children), and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac" (:16) indicates that he saw an equivalence between them and him; he saw they were "heirs of the same promise" (Heb. 11:9). Jacob came to realize that those promises made to them were the very basis of *his* faith too, as well as theirs, and he knew therefore that he would be resurrected with them into the glory of God's Kingdom. And so he wanted to be buried with them; he didn't reject them, but he came to understand that the promises were gloriously true for him on a personal level.

48:16 It is so easy to under-estimate the amount of work the Angels are doing in our lives; Jacob recognized that his Angel physically fed him all his days, and that it was not just at the crises in his life that the Angel had been present; he describes the Angel as "ever redeeming me", as if the whole process of life is one continual redeeming process by the Angel, as He designs trials for us which will perfect us in order to gain redemption, as well as physically redeeming us more times than we realize.

Redeemed me – At the end, Jacob spoke of God as his redeemer, which is the first Biblical reference to the concept of redemption. This was not the only area in which Jacob was a paradigm breaker (consider how he coined the word *abiy'r* to describe God's mightiness). The Hebrew for "redeem" is taken from the idea of the nearest kinsman. Jacob at the end of his days is surely saying that now he saw God as closer than his family. We really have a lot to learn here. God comes before family. The new convert who sacrifices family ties for allegiance to Christ realizes this full well. God's Truth must never become a social and family affair, but rather a candlestick burning with the

earth. ¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. He held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head. ¹⁹ His father refused, and said, I know, my son, I know. He also will become a people, and he also will be great. However, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his seed will become a multitude of nations. ²⁰ He blessed them that day, saying, In you will Israel bless, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh'. He set Ephraim before Manasseh. ²¹ Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers. ²² Moreover I have given to you Shechem, one portion above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

CHAPTER 49 Jan. 29

Jacob Blesses his Sons

Jacob called to his sons, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which will happen to you in the days to come. ² Assemble yourselves, and hear, you sons of Jacob. Listen to Israel, your father. ³ Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength; excelling in dignity, and excelling in power. ⁴ Boiling over as water, you shall not excel; because you went up to your father's bed, then defiled it. He went up to my couch. ⁵ Simeon and Levi are brothers. Their swords are weapons of violence. ⁶ My soul, don't come into their council. My glory, don't be united to their multitude; for in their anger they killed men. In their self-will they hamstrung cattle. ⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. ⁸ Judah, your broth-

fire of the Spirit. Christians mustn't merely follow parental expectation and the norms of their social network.

48:22 "*My sword and with my bow*" indicates that Jacob's old self-reliance was still not totally gone; he sensed that through his own effort he could bring about the fulfillment of God's promises for him. In this area, the weakness of Jacob remained. These very words are alluded to in Josh. 24:12 and Ps. 44:1-6, where the Spirit says that the land was given to Israel *not* on account of their bow and sword. Although Jacob can look forward to being in God's eternal Kingdom, he died with some weaknesses, just as we do; and we have to accept this fact in our coping with irritating or immature fellow believers. In some spiritual areas both they and we will never quite 'get there' in this life.

49:2 In 49:2,7,24 Jacob mentions his old and new names ('Jacob' and 'Israel') together, as if to show that now he finally accepted and believed the wondrous change that God had wrought in him. First of all, he doesn't seem to have accepted his name change, and needed God to remind him of it again (32:28; 35:10). It's difficult to really accept the Name we called upon ourselves at baptism (Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-14).

ers will praise you. Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's sons will bow down before you. ⁹ Judah is a lion's cub. From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, as a lioness. Who will rouse him up? ¹⁰ The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs. To him will the obedience of the peoples be. ¹¹ Binding his foal to the vine, his donkey's colt to the choice vine; he has washed his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes will be red with wine, his teeth white with milk. ¹³ Zebulun will dwell at the haven of the sea. He will be for a haven of ships. His border will be on Sidon. ¹⁴ Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the saddlebags. ¹⁵ He saw a resting place, that it was good, the land, that it was pleasant. He bows his shoulder to the burden, and becomes a servant doing forced labour. ¹⁶ Dan will judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁷ Dan will be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, That bites the horse's

heels, so that his rider falls backward. ¹⁸ I have waited for Your salvation, Yahweh. ¹⁹ A troop will press on Gad, but he will press on their heel. ²⁰ Asher's food will be rich. He will yield royal dainties. ²¹ Naphtali is a doe set free, who bears beautiful fawns. ²² Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a spring. His branches run over the wall. ²³ The archers have severely grieved him, shot at him, and persecuted him: ²⁴ But his bow remained strong. The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), ²⁵ even by the God of your father, who will help you; by the Almighty, who will bless you, with blessings of the sky above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb. ²⁶ The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of your ancestors, above the boundaries of the ancient hills. They will be on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers. ²⁷ Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. In the

49:14 Jacob's achievement of a true humility is evident in his last words. The way he blessed his sons in Gen. 49 indicates this; he saw Issachar's greatness in the fact he was a humble servant. He learnt the lesson of that night of wrestling; his natural strength was not to be gloried in, neither was this to be his true greatness.

49:18 Jacob's hope of the future Messiah was the hope of his life; 'Jehoshua', the Hebrew form of 'Jesus', means 'Yahweh's salvation'.

49:25 *God of your father* – Finally, Jacob got there. He says three times the same thing: God is my God, Yahweh will be *my* rock, *my* stone, yes, He is the personal God of your father Jacob, He is almighty to save. That promise made 70 years previously in semi-belief, he had now fulfilled. He had made Yahweh his God. He was not only the God of his father and grandfather. The God who can do all things, not only physically but more importantly (as Jacob now realized) *spiritually*, was now Jacob's very own God.

morning he will devour the prey. At evening he will divide the spoil.

Jacob's Burial Wishes

²⁸ All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them and blessed them. He blessed everyone according to his blessing. ²⁹ He instructed them, and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as a burial place. ³¹ There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah, his wife, and there I buried Leah: ³² the field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth. ³³ When Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the spirit, and was gathered to his people.

CHAPTER 50 Jan. 29

The Death and Burial of Jacob

Joseph fell on his father's face, wept on him, and kissed him. ² Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father; and the physicians embalmed Israel. ³ Forty

days were fulfilled for him, for that is how many days it takes to embalm. The Egyptians wept for him for seventy days. ⁴ When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spoke to the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found favour in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, ⁵ 'My father made me swear, saying, Behold, I am dying. Bury me in my grave which I have dug for myself in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come again'. ⁶ Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury your father, just like he made you swear. ⁷ Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, all the elders of the land of Egypt, ⁸ all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. ⁹ There went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company. ¹⁰ They came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and there they lamented with a very great and severe lamentation. He mourned for his father seven days. ¹¹ When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians.

50:10 *Seven days* – As in :3, it seems emphasized that the Egyptians mourned for Jacob longer than did Jacob's own sons [40 rather than 70 days]. Perhaps this shows that mourning, as all emotions, is counted by its intensity rather than its external appearance.

50:11 *The Egyptians* – The sons of Jacob weren't Egyptians, but sometimes the family of faith appears as the world, as Egyptians. Our separation from the world doesn't

Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. ¹² His sons did to him just as he commanded them, ¹³ for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field, for a possession of a burial site, from Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. ¹⁴ Joseph returned into Egypt—he, and his brothers, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

Joseph's Brothers Fear Joseph's Revenge

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully pay us back for all of the evil which we did to him. ¹⁶ They sent a message to Joseph, saying, Your father commanded before he died, saying, ¹⁷ 'You shall tell Joseph, Now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin, because they did evil to you'.

Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we are your servants. ¹⁹ Joseph said to them, Don't be afraid, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive. ²¹ Now therefore don't be afraid. I will nourish you and your little ones. He comforted them, and spoke kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph

²² Joseph lived in Egypt, he, and his father's house. Joseph lived one hundred ten years. ²³ Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. ²⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, I am dying, but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land which he

mean that we externally look different to them; faith in one sense is an internal matter visible only to God, who alone sees the heart.

50:14 This was a huge expense of effort, to bury Jacob in Canaan rather than Egypt. It shows that even if we have all the best of this world, as Israel had Goshen, our heart should be in the promised land which is yet to come and shall be eternally ours.

50:16 There's no record that Jacob ever said this. But instead of taking up the issue of dishonesty, Joseph instead concentrates on assuring his brothers of God's grace. We don't need to 'take up' every issue and establish an agreed version of events in order to forgive our brothers.

50:19 The Hebrew can also be rendered: "Fear not: for I am in the place of God". Joseph's relationship with God and with Pharaoh demonstrates how Jesus operates as God functionally, without being God Himself in person. See on 44:18.

50:20 Forgiving others doesn't mean that we justify or mitigate the real evil that has been done to us. This needs to be recognized, but we are to perceive that God works through the evil intentions of others, to do us good in our latter end.

swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ²⁵ Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here. ²⁶ So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old, and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

50:25 Like his father, Joseph's heart was in the land of promise, even though he had spent the majority of his life in the wealth of Egypt.

EXODUS

CHAPTER 1 Jan. 30

The Israelites Are Abused

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt (every man and his household came with Jacob): ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, ³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, ⁴ Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵ All the souls who came out of Jacob's body were seventy souls, and Joseph was in Egypt already. ⁶ Joseph died, as did all his brothers, and all that generation. ⁷ The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly and multiplied, and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. ⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who didn't know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and mightier than we are. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal prudently with them, in case they multiply yet more and it happens that when any war breaks out, they also join themselves to our enemies, and fight against us, and escape out of the land. ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. They built storage cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the

more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out. They were grieved because of the children of Israel. ¹³ The Egyptians ruthlessly made the children of Israel serve, ¹⁴ and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all kinds of service in the field; they ruthlessly made them serve in all their service.

The Plan to Kill All Baby Boys

¹⁵ The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah, ¹⁶ and he said, When you perform the duty of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birth stool; if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live. ¹⁷ But the midwives feared God, and didn't do what the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the baby boys alive. ¹⁸ The king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, Why have you done this thing, and have saved the boys alive? ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women aren't like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous, and give birth before

1:5 *Souls* – The Hebrew word *nephesh* translated “soul” means a person, a body. It carries no idea of immortality.

1:7 The promises to Abraham of having numerous descendants have their main fulfilment in Christ and those baptized into Him (Gal. 3:16,27-29), but as in our lives too, God's Kingdom promises have an initial fulfilment even in this life.

1:19 This would be an example of lies being told as an act of faith, similar to Rahab's lie. We must be careful on one hand not to justify our behaviour all the time by thinking that we had no option but to do things which in most contexts would be sinful; yet

the midwife comes to them. ²⁰ God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied, and grew very mighty. ²¹ It happened, because the midwives feared God, that He made them families. ²² Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, You shall cast every son who is born into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.

CHAPTER 2 Jan. 30

Baby Moses Is Saved

A man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi as his wife. ² The woman conceived, and bore a son. When she saw that he was a child fair to God, she hid him three months. ³ When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus basket for him, and coated it with tar and with pitch. She put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. ⁴ His sister stood far off, to see what would be done to him. ⁵ Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe at the river. Her maids walked along by the riverside. She saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her handmaid to get it. ⁶ She opened it,

and saw the child, and behold, the baby cried. She had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children! ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, Should I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you? ⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. The maiden went and called the child's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages. The woman took the child, and nursed it. ¹⁰ The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water.

Moses Tries to Deliver the Israelites

¹¹ It happened in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brothers, and looked at their burdens. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his brothers. ¹² He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no one, he killed the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. ¹³ He went out

on the other hand, we need to understand that God calls us to live by principles rather than a literalistic obedience to a legal code.

1:16 The plan to kill all the baby boys around the time of Moses' birth is exactly what happened at the time of Christ (Mt. 2:16). This invites us to see Moses as a type of Christ.

1:21 It is God who gives and creates families; it is He who joins together husband and wife throughout the years of their relationship. These infertile women working as midwives must have longed for their own children more than many.

2:10 'Moses' meaning 'drawn out' suggests he is the prototype for every 'saint' – a called out one. As Moses was drawn out of the Nile and saved, so he later drew Israel out of Egypt. He could exactly enter into their feelings when they emerged from the Red Sea because he too had been drawn out of water to safety. Moses was a type of Christ, our representative who knows our feelings.

the second day, and behold, two men of the Hebrews were fighting with each other. He said to him who did the wrong, Why do you strike your fellow? ¹⁴ He said, Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you plan to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian? Moses was afraid, and said, Surely this thing is known. ¹⁵ Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and lived in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Moses Flees Egypt

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ The shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they came to Reuel, their father, he said,

How is it that you have returned so early today? ¹⁹ They said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock. ²⁰ He said to his daughters, Where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread. ²¹ Moses was content to dwell with the man. He gave Moses Zipporah, his daughter. ²² She bore a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land. ²³ It happened in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed because of the abuse, and they cried, and their cry came up to God because of the abuse. ²⁴ God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the children of Israel, and God was concerned about them.

2:15 Visualize the scene when Moses was “full forty years old” (Acts 7:23). The Greek phrase could refer to Moses’ birthday – perhaps it had been arranged that when Moses was 40, he would become Pharaoh. Heb. 11:24 says that he refused and chose to suffer affliction with God’s people. Imagine Moses at the ceremony when he should have been declared as Pharaoh, the most powerful man in his world... standing up and saying, to a suddenly hushed audience, voice cracking with shame and stress and yet some sort of proud relief that he was doing the right thing: ‘I, whom you know in Egyptian as Meses, am Moshe, yes, Moshe the Israelite; and I decline to be Pharaoh’. Imagine his foster mother’s pain and anger. And then in the end, the wonderful honour would have been given to another man, who became Pharaoh. Perhaps he or his son was the one to whom Moses was to come, 40 years later. After a nervous breakdown, stuttering, speaking with a thick accent, clearly having forgotten Egyptian... walking through the mansions of glory, along the corridors of power, to meet that man, to whom he had given the throne 40 years earlier. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God’s people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER 3 Jan. 31***God Appears to Moses at the Burning Bush***

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to God's mountain, to Horeb.

² The angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. ³ Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

⁴ When Yahweh saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses! Moses! He said, Here I am.

⁵ He said, Don't come close. Take your sandals off from your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground. ⁶ Moreover he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ Yahweh said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

⁸ I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and

to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. ⁹ Now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me. Moreover I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

God's Plan to Deliver Israel from Egypt

¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. ¹¹ Moses said to God, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

¹² He said, Certainly I will be with you. This will be the token to you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

¹³ Moses said to God, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you;' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' What should I tell them? ¹⁴ God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM; and He said, You shall tell the children of Israel this: 'I

3:7 God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He saw and knew their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

3:11 Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: "Who am I...?" to do the great things God required... and the answer was "I am" (:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it. We 'are not' as we would like to be, but God is.

AM has sent me to you'. ¹⁵ God said moreover to Moses, You shall tell the children of Israel this, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations. ¹⁶ Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and tell them, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt; ¹⁷ and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey'. ¹⁸ They will listen to your voice, and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God'. ¹⁹ I know that the king of Egypt won't give you permission to go, no, not by a mighty hand. ²⁰ I will reach out My hand

and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst, and after that he will let you go. ²¹ I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and it will happen that when you go, you shall not go empty-handed. ²² But every woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her who visits her house, jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons, and on your daughters. You shall plunder the Egyptians.

CHAPTER 4 Jan. 31

Moses Doubts God

Moses answered, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my voice; for they will say, 'Yahweh has not appeared to you'. ² Yahweh said to him, What is that in your hand? He said, A rod. ³ He said, Throw it on the ground. He threw it on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses ran away from it. ⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand, and take it by the tail. He stretched out his hand, and took hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand. ⁵ That they may believe that Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the God of

3:18 The concepts of being God manifest and also being representative of a sinful Israel come together in Moses in a wonderful way. The elders of Israel were to tell Pharaoh that "Yahweh has met with us". Yet Yahweh had only met with Moses. But because he was representative of Israel and also because he himself manifested Yahweh, the elders had met Yahweh when they met Moses. In this we see a superb prefigurement of the Lord Jesus. He was the supreme, faultless manifestation of God, and yet also the total, empathetic representative of sinful man.

3:20 Moses "supposed his brothers would have understood how that God by *his hand* would deliver them" (Acts 7:25); but God told Moses: "I will reach out *My hand*". Moses had yet to learn the meaning of God manifestation through men. We too must learn that our hand is to be replaced by God's hand.

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.

⁶ Yahweh said furthermore to him, Now put your hand inside your cloak. He put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, as white as snow.

⁷ He said, Put your hand inside your cloak again. He put his hand inside his cloak again, and when he took it out of his cloak, behold, it had turned again as his other flesh. ⁸ It will happen, if they will neither believe you nor listen to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. ⁹ It will happen, if they will not believe even these two signs, neither listen to your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take out of the river will become blood on the dry land.

¹⁰ Moses said to Yahweh, O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before now, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a stammering tongue. ¹¹ Yahweh said to him, Who made man's mouth? Or who makes one mute, or

deaf, or seeing, or blind? Isn't it I, Yahweh? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall speak. ¹³ He said, Oh, Lord, please send someone else. ¹⁴ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Moses, and He said, What about Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Also, behold, he comes out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. ¹⁶ He will be your spokesman to the people; and it will happen, that he will be to you a mouth, and you will be to him as God. ¹⁷ You shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.

Moses Leaves Midian

¹⁸ Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, Please let me go and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive. Jethro

4:7 Both the snake and leprosy are symbols of sin. Moses felt he was unable to do God's work because of his own moral failures – but God was showing him that He has the power to deal with that, and that Moses could in fact grapple with sin if he let God use him. Moses had given the excuse that the people wouldn't believe God's word if he preached it to them (:1), but it seems this was really an excuse for his inner sense of unworthiness.

4:11 This verse is classic proof that disease is ultimately from God and not from any superhuman Devil or demons.

4:12 This is alluded to in Mt. 10:19,20 and Mk. 13:11 concerning how we too will be taught what to say when we come before the rulers of our world. In such moments of crisis, Moses, even in weakness as he was at this time, really is our living example.

4:16 Moses was “as God” to Aaron and Pharaoh (7:1), but he wasn't God Himself. Such language can be used about men, Angels and Christ – but it doesn't make them personally equal to God.

said to Moses, Go in peace. ¹⁹ Yahweh said to Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead. ²⁰ Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moses took God's rod in his hand. ²¹ Yahweh said to Moses, When you go back into Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go. ²² You shall tell Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, Israel is My son, My firstborn, ²³ and I have said to you, Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn'. ²⁴ It happened on the way at a lodging place, that Yahweh met Moses and wanted to kill him. ²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me. ²⁶ So He let him alone. Then

she said, You are a bridegroom of blood, because of the circumcision. ²⁷ Yahweh said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. He went, and met him on God's mountain, and kissed him. ²⁸ Moses told Aaron all the words of Yahweh with which He had sent him, and all the signs with which He had instructed him. ²⁹ Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. ³⁰ Aaron spoke all the words which Yahweh had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ The people believed, and when they heard that Yahweh had visited the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

CHAPTER 5 Feb. 1

Moses and Aaron Meet Pharaoh

Afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said to Pharaoh, This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the

4:24 God's intentions can be changed by the actions of a third party, in this case Moses' wife. Later, God intended to destroy all Israel, but Moses interceded for them, and God relented. Moses was inspired to do this by his experience at this time; and his Saviour was a Gentile woman [an unbeliever, or weak in the true faith] whom perhaps he should never have married. Moses was being taught that he too for all *his* weakness could be used by God to save others.

4:26 Zipporah was not one of the covenant people; she was the daughter of a pagan priest (18:11 implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods); she did not circumcise their children. Should Moses have married her? The fact Moses did not bother circumcising his son shows he was not really serious about his relationship with God; God tried to kill him because of this, showing how serious this was in God's eyes. Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). Circumcision was a sign of the covenant through Isaac, hence the resentment and bitterness of Zipporah over the circumcision issue; and it seems Moses capitulated to her on this. Their marriage is sure proof that fundamental spiritual differences at the start can only lead to anger and break up later on.

wilderness'. ² Pharaoh said, Who is Yahweh, that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I don't recognize Yahweh, and moreover I will not let Israel go. ³ They said, The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Yahweh, our God, lest He fall on us with plague, or with the sword. ⁴ The king of Egypt said to them, Why do you, Moses and Aaron, take the people from their work? Get back to your burdens! ⁵ Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens. ⁶ The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, ⁷ You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick, as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. ⁸ The number of the bricks, which they made before, you are to still require from them. You shall not diminish anything of it, for they are idle; therefore they cry, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God'. ⁹ Let heavier work be laid on the men, that

they may labour therein; and don't let them pay any attention to lying words.

The Israelites Abused Even More

¹⁰ The taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spoke to the people, saying, This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you straw. ¹¹ Go yourselves, get straw where you can find it, for nothing of your work shall be diminished'. ¹² So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters were urgent saying, Fulfil your work quota daily, as when there was straw! ¹⁴ The officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, it was demanded of them, Why haven't you fulfilled your quota both yesterday and today, in making brick as before? ¹⁵ Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, saying, Why do you deal this way with your servants? ¹⁶ No straw is given to your servants, and they tell us, 'Make

5:3 *Lest He fall on us* – This isn't what God had threatened (3:18); Moses almost makes God out to be an unreasonable and draconian deity. It seems Moses added to God's word to make it sound more credible, rather like Adam added "... neither shall you touch it" when relating God's word to Eve. If we accept the Bible as God's inspired word, we must be careful never to add to it, even implicitly, in order to make the message sound better in human terms.

5:16 Three times in :15,16 the Israelites assure Pharaoh that they are *his* servants, whereas Yahweh had requested that His people be allowed to leave so that they might serve *Him* (4:23). We cannot serve two masters – and they chose to serve Pharaoh and not Yahweh, in the hope that their hard lives might be made a fraction lighter by doing so. There was no fire of devotion in them for Yahweh, no desire to make a radical revolt against their surrounding world; they were interested in the offer of a better life which Moses offered them (4:31), they believed it for a brief moment, but any short term suffering was enough to bring them back to serving Egypt.

brick!’ and behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people. ¹⁷ But he said, You are idle! You are idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to Yahweh’. ¹⁸ Go therefore now, and work, for no straw shall be given to you, yet you shall deliver the same number of bricks! ¹⁹ The officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble, when it was said, You shall not diminish anything from your daily quota of bricks!

Israelite Anger with Moses and Aaron

²⁰ They met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came out from Pharaoh: ²¹ and they said to them, May Yahweh look at you, and judge, because you have made us a stench to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us. ²² Moses returned to Yahweh and said, Lord, why have You brought evil on this people? Why is it that You have sent me? ²³ For since

I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.

CHAPTER 6 Feb. 1

God's Message to Israel

Yahweh said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for by a strong hand he shall let them go, and by a strong hand he shall drive them out of his land. ² God spoke to Moses, and said to him, I am Yahweh; ³ and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty; but by My name Yahweh was I not known to them? ⁴ I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their travels, in which they lived as aliens. ⁵ Moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. ⁶ Therefore tell the children of Israel, ‘I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the

5:22 *Brought evil* – God is the ultimate source of “evil” in the sense of disaster (Is. 45:5-7), not any superhuman Satan being.

Moses is presented as initially a very unwilling co-operator with God, all too willing to give up and go home when there wasn’t the expected response. Yet he developed very quickly.

6:3 God had revealed Himself as Yahweh to the patriarchs, e. g. at Yahweh-Yireh (Gen. 22:14). But Israel had forgotten the implications of believing that the one true God is He who will be whom He will be, is who He is, and has been who He has been. God states seven times [the number of completion] in 6:8 that He “will” be and do things for His people. He really will be who He has said He will be.

6:5 God heard Israel’s groaning, even though at that time they didn’t believe in Him and were lost in depression. God ‘hears’ situations as if they are prayers, even when the people concerned are too weak physically, mentally or spiritually to formally verbalize their situation in the form of a prayer to God.

Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments: ⁷ and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, Who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an inheritance: I am Yahweh'. ⁹ Moses spoke so to the children of Israel, but they didn't listen to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage. ¹⁰ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹ Go in, speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land. ¹² Moses spoke before Yahweh, saying, Behold, the children of Israel haven't listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, who am of uncircumcised lips? ¹³ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a command to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

The Genealogy of Levi

¹⁴ These are the heads of their fathers' houses. The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are

the families of Reuben. ¹⁵ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon.

¹⁶ These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari; and the years of the life of Levi were one hundred thirty-seven years. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath: Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel; and the years of the life of Kohath were one hundred thirty-three years.

¹⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations. ²⁰ Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty-seven years. ²¹ The sons of Izhar: Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri. ²² The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Sithri. ²³ Aaron took Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, as his wife; and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ²⁴ The sons of Korah: Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites. ²⁵ Eleazar Aaron's son took

6:12 Yet God had promised Moses earlier that Israel *would* hear him (3:18). God solemnly told him to go and speak to Pharaoh, because God had told him to do so. But Moses has the cheek to say exactly the same words to God a second time. In a chapter which speaks much of Moses' reluctance, the record encourages us: "These are that Aaron and Moses... these are those who spake to Pharaoh... these are that Moses and Aaron" (:26,27) – as if the weakness of one as great as Moses should be encouragement to us who are so doubting and faltering in our service of God.

one of the daughters of Putiel as his wife; and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families. ²⁶ These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom Yahweh said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies. ²⁷ These are those who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are that Moses and Aaron. ²⁸ It happened on the day when Yahweh spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ that Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, I am Yahweh. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you. ³⁰ Moses said before Yahweh, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh listen to me?

CHAPTER 7 Feb. 2

God Tells Moses How to Speak to Pharaoh

Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I have made you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. ² You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land. ³ I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will lay My hand on Egypt, and bring out My armies and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

6:30 *Uncircumcised lips* – This may refer to some speech impediment Moses came to suffer. Or it may be that Moses felt he had been so long away from the Israelites that he didn't feel himself as 'circumcised', or perhaps he had never been circumcised. But God used a man who keenly felt his physical and spiritual inadequacies for the great work he was asked to do. A feeling of insufficiency is vital if we are to be used by God, for He delights in using the weak and broken things of this world.

7:2 Although Aaron was intended to be Moses' spokesman, it seems Moses soon took over speaking directly to Pharaoh. This may mean that Aaron lost his nerve; or that Moses gained confidence and no longer considered his spiritual and physical impediments of "uncircumcised lips" (see on 6:30) to be a barrier to God using him.

7:4 It seems that each of the people of Israel had a guardian Angel – this seems to be implied by "bring out My armies and My people", implying that there were two armies leaving Egypt – one of Angels, another of their charges. Hence 12:41 "it happened, that *all* the armies of Yahweh (a phrase often used about the Angels – but here concerning the Israelites too) went out from the land of Egypt". We too each have a guardian Angel.

7:5 The rejected will not only see how they could have been in the Kingdom; judgment results in men knowing God's Name / character. When God's judgments had been poured out on Egypt, then they knew God's Name; but for those racing against the inevitable tide of death in the returning Red Sea, it was all too late. This will be the tragedy of those rejected at the day of final judgment; nobody will be indifferent in that day, all will earnestly perceive who God really is. The day to know Him is now.

The Miracle of Aaron's Rod

⁶ Moses and Aaron did so. As Yahweh commanded them, so they did. ⁷ Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh. ⁸ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ⁹ When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Perform a miracle!' then you shall tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it become a serpent'. ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, as Yahweh had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers. They also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same thing with their enchantments. ¹² For they each cast down their rods, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. ¹³ Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken.

Water Turned to Blood

¹⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is stubborn. He refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Behold, he goes out to the water; and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand. ¹⁶ You shall

tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness, and behold, until now you haven't listened. ¹⁷ Thus says Yahweh, In this you shall know that I am Yahweh. Behold, I will strike with the rod that is in My hand on the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. ¹⁸ The fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink water from the river'. ¹⁹ Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone'. ²⁰ Moses and Aaron did so, as Yahweh commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. ²¹ The fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians couldn't drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt. ²² The magicians of Egypt did the same thing

7:7 The life of Moses was in three clear sections. Forty years in Egypt in the opulence of Pharaoh's court, forty years leading sheep in the wilderness, forty years leading Israel in the wilderness. Our lives too are arranged by God, although we only perceive it after many years.

7:17 The pronouns purposefully confuse God with Moses – our hand becomes God's hand when we put it to His work.

with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken. ²³ Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he didn't even take this to heart. ²⁴ All the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink; for they couldn't drink of the water of the river. ²⁵ Seven days were fulfilled, after Yahweh had struck the river.

CHAPTER 8 Feb. 2

The Plague of Frogs

Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, This is what Yahweh says, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ² If you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your borders with frogs: ³ and the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into your house, and into your bedroom, and on your bed, and into the house of your servants, and on your people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading troughs: ⁴ and the frogs shall come up both on you, and on your people, and on all your servants'. ⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt'. ⁶ Aaron

stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ The magicians did the same thing with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt. ⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat Yahweh, that He take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to Yahweh. ⁹ Moses said to Pharaoh, I give you the honour of setting the time that I should pray for you, and for your servants, and for your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, and remain in the river only. ¹⁰ He said, Tomorrow. He said, Be it according to your word, that you may know that there is none like Yahweh our God. ¹¹ The frogs shall depart from you, and from your houses, and from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only. ¹² Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to Yahweh concerning the frogs which He had brought on Pharaoh. ¹³ Yahweh did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields. ¹⁴ They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there

8:9 Was such sarcasm appropriate? We have 'the Truth' in comparison to the unbelieving world, but this is by grace alone, and no sense of superiority, arrogance or sarcasm should ever feature in our witness to them.

8:13 *According to the word of Moses* – The requests of prayer become almost a command to God if we really believe they are according to His will; by His grace, we will ask what we will and He will do it for us (Jn. 16:23). The Greek there implies a superior asking an inferior to do something. This is an essay in the humility of God. We shall decree a thing (in prayer) and it shall be established unto us (Job 22:28).

was a respite, he hardened his heart, and didn't listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken.

The Plague of Lice

¹⁶ Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt'. ¹⁷ They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were lice on man, and on animal; all the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. ¹⁸ The magicians tried with their enchantments to produce lice, but they couldn't. There were lice on man, and on animal. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken.

The Plague of Beetles

²⁰ Yahweh said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand be-

fore Pharaoh; behold, he comes out to the water; and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh says, Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ²¹ Else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of beetles on you, and on your servants, and on your people, and into your houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of beetles, and also the ground whereon they are. ²² I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of beetles shall be there; to the end you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the earth. ²³ I will put a division between My people and your people: by tomorrow shall this sign be'. ²⁴ Yahweh did so; and there came grievous swarms of beetles into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses: and in all the land of Egypt the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of beetles. ²⁵ Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go, sacrifice to your God within the land! ²⁶ Mo-

8:16 The plagues were judgments against the gods of Egypt, whom Israel had likely come to believe in (12:12; 15:11). This plague targeted Seb, god of the dust of the earth; as the frogs had mocked Hekot, the goddess of magic who had a frog's head, and the Nile turning to blood showed the effective death of Hapi, the god of the spirit of the Nile.

8:21 Ra and the forerunner of Beelzebub were likened to beetles; much pagan Egyptian jewellery featured beetles.

8:22 Initially, God's people suffered the effects of the earlier plagues. But they didn't experience the later plagues. The plagues on Egypt are alluded to in the descriptions of the latter day judgments to come upon the earth just before Christ returns. It could be that the same will happen – those who are alive at that time may suffer the effects of the initial judgments, and then be somehow preserved as Israel were (Is. 26:20).

To the end – God's desire was to save even Pharaoh. We should never give up on seeking to convert anyone.

8:25 *Within the land* – Comparing :27, it required three days journey for God's people to leave Egypt. It's likely that we are to see here a reference to the three days Christ

ses said, It isn't appropriate to do so; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to Yahweh our God. Behold, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and won't they stone us?

²⁷ We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Yahweh our God, as He shall command us. ²⁸ Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to Yahweh your God in the wilderness, only you shall not go very far away. Pray for me. ²⁹ Moses said, Behold, I go out from you, and I will pray to Yahweh that the swarms of beetles may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow; only don't let Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to Yahweh. ³⁰ Moses went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Yahweh. ³¹ Yahweh did according to the word of Moses, and He removed the swarms of beetles from Pharaoh, from his servants, and

from his people. There remained not one. ³² Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he didn't let the people go.

CHAPTER 9 Feb. 3

The Plague on the Livestock

Then Yahweh said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ² For if you refuse to let them go, and hold them still, ³ behold, the hand of Yahweh is on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks with a very grievous pestilence. ⁴ Yahweh will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt; and nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel'. ⁵ Yahweh appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow Yahweh shall do this thing in the land. ⁶ Yahweh did that thing on

remained dead, before resurrecting to enable God's people to leave Egypt [the world] and embark for His Kingdom.

8:28 *Pray for me* sounds as if there might have been some recognition of Yahweh forming within Pharaoh. Hence God and Moses were seeking his repentance and even salvation, and the drawn out process of the plagues was part of that seeking, even though the more he hardened his heart against his spiritual possibilities, the more God had to confirm him in this.

9:3 *Is on* – Present tense. Yet the idea is clearly 'it *will be* on'. God's word is so certain that He can speak of things He has not yet done as if He has done them, or is now doing them (Rom. 4:17). We need to try to look at things like this; and see that the essence of future judgment and salvation are in fact working themselves out right now.

9:5 The plague upon cattle was clearly prophesied as going to happen at a specified time; but it was conditional upon Pharaoh refusing to let Israel go (:1,2). He *could* have complied, and therefore the plague wouldn't have happened. And yet the prophecy is so specific that it would seem that this conditionality just didn't exist. But it did. Bible prophecies often have a conditional element to them, because God's purpose is often open-ended, reflecting the colossal value He places upon our freewill decisions.

the next day; and all the livestock of Egypt died, but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died. ⁷ Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the livestock of the Israelites dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn, and he didn't let the people go.

The Plague of Boils

⁸ Yahweh said to Moses and to Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹ It shall become small dust over all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking out with boils on man and on animal, throughout all the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ They took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward the sky; and it became a boil breaking out with boils on man and on animal. ¹¹ The magicians couldn't stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the magicians, and on all the Egyptians. ¹² Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he didn't listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken to Moses.

The Plague of Hail

¹³ Yahweh said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the He-

brews, says: Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ¹⁴ For this time I will send all My plagues against your heart, against your officials, and against your people; that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For now I would have stretched out My hand, and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth; ¹⁶ but indeed for this cause I have raised you up: to show in you My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth; ¹⁷ as you still exalt yourself against My people, that you won't let them go. ¹⁸ Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now. ¹⁹ Now therefore command that all of your livestock and all that you have in the field be brought into shelter. Every man and animal that is found in the field, and isn't brought home, the hail shall come down on them, and they shall die'. ²⁰ Those who feared the word of Yahweh among the servants of Pharaoh made their servants and their livestock flee into the houses. ²¹ Whoever didn't respect the word of Yahweh left his servants and his livestock in the field. ²² Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be hail

9:14 The plagues were on Pharaoh's heart in that God was progressively confirming Pharaoh in the position he had himself adopted.

9:22 The great hail plague lead up to Israel's Passover deliverance, and yet this is the language of the last days (Rev. 16:21) – as if there will again be a Passover deliverance for God's people, heralded by the pouring out of plagues upon those who persecute them.

in all the land of Egypt, on man, and on animal, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. ²³ Moses stretched out his rod toward the heavens, and Yahweh sent thunder, hail, and lightning flashed down to the earth. Yahweh rained hail on the land of Egypt. ²⁴ So there was very severe hail, and lightning mixed with the hail, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵ The hail struck throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and animal; and the hail struck every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field. ²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail. ²⁷ Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, I have sinned this time. Yahweh is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. ²⁸ Pray to Yahweh; for there has been enough of mighty thunderings and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer. ²⁹ Moses said to him, As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands to Yahweh. The thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that you may know that the earth is Yahweh's.

³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you don't yet fear Yahweh God. ³¹ The flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom. ³² But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they had not grown up. ³³ Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands to Yahweh; and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth. ³⁴ When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ The heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he didn't let the children of Israel go, just as Yahweh had spoken through Moses.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 4

The Plague of Locusts

Yahweh said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these My signs in their midst, ² and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have done to Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know that I am Yahweh. ³ Mo-

9:29 Spreading out hands is a form of prayer, perhaps symbolizing our openness before God, or perhaps an expression meaning that we have nothing, but beg God for His grace.

9:31, 32 Are we to conclude that the Egyptians grew barley but the Hebrews preferred wheat?

9:35 The record speaks often of how Pharaoh hardened his heart ["his heart was stubborn" carries this idea], and yet also of how God hardened Pharaoh's heart (10:1). God confirms people in the mental attitude they adopt. He's not indifferent. Hence the colossal importance of human thought and action – God is waiting to confirm us in the way we choose to go.

ses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and said to him, This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ⁴ Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, ⁵ and they shall cover the surface of the earth, so that one won't be able to see the earth. They shall eat the residue of that which has escaped, which remains to you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field. ⁶ Your houses shall be filled, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; as neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day'. He turned himself about, and went out from Pharaoh. ⁷ Pharaoh's servants said to him, How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve Yahweh, their God. Don't you yet know that Egypt is destroyed? ⁸ Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, Go, serve Yahweh your God; but who are those who will go? ⁹ Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast to Yahweh. ¹⁰ He said to them, Yahweh be with you if I will let you

go with your little ones! See, evil is clearly before your faces. ¹¹ Not so! Go now you who are men, and serve Yahweh; for that is what you desire! They were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. ¹² Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail has left. ¹³ Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and Yahweh brought an east wind on the land all that day, and all the night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. ¹⁴ The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the borders of Egypt. They were very grievous. Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. ¹⁵ For they covered the surface of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, and they ate every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. There remained nothing green, either tree or herb of the field, through all the land of Egypt. ¹⁶ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and he said, I have sinned against Yahweh your God, and against you. ¹⁷ Now therefore please forgive my sin again, and pray to Yahweh your God, that He may also take away from me this death. ¹⁸ He went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Yahweh. ¹⁹ Yahweh turned an

10:6 Turning around and storming out shows his anger and emotion; being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics (Num. 20:12; Ps. 106:32,33). And yet he was very humble (Num. 12:3). There's nothing wrong with emotion and passion in itself, and it's not irreconcilable with humility.

exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the borders of Egypt. ²⁰ But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he didn't let the children of Israel go.

The Plague of Darkness

²¹ Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. ²² Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. ²³ They didn't see one another, neither did anyone rise from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. ²⁴ Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, Go, serve Yahweh. Only let your flocks and your herds stay behind. Let your little ones also go with you. ²⁵ Moses said, You must

also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God. ²⁶ Our livestock also shall go with us. Not a hoof shall be left behind, for of it we must take to serve Yahweh our God; and we don't know with what we must serve Yahweh, until we come there. ²⁷ But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he wouldn't let them go. ²⁸ Pharaoh said to him, Get away from me! Be careful to see my face no more; for in the day you see my face you shall die! ²⁹ Moses said, You have spoken well. I will see your face again no more.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 5

God Predicts the Death of Egypt's Firstborn

Yahweh said to Moses, Yet one plague more will I bring on Pharaoh, and on Egypt; afterwards he will let you go. When he lets you go, he will surely thrust you out altogether.

10:19 The wind casting the locusts into the Red Sea was similar to how God sent a wind to open and close the Red Sea, and the Egyptians were as it were cast into the Red Sea to their destruction. God was seeking to show Pharaoh what He was capable of, and how Pharaoh was just another locust. The Pharaohs had a locust crest on their crowns. God tries to give people warning of the judgment that will come upon them, in the hope they will repent.

10:22 The plague of darkness was clearly intended to imply the death of Ra, the Egyptian sun god. One by one, the major gods of Egypt were declared dead or powerless by the plagues. The Israelites should've learnt from this not to worship the Egyptian gods ever again; but they forgot the lesson.

10:23 Similar to how the Angel stood behind the Israelites as they crossed the Red Sea, giving them light and yet giving darkness to the pursuing Egyptians (14:20). Perhaps the Israelites had light but the Egyptians darkness because the Angel stood with them literally? God often gives notice of what He is planning to do, bringing about similar situations, in the hope that His people will repent.

10:25 God's demands upon Pharaoh grew – now he had to give them animals too. The further a person goes away from God, the harder God makes it for them – because He confirms people in the hardness or softness to Him which they choose.

er. ² Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. ³ Yahweh gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people. ⁴ Moses said, This is what Yahweh says: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of livestock. ⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been, nor shall be any more. ⁷ But against any of the children of Israel a dog won't even bark or move its tongue, against man or animal; that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. ⁸ All these your servants shall come down to me, and bow down themselves to me, saying, Get out, with all the people who follow you; and after that I will go out'. He went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. ⁹ Yahweh said to Moses, Pharaoh won't listen to you, that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he didn't let the children of Israel go out of his land.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 5

The Passover Is Commanded

Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ² This month shall be to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you. ³ Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household; ⁴ and if the household is too little for a lamb, then he and his neighbour next to his house shall take one according to the number of the souls; according to what everyone can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: ⁶ and you shall keep it until the four-

11:3 *The man Moses was very great* – Yet it is also written that “the man Moses was very meek” (Num. 12:3). Putting the two passages together we have the clear lesson that he who humbles himself is made great; and in this, Moses was not only a type of Christ but also a pattern for all who would go through the pattern which the Lord Jesus set before us: of humbling ourselves now that we might be made great in due time.

11:8 *I will go out* – Moses saw himself as representative of all God's people, just as Christ is our representative.

12:5 *Without blemish* – quoted about Christ, whom the Passover lamb represented (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19). The animal was to be ‘taken out’ from the flock – it wasn't specially bred for the occasion. This prefigures how the Lord Jesus was to be of true human nature, one of us, identical by nature with the rest of the flock whom He died to save.

teenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at evening.

⁷ They shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs. ⁹ Don't eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted with fire; with its head, its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰ You shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire. ¹¹ This is how you shall eat it: with your belt on your waist, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is Yahweh's Passover. ¹² For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal. Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Yahweh. ¹³ The blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be on you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ This day shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh: throughout your genera-

tions you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.

Unleavened Bread

¹⁵ 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away yeast out of your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ In the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no kind of work shall be done in them, except that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. ¹⁷ You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance forever. ¹⁸ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ There shall be no yeast found in your houses for seven days, for whoever eats that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a foreigner, or one who is born in the land. ²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened. In all your habitations you shall eat unleavened bread'.

12:11 *Belt on your waist* – With their robes girded up. In a chapter full of Passover allusions, Peter quotes this phrase as painting a word picture of the intensity in which believers today should be living as they await the call to leave this present society [cp. Egypt] and go to be with the Lord (1 Pet. 1:13).

12:19 Searching their homes for yeast represents our searching of our lives for sin (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Sin is like yeast in that just a little bit of it leads to a huge influence in our lives and those of others – it spreads, unless it is thrown away.

The Death of the Firstborn

²¹ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, Draw out, and take lambs according to your families, and kill the Passover. ²² You shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. ²³ For Yahweh will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel, and on the two doorposts, Yahweh will pass over the door, and will not allow the Destroyer to come in to your houses to strike you. ²⁴ You shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever. ²⁵ It shall happen when you have come to the land which Yahweh will give you, according as he has promised, that you shall keep this service. ²⁶ It will happen, when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷ that you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of Yahweh’s Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when

He struck the Egyptians, and spared our houses’. The people bowed their heads and worshiped. ²⁸ The children of Israel went and did so; as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. ²⁹ It happened at midnight, that Yahweh struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of livestock. ³⁰ Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. ³¹ He called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve Yahweh, as you have said! ³² Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also! ³³ The Egyptians were urgent with the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, We are all dead men. ³⁴ The people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their

12:22 *Hyssop* – We think of the use of hyssop in Christ’s crucifixion (Jn. 19:29).

12:23 ‘Pass over’ translates a Hebrew word meaning to hover over. One Angel would hover over the homes of the faithful Israelites to stop the ‘Destroyer’ Angel (1 Cor. 10:10) killing their firstborn.

12:29 *Midnight* – The second coming of Christ is figuratively said to be with a great cry at “midnight” (Mt. 25:6). A great cry went up at midnight on Passover night (:30). We who are awaiting the return of Christ are therefore in a similar position to Israel on Passover night, watching and waiting, under persecution of various types.

12:34 The Israelites also took with them the idols of Egypt (Ez. 20:7,8), even though the plagues had demonstrated those idols to be dead and powerless, and God had declared those idols condemned by the plagues (:12). The crossing of the Red Sea represents our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and we too mustn’t take any of this world’s idols with us when we spiritually leave this world.

clothes on their shoulders.³⁵ The children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing.³⁶ Yahweh gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. They despoiled the Egyptians.

The Israelites Leave Egypt

³⁷ The children of Israel travelled from Raamses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot who were men, besides children.³⁸ A mixed multitude went up also with them, with flocks, herds, and even very much livestock.³⁹ They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt; for it wasn't leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and couldn't wait, neither had they prepared for themselves any food.⁴⁰ Now the time that the children of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years.⁴¹ It happened at the end of four hundred thirty years, even the same day it happened, that all the

armies of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt.⁴² It is a night to be much observed to Yahweh for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This is that night of Yahweh, to be much observed of all the children of Israel throughout their generations.⁴³ Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover. No foreigner shall eat of it,⁴⁴ but every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then shall he eat of it.⁴⁵ A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat of it.⁴⁶ In one house shall it be eaten; you shall not carry out anything of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall you break a bone of it.⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.⁴⁸ When a stranger shall live as a foreigner with you, and will keep the Passover to Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one who is born in the land: but no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.⁴⁹ One law shall be to him who is born at home, and to the stranger who lives as a foreigner

12:37 If there were 600,000 men, excluding children, we can guess that there were around three million Israelites who left Egypt, in addition to the mixed multitude of :38. Jacob's family numbered 70 people when they entered Egypt 430 years previously (:41; Gen. 46:27). This is a huge growth rate; the promises to Abraham that his descendants would become many clearly received a major initial fulfilment. Through baptism, those same promises are made to us (Gal. 3:27-29), and in some way we may also experience an initial fulfilment of the promised blessing even in this life.

12:38 *Mixed multitude* – Egyptians who had come to side with Yahweh? Or does this refer to the offspring of relations between the Israelites and Egyptians (e.g. Lev. 24:10)?

12:42 The Passover was a memorial feast, to commemorate how God had saved His people. The equivalent for believers today is the breaking of bread meeting, rightly called by some 'the memorial meeting'. It's a celebration of what has been done for us through the slain lamb, the Lord Jesus.

among you. ⁵⁰ All the children of Israel did so. As Yahweh commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. ⁵¹ It happened the same day, that Yahweh brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

CHAPTER 13 Feb. 6

Passover Regulations Repeated

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Sanctify to me all of the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of animal. It is mine. ³ Moses said to the people, Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Yahweh brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴ This day you go out in the month Abib. ⁵ It shall be, when Yahweh shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. ⁶ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Yahweh. ⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven

days; and no leavened bread shall be seen with you, neither shall yeast be seen with you, in all your borders. ⁸ You shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'It is because of that which Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt'. ⁹ It shall be for a sign to you on your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that the law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt. ¹⁰ You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

The Redemption of the Firstborn

¹¹ It shall be, when Yahweh shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and shall give it you, ¹² that you shall set apart to Yahweh all that opens the womb, and every firstborn which you have that comes from an animal. The males shall be Yahweh's. ¹³ Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and you shall redeem all the firstborn of man among your sons. ¹⁴ It shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall tell him, 'By strength of

13:8 *For me* – Subsequent generations were to see themselves as having been personally saved from Egypt, and many of the Psalms take comfort in what God did there as being a guarantee that He likewise will save *us* from our Egypt-like situations.

13:9 *A memorial* – All that Israel did with their hands or thought in their minds was to be influenced by the memory of the fact that they had been redeemed from Egypt. Our experience of redemption through the blood of our Passover lamb should have the same effect upon us. Some Jewish traditions literally fulfil this command by carrying jewellery on their wrist and forehead. For us it should be a mental awareness, which is physically articulated through the memorial meeting, breaking bread and drinking wine in memory of Christ's death which redeemed us from this world and its gods.

hand Yahweh brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage; ¹⁵ and it happened, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that Yahweh killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of animal. Therefore I sacrifice to Yahweh all that opens the womb, being males; but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem'. ¹⁶ It shall be for a sign on your hand, and for symbols between your eyes: for by strength of hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt.

Israel Are Led Out of Egypt

¹⁷ It happened, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God didn't lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt; ¹⁸ but God led the people around by the way of the wilderness by the Red

Sea; and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the children of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones away from here with you. ²⁰ They took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night: ²² the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, didn't depart from before the people.

CHAPTER 14 Feb. 6

The Egyptians Pursue the Israelites

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn back and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and

13:17 God is sensitive to our weaknesses in the path He chooses to lead us towards His promised land. The fact the people did later wish to return to Egypt (Num. 14:4) was therefore inexcusable; God did not test His people more than they could reasonably endure, just as He will not with us (1 Cor. 10:13).

13:21 The pillar of cloud is paralleled with an Angel in 14:19. Israel were led out of Egypt, through the desert to the promised land by an Angel who guided them – just as we are led by a guardian Angel. The cloud shielded them from the strong sun in the day, and the fire gave them warmth and light by night. In this we see God's sensitivity to us and provision of all our basic needs on our journey towards His Kingdom. An Angel in a cloud appears in Rev. 10:1 to announce that the journey of God's people is over, and they have entered His Kingdom.

13:22 The Angel was continually with the people, every day of their journey – including the days when they murmured against God, wanted to return to Egypt, made a golden calf. We too can become over familiar with God and with the fact that we are being led by an Angel towards God's Kingdom.

14:2 Geographically and tactically, this was a mistake in human terms – God led them into a dead end, surrounded by mountains and with their backs to the sea, with the Egyptians charging after them. We too are led by God at times into situations which

the sea, before Baal Zephon. You shall encamp opposite it by the sea. ³ Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are entangled in the land. The wilderness has shut them in’. ⁴ I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will follow after them; and I will get honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies; and the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh. They did so. ⁵ It was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us? ⁶ He prepared his chariot, and took his army with him; ⁷ and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them. ⁸ Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel; for the children of Israel went out with a high hand. ⁹ The Egyptians pursued after them: all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen, and his army; and overtook them encamping

by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal Zephon. ¹⁰ When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were very afraid. The children of Israel cried out to Yahweh. ¹¹ They said to Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you treated us this way, to bring us out of Egypt? ¹² Isn’t this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?’ For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. ¹³ Moses said to the people, Don’t be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh, which He will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see them again. ¹⁴ Yahweh will fight for you, and you shall be still.

The Exodus through the Red Sea

¹⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, Why do you cry to me? Speak to the chil-

seem dead ends, with no human way out. But this is in order to show us the power of His salvation.

14:12 God wanted His people to leave Egypt in order to be His servants (7:16); but their response had been that they preferred to be Pharaoh’s servants. Moses brought them out of Egypt by *his* faith, not theirs (Acts 7:36,38; Heb. 11:28,29). In some ways, God drags us kicking and screaming out of the world and to be His people; this is what grace is all about.

14:13 *Whom you have seen* – The pursuing Egyptians were very close to the Israelites. God sometimes tests our faith to the very limit.

14:15 This was a rebuke of Moses by God. He had his crisis of faith, understandably – even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (:13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn’t, Heb. 11:27 cp. Ex. 2:14), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side.

dren of Israel, that they go forward. ¹⁶ Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get Myself honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies, over his chariots, and over his horsemen. ¹⁸ The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have gotten Myself honour over Pharaoh, over his chariots, and over his horsemen. ¹⁹ The angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them, and stood behind them. ²⁰ It came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one didn't come near the other all the night. ²¹ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and Yahweh caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued, and went in after

them into the midst of the sea: all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ It happened in the morning watch, that Yahweh looked out on the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and confused the Egyptian army. ²⁵ He took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let's flee from the face of Israel, for Yahweh fights for them against the Egyptians! ²⁶ Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen. ²⁷ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it. Yahweh overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even all Pharaoh's army that went in after them into the sea. There remained not so much as one of them. ²⁹ But the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left. ³⁰ Thus Yahweh saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-

14:21 *Made... dry land... the waters were divided* – Language definitely reminiscent of the Genesis creation (Gen. 1:7). It's as if God was making a new creation for Israel. After our baptisms into Christ, we too become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

14:22 1 Cor. 10:1,2 interprets crossing the Red Sea as prefiguring Christian baptism. Israel were baptized into Moses as we are into Christ, "in the cloud and in the sea". A cloud is water droplets. They had water on both sides of them and water above them – in this sense they were surrounded by water, just as baptism is a complete immersion in water.

shore. ³¹ Israel saw the great work which Yahweh did to the Egyptians, and the people feared Yahweh; and they believed in Yahweh, and in his servant Moses.

CHAPTER 15 Feb. 7

Moses' Song of Praise

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Yahweh, and said, I will sing to Yahweh, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea. ² Yah is my strength and song. He has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. ³ Yahweh is a man of war. Yahweh is His name. ⁴ He has cast Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea. His chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea. ⁵ The deeps cover them. They went down into

the depths like a stone. ⁶ Your right hand, Yahweh, is glorious in power. Your right hand, Yahweh, dashes the enemy in pieces. ⁷ In the greatness of Your excellency, You overthrow those who rise up against You. You send forth Your wrath. It consumes them as stubble. ⁸ With the blast of Your nostrils, the waters were piled up. The floods stood upright as a heap. The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The enemy said, 'I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them'. ¹⁰ You blew with Your wind. The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. ¹¹ Who is like You, Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? ¹² You stretched out Your right

15:1 The faithful believers will sing the Song of Moses when they enter God's Kingdom and all our troubled waters are permanently calm (Rev. 15:3). The Israelites are set up as our examples, and we should learn the lessons from their subsequent failures.

15:2 *My father's God* – Moses was only with his parents in babyhood and maybe very early childhood. They inculcated in him the faith of Yahweh at that early age. They likely died whilst he was still in the court of Pharaoh and looked like an ungrateful child who had gone the way of the world and forgotten his God and his people and their efforts to raise him in the faith. Moses here pays tribute to them. What a surprise awaits them in the Kingdom!

15:4 Pharaoh's men ran into the Sea themselves in hot pursuit of Israel; but God confirmed them in that desire, so in a sense He cast them into the Sea. There is strong emphasis on the image of God throwing or casting the Egyptians into the Red Sea (:1,21); God confirms people in the way they wish to go, in the heart they wish to have.

15:11 *Among the gods* – The Egyptian gods had been declared dead or powerless by the plagues. Israel enthusiastically sung of Yahweh's excellence above these gods; and yet they still carried the idols who represented those gods with them, and worshipped them (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:42,43). It's one thing to enthusiastically sing of God's truths in the words of hymns and songs, but to live out those words in daily life is quite another.

hand. The earth swallowed them.
¹³ You, in Your grace, have led the people that You have redeemed. You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation. ¹⁴ The peoples have heard. They tremble. Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed. Trembling takes hold of the mighty men of Moab. All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. ¹⁶ Terror and dread falls on them. By the greatness of your arm they are as still as a stone—until Your people pass over, Yahweh, until the people pass over whom You have purchased. ¹⁷ You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, the place, Yahweh, which You have made for yourself to dwell in; the sanctuary, Lord, which Your hands have established. ¹⁸ Yahweh shall reign forever and ever. ¹⁹ For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Yahweh brought back the waters of the sea on them; but the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea. ²⁰ Miriam the prophetess, the

sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dances. ²¹ Miriam answered them, Sing to Yahweh, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea.

Bitter Waters at Marah

²² Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. ²³ When they came to Marah, they couldn't drink from the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore its name was called Marah. ²⁴ The people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? ²⁵ Then he cried to Yahweh. Yahweh showed him a tree, and he threw it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them; ²⁶ and He said, If you will diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, and will do that which is right in His eyes, and will pay attention to His commandments, and keep all

15:15 *Are melted away* – So the people enthusiastically sung, and so it was in reality, as reported by Rahab (Josh. 2:9-11). But when Israel came to enter Canaan, they preferred to believe that the people there hadn't melted away at all, but were far too strong for them (Num. 13:30-33). Israel's hearts "melted" for fear of those melting Canaanites (Josh. 14:8). Again, we can loudly sing of God's power over all that might be obstacles in our path to entering the Kingdom, but to live and feel this in continual daily life is something else.

15:22 Soon after their baptism at the Red Sea, God gave His people tests. This is often seen in the lives of those baptized into Christ.

15:24 *Murmured* – We are specifically told not to murmur as they did (1 Cor. 10:10). They soon lost the intensity of joyful faith they had when they sung the Song of Moses earlier in this chapter. We too struggle to keep the intensity of faith which we have at some specific moments.

His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you, which I have put on the Egyptians; for I am Yahweh who heals you. ²⁷ They came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

CHAPTER 16 Feb. 8

Israel Complain about Lack of Food

They took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. ² The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness; ³ and the children of Israel said to them, We wish that we had died by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots, when we ate our fill of bread, for you have

brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. ⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from the sky for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. ⁵ It shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. ⁶ Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, At evening, then you shall know that Yahweh has brought you out from the land of Egypt; ⁷ and in the morning, then you shall see the glory of Yahweh; because He hears your murmurings against Yahweh. Who are we, that you murmur against us? ⁸ Moses said, Now Yahweh shall give you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to fully satisfy you; because Yahweh hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. And who are we?

15:27 The Israelites in their twelve tribes must have marvelled at God's gracious providence when they came across twelve wells in the desert, one for each tribe. In our wilderness journeys we too at times are amazed by God's kind providence. The twelve wells enabled 70 palm trees to grow. Gen. 10 listed 70 Gentile nations as the descendants of Noah's sons after the flood, and the number 70 is associated with the Gentiles. The implication is that Israel's blessings were to be shared with the Gentile world. Abraham's seed was to be a blessing to the world, and we who are in Christ are likewise that seed, and aren't to be selfish with our spiritual blessings but share them with the surrounding world. Israel's spiritual elitism and isolationism was exactly the opposite of what God intended.

16:3 As Israel exaggerated in their minds how good it had been in Egypt, forgetting it was the land of their suffering and desperation, so we can look back to the world we left at baptism [cp. the Red Sea crossing] and imagine it was so far better than it was.

16:6 God had brought Israel out of Egypt, but the reality and wonder of it was subsequently lost on them, just as it can be on us.

16:8 It's twice emphasized in :8,12 that the manna would completely fill them. God's word as it is in Christ can alone fully satisfy us here in life's wilderness.

Your murmurings are not against us, but against Yahweh. ⁹ Moses said to Aaron, Tell all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before Yahweh, for He has heard your murmurings'. ¹⁰ It happened, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread: and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God'.

God Gives Manna

¹³ It happened at evening that quail came up and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew that lay had gone, behold, on the surface of the wilderness was a small round thing, small as the frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? For they didn't know what it was. Moses said to them, It

is the bread which Yahweh has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded: Gather of it everyone according to his eating; an omer a head, according to the number of your persons, you shall take it, every man for those who are in his tent. ¹⁷ The children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less. ¹⁸ When they measured it with an omer, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating. ¹⁹ Moses said to them, Let no one leave of it until the morning. ²⁰ Notwithstanding they didn't listen to Moses, but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Moses was angry with them. ²¹ They gathered it morning by morning, everyone according to his eating. When the sun grew hot, it melted. ²² It happened that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one, and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. ²³ He said to them, This is that which Yahweh has spoken, 'Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to Yahweh. Bake that

Not against us – What they said against Moses they said against God, in the sense that all God's people represent Him, and our attitude to His people is our attitude to God – and will be the basis of our final judgment (Mt. 25:40).

16:18 Jewish tradition interpreted this as meaning that the stronger, fitter people gathered more and shared it with those who were weaker and couldn't gather so much, resulting in them all having the same amount of manna. Paul quotes this tradition with approval in 2 Cor. 8:15, using it to argue that rich Christians should give to those who are poorer. Those who refused to obey this command found their manna was corrupted by morning – teaching that unless we share our manna or wealth (as 2 Cor. 8:15 interprets it) before the morning of the Lord's coming, we will incur His wrath.

16:19 They were given enough food only for each day. Jesus alluded to this when He asked us to pray that God will give us enough bread for today only (Mt. 6:11).

which you want to bake, and boil that which you want to boil; and all that remains over lay up for yourselves to be kept until the morning'.²⁴ They laid it up until the morning, as Moses asked, and it didn't become foul, neither was there any worm in it.²⁵ Moses said, Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to Yahweh. Today you shall not find it in the field.²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath. In it there shall be none.²⁷ It happened on the seventh day, that some of the people went out to gather, and they found none.²⁸ Yahweh said to Moses, How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?²⁹ Behold, because Yahweh has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days. Everyone stay in his place. Let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.³¹ The house of Israel called its name Manna, and it was like coriander seed, white; and its taste was like wafers with honey.³² Moses said, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded, 'Let an omer-full of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth

from the land of Egypt'.³³ Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer-full of manna in it, and lay it up before Yahweh, to be kept throughout your generations.³⁴ As Yahweh commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.³⁵ The children of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land. They ate the manna until they came to the borders of the land of Canaan.³⁶ Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.

CHAPTER 17 Feb. 9

Water from the Rock

All the congregation of the children of Israel travelled from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to Yahweh's commandment, and encamped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.¹ Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses, and said, Give us water to drink. Moses said to them, Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test Yahweh?² The people were thirsty for water there; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?³ Moses cried to Yahweh, saying, What shall I do with these people?

16:27 The manna represented the word of God and the salvation which comes through its revelation in Christ (Jn. 6:48,63). Israel could gather it on six days of the week, but not on the seventh. The seventh day represents the Millennium / Kingdom (cp. how the manna ceased as soon as they entered Canaan, representing the Kingdom). Yet on the seventh day Israel sought to collect manna but found none – as the foolish virgins of the new Israel will seek the oil of the word when it is no longer available. Nobody will be indifferent in the day of judgment. All will want to gather the manna, to be filled with the oil. Now is the day to do so.

They are almost ready to stone me. ⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, Walk on before the people, and take the elders of Israel with you, and take the rod in your hand with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb. You shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink. Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because the children of Israel quarrelled, and because they put Yahweh to the test, saying, Is Yahweh among us, or not?

The Battle with Amalek

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. ⁹ Moses said to Joshua, Choose men for us, and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with God's rod in my hand. ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ It happened, when

Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. His hands were steady until sunset. ¹³ Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky. ¹⁵ Moses built an altar, and called its name Yahweh our Banner. ¹⁶ He said, Yah has sworn: 'Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'.

CHAPTER 18 Feb. 9

Jethro Visits Moses

Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, how that Yahweh had brought Israel out of Egypt.

17:6 The rock that was struck represented Christ (1 Cor. 10:4) – water came out of His side when He was 'struck' in crucifixion. Paul says that the rock followed them – in the sense that the water from the smitten rock followed them as a gushing river. This speaks of the constant refreshment and life available from Christ in our wilderness journeys. Yet despite the wonder of that provision, the people still murmured, made a golden calf, wanted to return to Egypt – they failed to perceive the wonder of God's constant presence, just as we can.

17:11 Uplifted hands represent intense prayer (Lam. 2:19; 2 Chron. 6:12,13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 141:2; 1 Tim. 2:8). The Bible is always teaching us the power of just one person – when Moses didn't pray so fervently, Israelite lives were lost. Others' wellbeing and final victory partially depends upon our prayer for them, hence Paul's example of and exhortation to pray for others continually.

17:12 Moses with his arms held above his head with men both side of him until the sun went down invites comparison with Christ on the cross, where He intensely prayed for the final victory of us God's people.

² Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, received Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her away, ³ and her two sons. The name of one son was Gershom, for Moses said, I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land. ⁴ The name of the other was Eliezer, for he said, My father's God was my help and delivered me from Pharaoh's sword. ⁵ Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the Mountain of God. ⁶ He said to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, have come to you with your wife, and her two sons with her. ⁷ Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and bowed and kissed him. They asked each other of their welfare, and they came into the tent. ⁸ Moses told his father-in-law all that Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had come on them on the way, and how Yahweh delivered them. ⁹ Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel, in that He had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰ Jethro said, Blessed be Yahweh, who has delivered you

out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all gods because of the thing in which they dealt arrogantly against them. ¹² Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God. Aaron came with all of the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

An Administrative System Put in Place

¹³ It happened on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from the morning to the evening. ¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that you do for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning to evening? ¹⁵ Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God. ¹⁶ When they have a matter, they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God, and

18:2 Moses "sent away" this woman – the Septuagint uses the same Greek word translated to "divorce" in 1 Cor. 7:11-13. Moses allowed divorce for the hardness of Israel's hearts (Mt. 19:8) and yet he himself appears to have divorced her – for the hardness of his heart?

18:3 Moses' children had names which showed his recognition he was a stranger in the land where he was living; he lived as a foreigner in Midian. Few people live in a country for 40 years without feeling they belong to it. We who are the Israel of God are to live as foreigners and pilgrims in this land which in fact is our eternal inheritance (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11).

18:15 Again we see the degree to which Moses was functionally God to the people, although he wasn't God Himself in person. The same can be said of Jesus.

His laws. ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, The thing that you do is not good. ¹⁸ You will surely wear away, both you, and this people that is with you; for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to perform it yourself alone. ¹⁹ Listen now to my voice. I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You represent the people before God, and bring the causes to God. ²⁰ You shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and shall show them the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do. ²¹ Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² Let them judge the people at all times. It shall be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves. So shall it be easier for you, and they shall share the load with you. ²³ If you will do this thing, and God commands you so, then you will be able to endure, and all of these people also will go to their place in peace. ²⁴ So Moses

listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²⁶ They judged the people at all times. They brought the hard causes to Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves. ²⁷ Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land.

CHAPTER 19 Feb. 10

God Proposes a Covenant

In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² When they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain. ³ Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him out of the mountain, saying, This is what you shall tell the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now

18:18 Moses accepts Jethro's advice on the basis that he would otherwise "wear away"; even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7). Was that because he followed Jethro's advice – or because God blessed him anyway, making Jethro's advice irrelevant?

18:21 As with the New Testament qualifications for leadership amongst God's people, birth, education, charisma and social standing were irrelevant. Spiritual qualifications were to decide who was chosen for leadership – a concept unheard of in any other religion.

19:4 The eagle tries to teach its young to fly independently by casting them out of the nest and flying beneath them to catch them if they fall, as well as the draft from it's own wings keeping them in motion. God wants His people to fly independently, not just be carried by Him.

therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant, then you shall be My very own possession from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation'. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. ⁷ Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Yahweh commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together, and said, All that Yahweh has spoken we will do. Moses reported the words of the people to Yahweh. ⁹ Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever. Moses told the words of the people to Yahweh. ¹⁰ Yahweh said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments, ¹¹ and be ready against the third day; for on the third day Yahweh will come down in the sight of all the people on Mount Sinai. ¹² You shall set bounds to the people all around, saying, 'Be careful that you don't go up onto the mountain,

or touch its border. Whoever touches the mountain shall be surely put to death. ¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether it is animal or man, he shall not live'. When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mountain.

The Need to Respect God's Holiness

¹⁴ Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵ He said to the people, Be ready by the third day. Don't have sexual relations with a woman. ¹⁶ It happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and the sound of an exceedingly loud trumpet; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai, all of it, smoked, because Yahweh descended on it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. ¹⁹ When

19:6 We in Christ are His Kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:9). The priests were from the tribe of Levi, and the kings from Judah. But God's intention was that all His people should be priests, rather than giving the responsibility for spiritual care and welfare to a select group of specialists. Nearly all religions delegate spiritual care to some group of specialists, but amongst God's true people we are all intended to be priests. Although Christ was from the kingly tribe of Judah, He is a priest too (Heb. 7:11-13) – and we who are in Him can therefore be a Kingdom of priests even now, and in the future be king-priests who shall reign eternally on earth (Rev. 5:10). Whilst the full physical manifestation of God's Kingdom is yet to come at Christ's return, we who are under the Kingship and dominion of God are in that sense His kingdom in embryo, in the sense that the people ruled over by a king are his 'kingdom'.

the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. ²⁰ Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ Yahweh said to Moses, Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to Yahweh to gaze, and many of them perish. ²² Let the priests also, who come near to Yahweh, sanctify themselves, lest Yahweh break forth on them. ²³ Moses said to Yahweh, The people can't come up to Mount Sinai, for you warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain, and sanctify it'. ²⁴ Yahweh said to him, Go down and you shall bring Aaron up with you, but don't let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest He break forth on them. ²⁵ So Moses went down to the people, and told them.

CHAPTER 20 Feb. 10

Ten Commandments Given

God spoke all these words, saying, ² I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate Me, ⁶ and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep my commandments. ⁷ You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His

19:19 According to Heb. 12:18-29, Moses was very frightened by the earthquake and sound of the voice. That passage draws a comparison with the voice of the blood of Christ, which is yet more powerful – having the power to shake all things to their very core.

19:24 God judges people in a manner appropriate to their sin – if the people 'broke through' to gaze at Yahweh, He would 'break through' in judgment against them.

20:4 Israel weren't to worship any appearance of God or anything which claimed to be a representation of Him – He wanted them to worship Him directly, facing the utter reality of the fact that we can have direct contact with Him.

20:5 *Jealous* – The more love someone shows to someone, the more they are going to be jealous about them, especially when the beloved one has agreed to accept that love. God's love for us is colossal, epitomized in the gift of His Son to die for us in demonstration of His love. He is therefore jealous over us, our thoughts, actions, feelings – for He sees all. It is painful for Him beyond words when we turn away to other gods – and it must be thrilling for Him to see us eagerly wanting to respond to Him, in a world which for the most part has refused His love or treats it as something ordinary.

20:7 *His Name in vain* – We take the Name to ourselves by baptism into that Name; baptism is a calling upon ourselves the Lord's Name (Acts 15:17; 22:16). We aren't to do this "in vain", for nothing, but to appreciate the wonder of it.

name in vain. ⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ You shall labour six days, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. You shall not do any work in it, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your livestock, nor your stranger who is within your gates; ¹¹ for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy. ¹² Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you. ¹³ You shall not murder. ¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ You shall not steal. ¹⁶ You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. ¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

The People Are Fearful

¹⁸ All the people perceived the thunders, the lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. When the people saw it, they trembled, and stayed at a distance. ¹⁹ They said to Moses, Speak with us yourself, and we will listen; but don't let God speak with us, lest we die. ²⁰ Moses said to the people, Don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, that you won't sin. ²¹ The people stayed at a distance, and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. ²² Yahweh said to Moses, This is what you shall tell the children of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall most certainly not make alongside Me gods of silver, or gods of gold for yourselves. ²⁴ You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. In every place where I record My name

20:17 *Not covet* – God's law differs from human laws in that it criminalizes internal attitudes. It was impossible to prove the sin of covetousness, nor enforce the law against it – because it's invisible to others. Yet the God who sees all stands in judgment upon our innermost thoughts and desires.

20:19 People prefer not to have a direct relationship with God, hence the hierarchies and pyramid structure of many churches. But God wants to have a direct personal relationship with us as individuals. They failed to see that Divine words given through another person really are the voice of God to us personally. Perhaps our difficulty with appreciating an inspired Bible is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself to us?

20:24 We are made from the dust of the earth. God doesn't want beautiful externalities, He wants us to worship Him from the heart, accepting us as we are. The Law of Moses recognizes so often that Israel wouldn't be fully obedient, hence the next verse goes on to speak of how *if* they still insisted on building not an earth altar but a stone one, then even if they make use of God's concession to human weakness, they must still abide by His principles.

I will come down to you and I will bless you. ²⁵ If you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stones; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have polluted it. ²⁶ Neither shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed to it’.

CHAPTER 21 Feb. 11

Regulations about Servants

Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. ² If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything. ³ If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he is married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. ⁵ But if the servant shall plainly say, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go out free;’ ⁶ then his master shall

bring him to the *elohim*, and shall bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever. ⁷ If a man sells his daughter to be a female servant, she shall not go out as the male servants do. ⁸ If she doesn’t please her master, who has married her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. ⁹ If he marries her to his son, he shall deal with her as a daughter. ¹⁰ If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marital rights. ¹¹ If he doesn’t do these three things for her, she may go free without paying any money.

Regulations about Violent Behaviour

¹² One who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death, ¹³ but not if it is unintentional, but God allows it to happen: then I will

I will come down to you and I will bless you – “You” is you singular in the Hebrew here. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, God would come to them personally. Yet this is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (19:20 “came down”) – as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses’ relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God’s people who truly sacrifices to Him.

21:6 Elohim – The word literally means ‘mighty ones’, and is usually translated “God”; but it can refer to Angels and also to men; in this case, to the elders or judges of Israel.

This custom is alluded to in Ps. 40:6, and applied to Christ in Heb. 10:5-10. For love of us, the wife whom He was given by God His “master” (:4), Christ chose to stay in the Father’s house for ever. The nailing of the ear to a piece of wood is understood in Hebrews 10 as prophetic of Christ’s nailing to the cross. The ear represented obedient listening to the Master’s word. Christ on the cross was ultimately obedient to God’s word – for our sakes. That we are seen as His wife should inspire us to the utmost faithfulness and support of His cause in this world.

appoint you a place where he shall flee. ¹⁴ If a man schemes and comes presumptuously on his neighbour to kill him, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die. ¹⁵ Anyone who attacks his father or his mother shall be surely put to death. ¹⁶ Anyone who kidnaps someone and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. ¹⁷ Anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ If men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he doesn't die, but is confined to bed; ¹⁹ if he rises again and walks around with his staff, then he who struck him shall be cleared: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for his healing until he is thoroughly healed. ²⁰ If a man strikes his servant or his maid with a rod, and he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. ²¹ Notwithstanding, if he gets up after a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his property. ²² If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, and yet no harm follows, he shall be surely fined as much as the woman's husband demands and the judges allow. ²³ But if

any harm follows, then you must take life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burning for burning, wound for wound, and bruise for bruise. ²⁶ If a man strikes his servant's eye, or his maid's eye, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. ²⁷ If he strikes out his male servant's tooth, or his female servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. ²⁸ If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the bull shall not be held responsible. ²⁹ But if the bull had a habit of goring in the past, and it has been testified to its owner, and he has not kept it in, but it has killed a man or a woman, the bull shall be stoned, and its owner shall also be put to death. ³⁰ If a ransom is laid on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is laid on him. ³¹ Whether it has gored a son or has gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. ³² If the bull gores a male servant or a female servant, thirty shekels of silver shall be given to their master, and the ox shall be stoned. ³³ If a man opens a pit, or if

21:14 The altar represented Christ (Heb. 13:10). He is the place of refuge whither we may flee, who like the man of :13 have committed sins worthy of death and yet against our deepest will. Whilst we cannot justify all our sins by blaming them on circumstances, within some kind of 'situational ethic', it is also true that God recognizes that at times and in some ways we sin without deeply intending to.

21:17 To deal with a person as if they are an object is judged by God as bad as murder. The value and meaning of the human person is paramount with God, and is reflected in His law.

21:20 A slave was to be respected as a person no less than anyone else. A person's social or economic standing can never excuse abusing them.

a man digs a pit and doesn't cover it, and a bull or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴ the owner of the pit shall make it good. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall be his. ³⁵ If one man's bull injures another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live bull, and divide its price; and they shall also divide the dead animal. ³⁶ Or if it is known that the bull was in the habit of goring in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall surely pay bull for bull, and the dead animal shall be his own.

CHAPTER 22 Feb. 12

Regulations about Theft and Loss

If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it, or sells it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. ² If the thief is found breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt of bloodshed for him. ³ If the sun has risen on him, guilt of bloodshed shall be for him; he shall make restitution. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the stolen property is found in his hand alive, whether it is ox, donkey, or sheep, he shall pay double. ⁵ If a man causes a field or vineyard to be eaten, and lets his animal loose, and it grazes in another man's

field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field, and from the best of his own vineyard. ⁶ If fire breaks out, and catches in thorns so that the stacks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field are consumed; he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. ⁷ If a man delivers to his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house; if the thief is found, he shall pay double. ⁸ If the thief isn't found, then the master of the house shall come near to God, to find out if he hasn't put his hand to his neighbour's goods. ⁹ For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any kind of lost thing, about which one says, 'This is mine', the cause of both parties shall come before God. He whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbour. ¹⁰ If a man delivers to his neighbour a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies or is injured, or driven away, no man seeing it; ¹¹ the oath of Yahweh shall be between them both, whether he hasn't put his hand to his neighbour's goods; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. ¹² But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its

21:33 *Doesn't cover it* – As the punishment for not keeping in an animal known to be dangerous (:29). These laws were seeking to inculcate sensitivity to others. We too should live our lives thinking about the possible consequence to others of our actions, both in what we commit and what we omit to do.

22:7 *Pay double* – But Zacchaeus paid back four times what he had stolen (Lk. 19:8). The existence of God's law shouldn't inculcate a spirit of minimalism in us, doing the letter of the law and no more. Rather if we perceive the principles behind it, we will do far over and above what the letter of the law requires.

22:10 'God' here refers to the judges or elders; to come before God's representative is to come before God.

owner. ¹³ If it is torn in pieces, let him bring it for evidence. He shall not make good that which was torn. ¹⁴ If a man borrows anything of his neighbour's, and it is injured, or dies, its owner not being with it, he shall surely make restitution. ¹⁵ If its owner is with it, he shall not make it good. If it is a leased thing, it came for its lease.

Regulations Teaching Sensitivity to Others

¹⁶ If a man entices a virgin who isn't pledged to be married, and lies with her, he shall surely pay a dowry for her to be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins. ¹⁸ You shall not allow a sorceress to live. ¹⁹ Whoever has sex with an animal shall surely be put to death. ²⁰ He who sacrifices to any god, except to Yahweh only, shall be utterly destroyed. ²¹ You shall not wrong an alien, neither shall you oppress him, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not take advantage of any widow or fa-

therless child. ²³ If you take advantage of them at all, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; ²⁴ and My wrath will grow hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. ²⁵ If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor; neither shall you charge him interest. ²⁶ If you take your neighbour's garment as guarantee of a loan, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down, ²⁷ for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What would he sleep in? It will happen, when he cries to Me, that I will hear, for I am gracious. ²⁸ You shall not blaspheme God, nor curse a ruler of your people. ²⁹ You shall not delay to offer from your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. You shall give the firstborn of your sons to Me. ³⁰ You shall do likewise with your cattle and with your sheep. Seven days it shall be with its mother, then on the eighth day you shall give it to Me. ³¹ You shall be holy men to Me, therefore

22:21 Israel were to be motivated in kindness to others by the recollection that they had been redeemed from Egypt; the memory of our redemption through the waters of baptism [cp. the Red Sea] should have the same effect upon us.

22:25 Israelites weren't to lend to each other for interest. Yet Jesus tells the rejected man that he should've done at least this (Mt. 25:7) – as if to say that the man should've done *at least something* with what God had given him, even if it wasn't the ideal, and even if it technically infringed God's law. Indifference and selfish laziness with God's gifts is therefore highlighted as being so reprehensible to Jesus.

22:31 This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised themselves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to

you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by animals in the field. You shall cast it to the dogs.

CHAPTER 23 Feb. 13

Principles of Judgment

You shall not spread a false report. Don't join your hand with

the wicked to be a malicious witness.

² You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; neither shall you testify in court to side with a multitude to pervert justice; ³ neither shall you show partiality to a poor man in his legal case.

⁴ If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. ⁵ If you see the donkey of him who hates you fallen down under his burden, don't leave him, you shall surely help him with it. ⁶ You shall not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits.

⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and don't kill the innocent and righteous:

for I will not justify the wicked.

⁸ You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds those who have sight and perverts the words of the righteous.

⁹ You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Principles of Agricultural Ethics

¹⁰ For six years you shall sow your land, and shall gather in its increase,

¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the animals of the field shall eat. In the same way, you shall deal with your vineyard and with your olive grove. ¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your handmaid, and the alien may be refreshed. ¹³ Be careful to do all things that I have said to you;

accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

23:2 We go astray "like sheep" (Is. 53:6) – we tend to sin because of others' influence, because we're not as strongly individualistic and independent as we like to think we are.

23:4, 5 These are further examples of how God's law differs from human laws in that it criminalizes internal attitudes. It was impossible to prove the sin of omitting to help your enemy's animal, nor enforce the law against it – because it would've been invisible to others. Yet the God who sees all stands in judgment upon our innermost thoughts and desires. Note too that sins of omission are just as bad as sins of commission; the man who refused to help the animal could've returned to his home that day feeling he hadn't actually committed anything wrong. But his sin of omission would've been noticed by God.

23:12 God's sensitivity to animals shines through the Law – the fact even animals are living beings and not mere machines should be felt by us too. God's intention was to inculcate an all round spirit of sensitivity to others in human life, and that included animals.

23:13 They were not to even mention the names of idols – a principle alluded to in Eph. 5:3, where we are told that we shouldn't even name or talk about immorality and evil. For these are the idols of our age. We aren't to sin vicariously, by watching, reading and speaking about sinful things whilst not physically doing them ourselves.

and don't invoke the name of other gods, neither let them be heard out of your mouth. ¹⁴ You shall observe a feast to Me three times a year. ¹⁵ You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib (for in it you came out from Egypt), and no one shall appear before me empty. ¹⁶ And the feast of harvest, the first fruits of your labours, which you sow in the field: and the feast of harvest, at the end of the year, when you gather in your labours out of the field. ¹⁷ Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁸ You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, neither shall the fat of My feast remain all night until the morning. ¹⁹ The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of Yahweh your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

The Exclusive Nature of the Covenant

²⁰ Behold, I send an angel before you, to keep you by the way, and

to bring you into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Pay attention to him, and listen to his voice. Don't provoke him, for he will not pardon your disobedience, for My name is in him. ²² But if you indeed listen to his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ For My angel shall go before you, and bring you in to the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; and I will cut them off. ²⁴ You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor follow their practices, but you shall utterly overthrow them and demolish their pillars. ²⁵ You shall serve Yahweh your God, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from your midst. ²⁶ No one will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will fulfil the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send My terror before you, and will confuse all the people to whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. ²⁸ I will send the hornet before you, which will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before

23:21 God's Name being carried by the Angel explains how Moses later is recorded as talking with Yahweh face to face, even though we are also told that He cannot ever be seen by humans. Moses spoke with the Angel who carried the Yahweh Name, and who was therefore functionally as God to men. The same principle explains how men, and especially Christ, can be spoken of as God because they carried His Name, without this making them God Himself in person.

23:23 This happened invisibly, with the Angel working through circumstances to weaken those tribes. But the Israelites failed to believe this verse, feeling that those tribes were far too strong for them (Num. 13:30-33).

23:28 The sending of hornets ahead of Israel parallels the sending of the Angel ahead of them (:23). The reference may be to literal hornets devastating and weakening the Canaanites; or it could refer instead to Egyptian tribes or the Philistines, some of

you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the animals of the field multiply against you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and inherit the land. ³¹ I will set your border from the Red Sea even to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. ³² You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me, for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

CHAPTER 24 Feb. 14

God Enters Covenant with Israel

He said to Moses, Come up to Yahweh, you, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship from a

distance. ² Moses alone shall come near to Yahweh, but they shall not come near, neither shall the people go up with him. ³ Moses came and told the people all the words of Yahweh, and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Yahweh has spoken will we do. ⁴ Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ He sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of cattle to Yahweh. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ He took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, All that Yahweh has spoken will we do, and be obedient. ⁸ Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on

whom had hornets on their armour, attacking and weakening the Canaanite tribes just before the Israelites arrived. This situation was providentially arranged by the Angel who went before Israel. The obstacles to our possessing the Kingdom seem huge and strong, but in fact they have been significantly weakened by God's providence. Invisible to us, the Angels likewise are potentially preparing our way to enter the Kingdom. **23:29** The God who is so far away from this earth foresees the situations we will face in life, and like a true Father, arranges things so that they will not be too great for us to overcome. His sensitivity to us is amazing.

24:7 Moses could read – for he had been raised with the best of the Egyptian education system (Acts 7:22).

24:8 *Blood of the covenant* – It wasn't that the blood *was* the covenant, but the death of the slain animal represented the confirmation and certainty of the covenant. Christ's death confirmed the new covenant which was made in the promises to Abraham (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:15-19). Believers take the cup of the new covenant in the breaking of bread service (1 Cor. 11:25), as a token of the absolute certainty of God's basic promises to us who have had those same covenant promises made to us through baptism (Gal. 3:27-29). We will eternally inherit the earth – and the blood of Christ confirmed that to us.

the people, and said, Look, this is the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you concerning all these words. ⁹ Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up. ¹⁰ They saw the God of Israel. Under His feet was like a paved work of sapphire stone, like the skies for clearness. ¹¹ He didn't lay His hand on the nobles of the children of Israel. They saw God, and ate and drank. ¹² Yahweh said to Moses, Come up to me on the mountain, and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and the commands that I have written, that you may teach them.

Moses Ascends Mount Sinai

¹³ Moses rose up with Joshua, his servant, and Moses went up onto God's Mountain. ¹⁴ He said to the elders, Wait here for us, until we come again to you. Behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever is involved in a dispute can go to them. ¹⁵ Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of Yahweh settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. The seventh day He

called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ The appearance of the glory of Yahweh was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. ¹⁸ Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up on the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

CHAPTER 25 Feb. 14

Preparations to Make the Tabernacle

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, that they take an offering for Me. From everyone whose heart makes him willing you shall take My offering. ³ This is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, brass, ⁴ blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, ⁵ rams' skins dyed red, sea cow hides, acacia wood, ⁶ oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense, ⁷ onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate. ⁸ Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of

24:11 To eat and drink with the Lord is a sign He accepts us and does not wish to destroy us. This is the comfort of doing so at the breaking of bread meeting.

24:12 Yahweh wrote the Law. Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of *Moses* writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). "The book of the law of Moses" is parallel with "the book of the law of Yahweh" (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was "the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses" (2 Chron. 34:14). God was so strongly manifest in Moses, without making Moses to be God Himself in person.

25:2 Willing hearted giving to God is important – the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea – speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

all of its furniture, even so you shall make it.

The Ark

¹⁰ They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Its length shall be two and a half cubits, its breadth a cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half its height.

¹¹ You shall overlay it with pure gold. You shall overlay it inside and outside, and you shall make a gold moulding around it. ¹² You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four feet. Two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. ¹³ You shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark. ¹⁵ The poles shall be in the rings of the ark. They shall not be taken from it. ¹⁶ You shall put the testimony which I shall give you into the ark. ¹⁷ You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two and a half cubits shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth.

¹⁸ You shall make two cherubim of hammered gold. You shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. You shall make the cherubim on its two ends of one piece with the mercy seat. ²⁰ The cherubim shall spread out their wings upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I will give you. ²² There I will meet with you, and I will tell you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the testimony, all that I command you for the children of Israel.

The Table of Shewbread

²³ You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth, and one and

25:21 The blood of atonement was sprinkled each year upon the top of the ark, the place known as “the mercy seat” or ‘atonement cover’. This blood represented the blood of Christ. The Angel cherubim shadowed the blood on the cover, representing how the Angels watched over Christ in His sacrifice and especially upon the cross. Hence His temptation to call Angels to deliver Him from it (Mt. 26:53). Peter alludes to this in saying that the Angels intently look down upon the things of the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:12). Pagan religions typically had a throne in their temples, on which their God sat. The throne of the true God was empty – there was a “mercy seat”, but no god or idol sat upon it. Faith is about believing in the God who cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1,2), and whose saving mercy to us is confirmed in the blood of His Son.

25:22 God meets with us over the blood of Christ, and from there His voice is heard. Hence Heb. 12:18-29 likens the blood of Christ to a huge voice; we cannot imagine Him there on the cross and be passive, we hear, as it were, God’s voice for us. This is why we must regularly remember Christ on the cross, replaying the scene continually before our eyes. For there we hear God’s voice and we have our meeting with Him. The breaking of bread service is a practical help to this end.

a half cubits its height. ²⁴ You shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a gold moulding around it. ²⁵ You shall make a rim of a handbreadth around it. You shall make a golden moulding on its rim around it. ²⁶ You shall make four rings of gold for it, and put the rings in the four corners that are on its four feet. ²⁷ The rings shall be close to the rim, for places for the poles to carry the table. ²⁸ You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. ²⁹ You shall make its dishes, its spoons, its ladles, and its bowls to pour out offerings with. You shall make them of pure gold. ³⁰ You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always.

The Lampstand

³¹ You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. Of hammered work shall the lampstand be made, even its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it. ³² There shall be six branches going out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of its one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side; ³³ three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a bud and a flower; and three

cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bud and a flower, so for the six branches going out of the lampstand; ³⁴ and in the lampstand four cups made like almond blossoms, its buds and its flowers; ³⁵ and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the lampstand. ³⁶ Their buds and their branches shall be of one piece with it, all of it one beaten work of pure gold. ³⁷ You shall make its lamps seven, and they shall light its lamps to give light to the space in front of it. ³⁸ Its snuffers and its snuff dishes shall be of pure gold. ³⁹ It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these accessories. ⁴⁰ See that you make them after their pattern, which has been shown to you on the mountain.

CHAPTER 26 Feb. 15

The Curtains of the Tabernacle

Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim. By the work of the skilful workman you shall make them. ² The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits,

25:36 The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God.

25:38 Gold wasn't the strongest or most practical material for these instruments. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). We aren't the best instruments for God to use in His house, but He prefers to use the soft and those who aren't humanly qualified for His work – because He works by faith in us, and by our faith in Him rather than our human strength.

and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains shall have one measure. ³ Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and the other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. ⁴ You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain from the edge in the coupling; and likewise you shall make in the edge of the curtain that is outmost in the second coupling. ⁵ You shall make fifty loops in the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that is in the second coupling. The loops shall be opposite one to another. ⁶ You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to another with the clasps; and the tabernacle shall be one. ⁷ You shall make curtains of goats' hair for a covering over the tabernacle. You shall make them eleven curtains. ⁸ The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: the eleven curtains shall have one measure. ⁹ You shall couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shall double

over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent. ¹⁰ You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which is outmost in the second coupling. ¹¹ You shall make fifty clasps of brass, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. ¹² The overhanging part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. ¹³ The cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of that which remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. ¹⁴ You shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above.

The Boards of the Tabernacle

¹⁵ You shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up. ¹⁶ Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and one and a half cubits

26:6 The tabernacle was “one”, joined together in such a way by the interlocking parts that it taught the lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was “pitched” by the Lord Jesus – translating a Greek word which suggests ‘crucifixion’ (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross.

26:10 The tabernacle represents God's dwelling place. He now no longer lives in any physical structure, but in the hearts of His people, who between them comprise His new dwelling place. We can however learn lessons from the principles behind the tabernacle construction. Great emphasis was placed on how the components were all interlocking – the curtains coupled together, the boards were joined by bars etc. It is by our unity and connection with each other that God will dwell amongst us. Christianity can't be lived in isolation – we need each other.

26:14 They were dyed red to represent how the blood of Christ is the covering for God's people.

the breadth of each board. ¹⁷ There shall be two tenons in each board, joined to one another: thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle. ¹⁸ You shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side southward. ¹⁹ You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons. ²⁰ For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, twenty boards, ²¹ and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. ²² For the far part of the tabernacle westward you shall make six boards. ²³ You shall make two boards for the corners of the tabernacle in the far part. ²⁴ They shall be double beneath, and in the same way they shall be whole to its top to one ring; thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. ²⁵ There shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. ²⁶ You shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷ and

five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far part westward. ²⁸ The middle bar in the midst of the boards shall pass through from end to end. ²⁹ You shall overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and you shall overlay the bars with gold. ³⁰ You shall set up the tabernacle according to the way that it was shown to you on the mountain.

The Veil

³¹ You shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim. The work of the skilful workman shall it be made. ³² You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, on four sockets of silver. ³³ You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil: and the veil shall separate the holy place from the most holy for you. ³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. ³⁵ You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand over against the table on

26:31 The veil represents Christ in His humanity (Heb. 10:20). His character was complexly woven and beautiful, with the white linen of righteousness (Rev. 19:8) running as a thread through His entire character. Weaving complex strands and patterns therefore speaks of how God worked to develop the character of Christ, and He likewise weaves in our lives too, if we are open to His working.

26:33 The veil screened off the Most Holy Place, where the very presence of God was. When Christ died, this veil was torn down (Mt. 26:51), from top to bottom – indicating it was done by God and not men. Through His death, anyone who believes in Him can do continually what the High Priest could do only once per year – come right into the very presence of God Himself.

the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side. ³⁶ You shall make a screen for the door of the Tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer. ³⁷ You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold: their hooks shall be of gold; and you shall cast five sockets of brass for them.

CHAPTER 27 Feb. 16

The Altar

You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be four-square: and its height shall be three cubits. ² You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it; and you shall overlay it with brass. ³ You shall make its pots to take away its ashes, its shovels, its basins, its flesh hooks, and its fire pans: all its vessels you shall make of brass. ⁴ You shall make a grating for it of network of brass: and on the net you shall make four bronze rings in its four corners. ⁵ You shall put it under the ledge around the altar beneath, that the net may reach halfway up the altar. ⁶ You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay

them with brass. ⁷ Its poles shall be put into the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar, when carrying it. ⁸ You shall make it with hollow planks. They shall make it as it has been shown you on the mountain.

The Court

⁹ You shall make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen one hundred cubits long for one side; ¹⁰ and its pillars shall be twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. ¹¹ Likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, and its pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. ¹² For the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. ¹³ The breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. ¹⁴ The hangings for the one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. ¹⁵ For the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. ¹⁶ For

27:1 *Acacia wood* – This was plentiful in the wilderness, but it is little more than brushwood; a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and broken in order to do His work (as also in Ez. 15:2-5).

the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four. ¹⁷ All the pillars of the court around shall be filleted with silver; their hooks of silver, and their sockets of brass. ¹⁸ The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty everywhere, and the height five cubits, of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass. ¹⁹ All the instruments of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pins, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass. ²⁰ You shall command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually. ²¹ In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh: it shall be a statute forever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

CHAPTER 28 Feb. 17

The Clothing of the Priests

Bring Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, near to you from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me in the priest's of-

fice, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

² You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³ You shall speak to all who are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to sanctify him, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office. ⁴ These are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and his sons, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office. ⁵ They shall take the gold, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen.

The Ephod and Breastplate

⁶ They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the skilful workman. ⁷ It shall have two shoulder straps joined to the two ends of it, that it may be joined together. ⁸ The skilfully woven belt band which is on it, that is to be put on him, shall be like its work and of the same piece; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. ⁹ You shall take two onyx stones,

27:20 The lampstand is used as a symbol of the ecclesia in the visions of Revelation 2 and 3. The purpose of the ecclesia is to enable the oil of the Spirit to be burnt, to turn it into light. We are to keep our own personal light burning continually, day and night. Jesus had this in mind when He likened us to women waiting for the bridegroom to come at night, whose oil lamps should not be allowed to go out (Mt. 25:8).

28:3 The wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go.

28:6 The ephod was a kind of waistcoat, onto which the breastplate was attached.

and engrave on them the names of the children of Israel: ¹⁰ six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, in the order of their birth.

¹¹ With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones, according to the names of the children of Israel: you shall make them to be enclosed in settings of gold. ¹² You shall put the two stones on the shoulder straps of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for a memorial. ¹³ You shall make settings of gold, ¹⁴ and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them like cords of braided work: and you shall put the braided chains on the settings. ¹⁵ You shall make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, you shall make it. ¹⁶ It shall be square and folded double; a span shall be its length of it, and a span its breadth. ¹⁷ You shall set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl shall be the first row; ¹⁸ and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; ¹⁹ and the third row

a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ²⁰ and the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be enclosed in gold in their settings. ²¹ The stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, each one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes. ²² You shall make on the breastplate chains like cords, of braided work of pure gold. ²³ You shall make on the breastplate two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. ²⁴ You shall put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. ²⁵ The other two ends of the two braided chains you shall put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in its forepart. ²⁶ You shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on its edge, which is toward the side of the ephod inward. ²⁷ You shall make two rings of gold, and shall put them on the two shoulder straps of the ephod underneath, in its forepart, close by its coupling, above the skilfully woven band of the ephod. ²⁸ They shall bind the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be on the skilfully

28:12 This is symbolic of how Christ, our High Priest, carries the names of all God's people on His shoulders and over His heart (:29) as He stands for us in God's presence. The preciousness of the stones reflects our high value in God's sight.

28:17 The faithful believers are likened to a stone with a unique name written on it (Rev. 2:17). We are each called to uniquely reflect and refract the light of God's glory in a way slightly different to anyone else, just as the stones on the breastplate all glimmered with their own unique beauty. Unity isn't the same as uniformity.

woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate may not swing out from the ephod. ²⁹ Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart, when he goes in to the holy place, for a memorial before Yahweh continually. ³⁰ You shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before Yahweh; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Yahweh continually. ³¹ You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. ³² It shall have a hole for the head in its midst: it shall have a binding of woven work around its hole, as it were the hole of a coat of mail, that it not be torn. ³³ On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, around its hem; and bells of gold between and around them: ³⁴ a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe. ³⁵ It shall be on Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place

before Yahweh, and when he comes out, so that he will not die.

The Plate and Coats

³⁶ You shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, 'HOLY TO YAHWEH'. ³⁷ You shall put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be on the sash; on the front of the sash it shall be. ³⁸ It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall make holy in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Yahweh. ³⁹ You shall weave the coat in chequer work of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of the embroiderer. ⁴⁰ You shall make coats for Aaron's sons, and you shall make sashes for them and you shall make headbands for them, for glory and for beauty. ⁴¹ You shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they

28:35 "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16) may be Paul alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound shall be heard... so that he will not die". This idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19:3 concerning the spread of the Gospel.

28:39 That the Priest's crown was to be made of linen rather than solid gold or some other precious metal could appear some kind of anticlimax – most leaders of other religions had something solid on their heads. White linen represents righteousness (Rev. 19:8); it's as if the intention was to highlight the fact that simple righteousness is of such great value and power in God's sight rather than any visible ostentation.

28:41 Jesus died that He might "sanctify" us to God (Jn. 17:17,19). This is the word used here by the Septuagint to describe the consecration of the priests to service of the body of Israel. If we reject the call to priesthood today, wanting to leave it all to others, we reject the point of the Lord's saving suffering for us.

may minister to Me in the priest's office.⁴² You shall make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the waist even to the thighs they shall reach.⁴³ They shall be on Aaron, and on his sons, when they go in to the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place; that they don't bear iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him.

CHAPTER 29 Feb. 18

Consecrating Aaron and His Sons

This is the thing that you shall do to them to make them holy, to minister to Me in the priest's office: take one young bull and two

rams without blemish,² unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil: you shall make them of fine wheat flour.³ You shall put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams.⁴ You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall wash them with water.⁵ You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the coat, the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and clothe him with the skilfully woven band of the ephod;⁶ and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban.⁷ Then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head,

28:43 *Bear iniquity* is therefore an idiom for being personally guilty. Yet the idiom is used about Christ in His bearing of our iniquity on the cross (Is. 53:11). The Lord Jesus was our sin bearer and yet personally guiltless. This is the paradox which even He struggled with, leading to His feeling of having been forsaken by God (Mt. 27:46). This means that although Christ never sinned, He knows the feelings of sinners, because His identity with us was so deep and complete.

29:1 'To make holy' or to 'sanctify' is something Jesus often spoke of in discussing the meaning of His death. He makes many allusions to the language of the High Priest in His prayer of John 17, e.g. "for their sakes I sanctify Myself so that they also may be sanctified" (Jn. 17:19). We are all called to be part of a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9); Christ's death sanctified us, prepared us for service in God's house. Spiritually serving others is therefore not something just for a specialist minority, but for *all* who are in Christ, 'the anointed one', anointed just as the priests were anointed to serve (:21). The unblemished animals which were sacrificed in order to sanctify the priests therefore represent the sacrifice of Jesus.

29:7 The Septuagint word used for 'anointing' here occurs in the New Testament only in 1 Jn. 2:20,27, where we read that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone as they began a specific calling or work. When we are baptized into Christ, *the* anointed One, we too are anointed in a sense (2 Cor. 1:21). We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" in 1 Jn. 2 would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism.

and anoint him. ⁸ You shall bring his sons, and put coats on them. ⁹ You shall clothe them with belts, Aaron and his sons, and bind headbands on them; and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute; and you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons. ¹⁰ You shall bring the bull before the Tent of Meeting; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. ¹¹ You shall kill the bull before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ¹² You shall take of the blood of the bull, and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. ¹³ You shall take all the fat that covers the innards, the cover of the liver, the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar. ¹⁴ But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside of the camp: it is a sin offering. ¹⁵ You shall also take the one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. ¹⁶ You shall kill the ram, and you shall take its blood, and sprinkle it around on the altar. ¹⁷ You shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its innards, and its legs, and put them with its pieces, and with its head. ¹⁸ You shall burn the whole ram on the altar: it is a burnt offering to Yahweh; it is a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ¹⁹ You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. ²⁰ Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of

Aaron, and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood around on the altar. ²¹ You shall take of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron, and on his garments, and on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him; and he shall be made holy, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him. ²² Also you shall take some of the ram's fat, the fat tail, the fat that covers the innards, the cover of the liver, the two kidneys, the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration), ²³ and one loaf of bread, one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before Yahweh. ²⁴ You shall put all of this in Aaron's hands, and in his sons' hands, and shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh. ²⁵ You shall take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar on the burnt offering, for a pleasant aroma before Yahweh: it is an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ²⁶ You shall take the breast of Aaron's ram of consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before Yahweh; and it shall be your portion. ²⁷ You shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the thigh of the wave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons; ²⁸ and it shall be for Aaron and his sons as their portion forever from the children of Israel;

for it is a wave offering; and it shall be a wave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, even their wave offering to Yahweh.

Offerings for Consecration

²⁹ The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed in them, and to be consecrated in them. ³⁰ Seven days shall the son who is priest in his place put them on, when he comes into the Tent of Meeting to minister in the holy place. ³¹ You shall take the ram of consecration, and boil its flesh in a holy place. ³² Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ³³ They shall eat those things with which atonement was made, to consecrate and sanctify them, but a stranger shall not eat of it, because they are holy. ³⁴ If anything of the flesh of the consecration, or of the bread, remains to the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. ³⁵ You shall do so to Aaron, and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. You shall consecrate them seven

days. ³⁶ Every day you shall offer the bull of sin offering for atonement; and you shall cleanse the altar, when you make atonement for it; and you shall anoint it, to sanctify it. ³⁷ Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and the altar shall be most holy: whatever touches the altar shall be holy. ³⁸ Now this is that which you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day continually. ³⁹ The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at evening; ⁴⁰ and with the one lamb a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil, and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering. ⁴¹ The other lamb you shall offer at evening, and shall do to it according to the meal offering of the morning, and according to its drink offering, for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ⁴² It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you. ⁴³ There I will meet with the children of Israel; and the place shall be sanctified by My glory. ⁴⁴ I will sanctify

29:33 Eating the things with which the atonement was made points forward to the breaking of bread service. We can see in this echoes of the consecration of the priests; and we should realize each time we do it that we have been sanctified in order to proactively serve in God's house.

29:42 Although we are a great multitude of redeemed, yet the communication of the Father and Son to us are still amazingly unique, even though we all hear and read the same actual words, and reflect upon the same facts. Right back at the beginning of God's relationship with Israel He made the point that "I will meet you [plural] to speak there to you [singular]" [the KJV reflects the Hebrew grammar by making a distinction between you plural and 'thee', you singular].

the Tent of Meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will sanctify, to minister to Me in the priest's office. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. ⁴⁶ They shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Yahweh their God.

CHAPTER 30 Feb. 19

The Altar of Incense

You shall make an altar to burn incense on. You shall make it of acacia wood. ² Its length shall be a cubit, and its breadth a cubit. It shall be square, and its height shall be two cubits. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. ³ You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, its sides around it,

and its horns; and you shall make a gold moulding around it. ⁴ You shall make two golden rings for it under its moulding; on its two ribs, on its two sides you shall make them; and they shall be for places for poles with which to bear it. ⁵ You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ⁶ You shall put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with you. ⁷ Aaron shall burn incense of sweet spices on it every morning. When he tends the lamps, he shall burn it. ⁸ When Aaron lights the lamps at evening, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Yahweh throughout your generations. ⁹ You shall offer no strange incense on it, nor burnt offering, nor meal offering;

29:45 *I will dwell... will be their God* – Rev. 21:3 understands this as coming true when Christ returns to earth, seeing that God's intention for this to happen with Israel didn't materialize. And yet, having prophesied that He *will be* their God, He says that He is right now their God (:46). This could mean that even if God's people choose not to have Him as their God, yet He keeps His side of the covenant; He is their God. In this we see God's hopefulness for us, His earnest desire to have a relationship with His people.

29:46 Often we read this two fold intention of God – to bring His people out from the world [Egypt], and then to do something positive with them. Our separation from the world isn't therefore negative; for 'holiness' means both separation *from* and separation *unto*.

30:8 *Perpetual incense* – The continual burning of incense, night and day, was a reminder that prayer (cp. incense, Rev. 8:3,4) was a way of life, not only specific statements. David's references to making constant prayer (e.g. Ps. 88:1) may allude to the constant rising up of the incense. We cannot be literally praying all the time, but our basic spirit of life can rise up as a prayer to God constantly. Our lives are, in a sense, our prayer.

30:9 The Law seems to have foreseen the difference between real and apparent prayer by warning that the true incense was to be burnt [representing prayer], but not any other kind of incense, or incense comprised of other kinds of ingredients. We must ask ourselves whether our prayers are the real thing, or just one part of our brain talking to another part of our brain which we call 'God'.

and you shall pour no drink offering on it. ¹⁰ Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once in the year: with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once in the year he shall make atonement for it throughout your generations. It is most holy to Yahweh.

The Atonement Money

¹¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² When you take a census of the children of Israel, according to those who are numbered among them, then each man shall give a ransom for himself to Yahweh, when you number them; that there be no plague among them when you number them. ¹³ They shall give this, everyone who passes over to those who are numbered: half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs); half a shekel for an offering to Yahweh. ¹⁴ Everyone who passes over to those who are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering to Yahweh. ¹⁵ The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of Yahweh, to make atonement

for your souls. ¹⁶ You shall take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the Tent of Meeting that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before Yahweh, to make atonement for your souls.

The Brass Basin

¹⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ You shall also make a basin of brass, and its base of brass, in which to wash. You shall put it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. ¹⁹ Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in it. ²⁰ When they go into the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water, that they not die; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ²¹ So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they not die; and it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his descendants throughout their generations.

The Anointing Oil

²² Moreover Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ Also take fine spices: of liquid myrrh, five hundred shek-

30:18 This may represent the need for the washing of baptism in order to come to Christ, the altar (Heb. 13:10). This was required if they didn't want to die (:20).

30:20 Tit. 3:5-7 implies that the priests washing in the brass basin typified baptism. Baptism is related to salvation. All God's people are priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9); the washing of baptism is an absolute necessity before we can be God's priestly people.

30:21 There are many allusions to the language of priesthood in the New Testament, both as major statements and also in passing. The idea of baptism as a washing suggests that we afterwards enter into priestly service; we're not declared by baptism to be merely members of a denomination, hobby level theologians who now agree to a set of doctrines. We instead, in a very real sense, are cleansed and consecrated into the service of God, ministering to His people, doing His work.

els; and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, even two hundred and fifty; and of fragrant cane, two hundred and fifty; ²⁴ and of cassia five hundred, after the shekel of the sanctuary; and a hin of olive oil. ²⁵ You shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil. ²⁶ You shall use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony, ²⁷ the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, ²⁸ the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its base. ²⁹ You shall sanctify them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them shall be holy. ³⁰ You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office. ³¹ You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. ³² It shall not be poured on man's flesh, neither shall you make any like it, according to its composition: it is holy. It shall be holy to you. ³³ Whoever compounds any like it, or whoever puts any of it on a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people'.

³⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Take to yourself sweet spices, gum resin, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense: there shall be an equal weight of each; ³⁵ and you shall make incense of it, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy: ³⁶ and you shall beat some of it very small, and put some of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be to you most holy. ³⁷ The incense which you shall make, according to its composition you shall not make for yourselves: it shall be to you holy for Yahweh. ³⁸ Whoever shall make any like that, to smell of it, he shall be cut off from his people.

CHAPTER 31 Feb. 20

The Use of Bezalel

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Behold, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship, ⁴ to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, ⁵ and in cutting

30:35 Incense is a symbol of prayer (Rev. 8:3,4). Whilst there is a place for instantaneous and emotional prayers, this doesn't mean that we should overlook the fact that another kind of prayer should be prayer that is carefully prepared, just as the incense was.

Seasoned with salt – Our speech, Paul says, should be “seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). He's alluding here, perhaps with the idea that the way we speak generally should be in the same manner as we pray to God, like the incense.

30:36 *Very small* – If incense is like prayer, this may refer to how we shouldn't be afraid nor ashamed to pray to God about the smallest things. Nothing is outside of His control, indeed, God is so often in the details.

of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of workmanship. ⁶ I, behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the heart of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony, the mercy seat that is on it, all the furniture of the Tent, ⁸ the table and its vessels, the pure lampstand with all its vessels, the altar of incense, ⁹ the altar of burnt offering with all its vessels, the basin and its base, ¹⁰ the finely worked garments—the holy garments for Aaron the priest—the garments of his sons to minister in the priest’s office, ¹¹ the anointing oil, and the incense of sweet spices for the holy place, according to all that I have commanded you they shall do.

The Sabbath

¹² Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹³ Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, ‘Most certainly you shall keep my Sabbaths: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that you may know

that I am Yahweh who sanctifies you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Yahweh. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷ It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed’. ¹⁸ When He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave to Moses the two tablets of the testimony, stone tablets, written with God’s finger.

CHAPTER 32 Feb. 20

The Israelites Make a Golden Calf

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and

31:6 The wise were made more wise – an idea we often encounter in the opening chapters of Proverbs. God confirms men and women in the way they wish to go; if they wish to do His work and build up His dwelling place, He will confirm them in their natural talents and give them new ones.

31:17 How are we to understand the ‘language of limitation’ which Scripture abounds with – e.g. Gen. 2:2; Ex. 31:17; Dt. 32:20,27? God is almighty and doesn’t need refreshment. One explanation is that such language refers to God’s manifestation through His Angels, who aren’t almighty although they are sinless (Mt. 24:36).

Heb. 4:10 understands the Sabbath to teach that as God ceased from His works, so those in Christ should cease from trusting in their own works and live their whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is defined here as a sign between God and the people of Israel; those in Christ don’t need to observe it today (Col. 2:14-17).

said to him, Come, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him. ² Aaron said to them, Take off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me. ³ All the people took off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He received what they handed him, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said, These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt. ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to Yahweh. ⁶ They rose up early on the next day, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. ⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go, get down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves! ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt'.

Moses Persuades God Not to Destroy Israel

⁹ Yahweh said to Moses, I have seen these people, and behold, they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now therefore

leave Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation. ¹¹ Moses begged Yahweh his God, and said, Yahweh, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, that you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'He brought them forth for evil, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the surface of the earth?' Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of the sky, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever'. ¹⁴ Yahweh changed His mind of the evil which He said He would do to His people. ¹⁵ Moses turned, and went down from the mountain, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand; tablets that were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tables. ¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, There is the noise of war in the camp.

Moses Descends from the Mountain and Judges Israel

¹⁸ He said, It isn't the voice of those who shout for victory, neither is it

the voice of those who cry for being overcome; but the noise of those who sing that I hear. ¹⁹ It happened, as soon as he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger grew hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, and scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. ²¹ Moses said to Aaron, What did these people do to you, that you have brought a great sin on them? ²² Aaron said, Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. ²³ For they said to me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him'. ²⁴ I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them take it off;' so they gave it to me; and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf. ²⁵ When Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked, for a shame among their enemies), ²⁶ then Moses stood in the

gate of the camp, and said, Whoever is on Yahweh's side, come to me! All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. ²⁷ He said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Every man put his sword on his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and every man kill his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour'. ²⁸ The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. ²⁹ Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to Yahweh, yes, every man against his son, and against his brother; that He may bestow on you a blessing this day.

Moses Intercedes with God

³⁰ It happened on the next day, that Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin. ³¹ Moses returned to Yahweh, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made themselves gods of gold.

³² Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out of

32:32 Moses loved the people so intensely, despite their rebellion. He was prepared to give his place in the Kingdom so that they might enter; he *prayed* God for 40 days to accept his offer. He knew that atonement could only be by sacrifice of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; cp. Num. 25:8,13); and yet he climbed the Mount with the intent of making atonement himself for Israel's sin (:30); he intended to give his life for them. And he didn't make such a promise in hot blood, as some men might. He made the statement, and then made the long climb to the top of the mount. And during that climb, it seems he came to an even higher spiritual level; he was prepared not only to offer his physical life, but also his place in the Kingdom; God's "book" is His book of life, of those who will ultimately be saved (Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12). The love of Moses for Israel typifies the love of Christ towards

Your book which You have written.
 33 Yahweh said to Moses, Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. 34 Now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My angel shall go before you. Nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin. 35 Yahweh

struck the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

CHAPTER 33 Feb. 21

The Tent of Meeting

Yahweh spoke to Moses, Depart, go up from here, you and the people that you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of

us. At the end of his life he recounts how God had threatened to destroy the people (Dt. 9:15), but he doesn't record his 40 days of pleading with the Father, and how he turned down the offer of having himself made into a great nation. In this we see his humility. Note how Moses argues with God against God's stated intention, and persuades God otherwise. He is open to dialogue with us His people; hence the intensity we can experience in prayer, and the element of wrestling there is in it. To be blotted out of the book may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9 – to be blotted out of the book meant to not enter the land. God had just spoken of 'blotting out' Israel from before Him (Dt. 9:14), and making a nation of Moses; but now Moses is asking to share in their condemnation rather than experience salvation without them. This was the extent of his devotion. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard* – in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land – to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded; Moses didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. But ultimately he did what he intended – he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses at the end of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Ps. 106:32). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. In all this, Moses was typifying the death of Jesus. Is. 53:8 describes His cross as being "cut off [Heb. 'excluded'] from the land of the living" (s.w. 'the congregation' – of Israel), for the transgression of His people. The Lord died the death of a sinner, He chose like Moses to suffer affliction with us, that we might be saved.

32:33 God didn't accept Moses' offer to die as a *substitute* for Israel, for each must be judged for their own sins. But He did accept Moses as a *representative* of Israel and accepted his mediation for their salvation on this basis; just as He accepted the work of Christ on the same basis. Paul learnt the lesson when he says that he *could wish* himself condemned and Israel saved (Rom. 9:1-3); but he recognized God didn't accept Moses' offer of dying for them as a substitute.

33:1 The manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. Here God says that *Moses* brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in 32:11, Moses says [as fre-

which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your seed'. ² I will send an angel before you; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: ³ to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of you, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you in the way. ⁴ When the people heard this evil news, they mourned; and no one put on his jewellery. ⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, Tell the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go up into your midst for one moment, I would consume you. Therefore now take off your jewellery from you, that I may know what to do to you'. ⁶ The children of Israel stripped themselves of their jewellery from Mount Horeb onward. ⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it outside the camp, far away from the camp, and he called it The Tent of Meeting. It happened that everyone who sought Yahweh went out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ It happened that when Moses went out

to the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, each one at their tent door, and watched Moses, until he had gone into the Tent. ⁹ It happened, when Moses entered into the Tent, that the pillar of cloud descended, stood at the door of the Tent, and spoke with Moses. ¹⁰ All the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent, and all the people rose up and worshiped, everyone at their tent door. ¹¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. He turned again into the camp, but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, didn't depart out of the Tent.

Moses Asks to Feel God's Presence

¹² Moses said to Yahweh, Behold, You tell me, 'Bring up this people' and yet You haven't let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight'. ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found grace in Your sight, please show me now Your ways, that I may know You, so that I may find grace in Your sight; and consider that this

quently] that *God* brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father.

33:5 God told Moses that because Israel were stiff-necked, therefore He could not go up with them. Moses agrees the people are stiff-necked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (34:9). And God did! He acted according to how broad was Moses' conception of God's grace. If Abraham's conception of grace had been even broader, perhaps Sodom would've been saved...

33:13 God assures Moses that he has found grace in His eyes, and yet Moses doubts this... as if the voice of God telling him wasn't enough! And maybe there is even the implication that he mistakenly thought that he needed more *knowledge* of God before he could find that grace... as if it depended upon his own mental faculties. And yet God patiently assures Moses yet again: "I *will be gracious* to whom I will be gracious" (:19) was said specifically to Moses, given the context of Moses' doubts about

nation is Your people. ¹⁴ He said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. ¹⁵ He said to Him, If Your presence doesn't go with me, don't carry us up from here. ¹⁶ For how would people know that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people? Isn't it in that You go with us, so that we are separated, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the surface of the earth? ¹⁷ Yahweh said to Moses, I will do this thing also that you have spoken; for you have found favour in My sight, and I know you by name. ¹⁸ He said, Please show me Your glory. ¹⁹ He said, I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ He said, You cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live. ²¹ Yahweh also said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. ²² It will happen, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will

cover you with My hand until I have passed by; ²³ then I will take away My hand, and you will see My back; but My face shall not be seen.

CHAPTER 34 Feb. 21

Moses Again Ascends Mount Sinai

Yahweh said to Moses, Chisel two stone tablets like the first; and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. ² Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. ³ No one shall come up with you; neither let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mountain. ⁴ He chiselled two tablets of stone like the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up to Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had commanded him, and took in his hand two stone tablets. ⁵ Yahweh descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Yahweh. ⁶ Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh!

his receipt of God's grace. The coming down of Yahweh to pronounce His Name was, in the context, to show how far God would go to assure Moses that yes, His grace towards Moses was real. We too struggle with really believing God's grace, it seems too good news; and we too are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance.

I will give you rest – But they did not enter that rest (Heb. 4:8,10). “Rest” was defined as the land being subdued before God with all the tribes driven out (Josh. 1:13,15; Num. 32:21,22; 1 Chron. 22:18). This being conditional on Israel's faithfulness, we conclude that when the Angel said “I will give you rest” He was speaking of what was possible in prospect; so much peace, victory and salvation have been prepared for us in prospect.

34:6 God's Name is essentially His characteristics and personality; this declaration of the Name is in response to the request to reveal His glory (33:18). How we pronounce or transliterate God's Name isn't so important; the essence of God's Name is who

Yahweh! A merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth, ⁷ keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation. ⁸ Moses hurried and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. ⁹ He said, If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your inheritance.

The Exclusive Nature of Covenant with God

¹⁰ He said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been worked in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which you are shall see the work of Yahweh; for it is an awesome thing that I do with you. ¹¹ Observe that which I command you this day. Behold, I drive out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. ¹² Be

careful, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be for a snare in the midst of you; ¹³ but you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and you shall cut down their Asherim; ¹⁴ for you shall worship no other god; for Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. ¹⁵ Don't make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, lest they play the prostitute after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and one call you and you eat of his sacrifice; ¹⁶ and you take of their daughters to your sons, and their daughters play the prostitute after their gods, and make your sons prostitute themselves to their gods. ¹⁷ You shall make no cast idols for yourselves. ¹⁸ You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. ¹⁹ All that opens the womb is Mine; and all your livestock that is male, the firstborn of cow and sheep. ²⁰ The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. No one shall ap-

He is and what He does by grace in the lives of people. Jesus alludes here when He predicted that His death would be a declaration of God's Name; in the cross we see the quintessence of God's mercy, grace, judgment etc. (Jn. 17:26). We are baptized into the Name, whereby all God's perfect character is counted to us.

34:9 Moses makes this request after the clear statement in 33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of you". So let us not be afraid to ask God to change what seems like His purpose in our lives, no matter how hard it seems, if we truly feel that another way would give Him more glory. Moses would not have tried if he did not think success in that prayer was possible. But he not only tried, he succeeded.

pear before Me empty. ²¹ Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest: in ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest. ²² You shall observe the feast of weeks with the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of harvest at the year's end. ²³ Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh, the God of Israel. ²⁴ For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man desire your land when you go up to appear before Yahweh your God three times in the year. ²⁵ You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left to the morning. ²⁶ You shall bring the first of the first fruits of your ground to the house of Yahweh your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. ²⁷ Yahweh said to Moses, Write you these words; for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. ²⁸ He was there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread, nor drank water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Moses Talks with the People

²⁹ It happened, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mountain, that Moses didn't know that the skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him. ³⁰ When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. ³² Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them all of the commandments that Yahweh had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. ³³ When Moses was done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. ³⁴ But when Moses went in before Yahweh to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel that which he was commanded. ³⁵ The children of Israel saw Moses' face, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

34:28 The Old Covenant is defined here and elsewhere as the ten commandments, which include the Sabbath. The New Testament teaches that the Old Covenant has been replaced by the New Covenant in Christ – and He never commanded us to keep the Sabbath.

34:29 We are described in 2 Cor. 3:18 as also like Moses beholding the glory of God, in terms of His moral perfection as it is in the face of Jesus (see on :6), and as the physical glory reflected off Moses' face, so the more we are in the presence of Jesus, meditating upon His character, the more that glory in a moral sense will increasingly shine off our faces. Paul uses the metaphor of looking in a mirror, until we find that the image in the mirror is no longer our face but the face of Jesus.

CHAPTER 35 Feb. 22***Materials Gathered for******Constructing the Tabernacle***

Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said to them, These are the words which Yahweh has commanded, that you should do them. ² Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of solemn rest to Yahweh: whoever does any work in it shall be put to death. ³ You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day'. ⁴ Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded, saying, ⁵ 'Take from among you an offering to Yahweh. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, Yahweh's offering: gold, silver, brass, ⁶ blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, ⁷ rams' skins dyed red, sea cow hides, acacia wood, ⁸ oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense, ⁹ onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for

the breastplate. ¹⁰ Let every wise-hearted man among you come, and make all that Yahweh has commanded: ¹¹ the tabernacle, its outer covering, its roof, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; ¹² the ark, and its poles, the mercy seat, the veil of the screen; ¹³ the table with its poles and all its vessels, and the show bread; ¹⁴ the lampstand also for the light, with its vessels, its lamps, and the oil for the light; ¹⁵ and the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle; ¹⁶ the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of brass, its poles, and all its vessels, the basin and its base; ¹⁷ the hangings of the court, its pillars, their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; ¹⁸ the pins of the tabernacle, the pins of the court, and their cords; ¹⁹ the finely worked garments, for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office'. ²⁰ All the congregation of the

35:5 Paul wanted the Corinthians to think themselves into Israel's shoes. For then they would realize that as Israel had to have a willing heart to give back to God the wealth of Egypt which He had given them, so they were to have a willing heart in being generous to their poorer brethren (35:5 = 2 Cor. 8:12). And they would have realized that as "last year" they had made this offer (2 Cor. 8:10 Gk.), so the year before, Israel had received Egypt's wealth with a similar undertaking to use it for the Lord's cause. As Moses had to remind them a second time of their obligations in Ex. 35, so Paul had to bring it again before Corinth. And if they had seen these similarities, they would have got the sense of Paul's lament that there was not one wise hearted man amongst them – for the "wise hearted" were to convert Israel's gold and silver into tools for Yahweh's service (35:10 = 1 Cor. 6:5; 2 Cor. 10:12).

35:6-9 These were the things which Israel had taken with them from Egypt (12:36); we likewise should use whatever resources we have taken from this world [cp. Egypt] in order to do God's work and build and enhance His dwelling place amongst His people.

children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹ They came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing, and brought Yahweh's offering, for the work of the Tent of Meeting, and for all of its service, and for the holy garments. ²² They came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought brooches, earrings, signet rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man who offered an offering of gold to Yahweh. ²³ Everyone, with whom was found blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and sea cow hides, brought them. ²⁴ Everyone who offered an offering of silver and brass brought Yahweh's offering; and everyone, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it. ²⁵ All the women who were wise-hearted spun with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen. ²⁶ All the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' hair. ²⁷ The rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastplate; ²⁸ and the spice, and the oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. ²⁹ The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to Yahweh; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Yahweh

had commanded to be made by Moses.

Bezalel and Oholiab

³⁰ Moses said to the children of Israel, Behold, Yahweh has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³¹ He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship; ³² and to make skilful works, to work in gold, in silver, in brass, ³³ in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of skilful workmanship. ³⁴ He has put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. ³⁵ He has filled them with wisdom of heart, to work all kinds of workmanship, of the engraver, of the skilful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of those who do any workmanship, and of those who make skilful works.

CHAPTER 36 Feb. 23

Enthusiastic Response to the Work

Bezael and Oholiab shall work with every wise-hearted man, in whom Yahweh has put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Yahweh has commanded. ² Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab, and eve-

35:31 These men could have refused to do what God asked them. This passage appears to be the basis upon which Paul tells us that each of us have "good works" which God has in mind for us to do, and we must exercise our freewill to perceive them and go do them (Eph. 2:10).

ry wise-hearted man, in whose heart Yahweh had put wisdom, even everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to the work to do it; ³ and they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, with which to make it. They brought yet to him freewill offerings every morning. ⁴ All the wise men, who performed all the work of the sanctuary, each came from his work which they did, ⁵ and they spoke to Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Yahweh commanded to make. ⁶ Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make anything else for the offering for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. ⁷ For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

Making the Curtains and Boards

⁸ All the wise-hearted men among those who did the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, with cherubim, the work of the skilful workman, they made them. ⁹ The length of each curtain was twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. All the curtains had one measure. ¹⁰ He cou-

pled five curtains to one another, and the other five curtains he coupled one to another. ¹¹ He made loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain from the edge in the coupling. Likewise he made in the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the second coupling. ¹² He made fifty loops in the one curtain, and he made fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that was in the second coupling. The loops were opposite one to another. ¹³ He made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains one to another with the clasps: so the tabernacle was a unit. ¹⁴ He made curtains of goats' hair for a covering over the tabernacle. He made them eleven curtains. ¹⁵ The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits the breadth of each curtain. The eleven curtains had one measure. ¹⁶ He coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. ¹⁷ He made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the coupling, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which was outmost in the second coupling. ¹⁸ He made fifty clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be a unit. ¹⁹ He made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above. ²⁰ He made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up. ²¹ Ten cubits was the length of a board, and a cubit and a half

36:6 Israel were extremely generous to God's work, whilst at the same time carrying with them the idols of Egypt and in their hearts wanting to return there (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:42,43). We too can be externally supportive of God's work whilst in our hearts being far from Him; this is the nature of our human condition which we must battle against. God above all seeks our hearts and not our external works.

the breadth of each board. ²² Each board had two tenons, joined one to another. He made all the boards of the tabernacle this way. ²³ He made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward. ²⁴ He made forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons. ²⁵ For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty boards, ²⁶ and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. ²⁷ For the far part of the tabernacle westward he made six boards. ²⁸ He made two boards for the corners of the tabernacle in the far part. ²⁹ They were double beneath, and in the same way they were all the way to its top to one ring. He did this to both of them in the two corners. ³⁰ There were eight

boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; under every board two sockets. ³¹ He made bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, ³² and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the hinder part westward. ³³ He made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from the one end to the other. ³⁴ He overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold for places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold. ³⁵ He made the veil of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim. He made it the work of a skilful workman. ³⁶ He made four pillars of acacia for it, and overlaid them with gold. Their hooks were of gold. He cast four sockets of silver for them. ³⁷ He made a screen for the door of the tent, of blue, purple, scarlet, and

36:31 *He made...*— There is an exact symmetry between the commands to make the tabernacle items – e.g. “You shall make bars...” (26:26) – and the record of the fulfilment of the work: “He made... bars”. This is to demonstrate how strictly obedient Moses was to all the commands, hence the comment that he was faithfully obedient in all the work of God’s house (Heb. 3:2,5). In all this, Moses was a type of the perfect obedience of Christ to God. However, we also note that earlier in his life, Moses tended to argue back with God and find every reason *not* to be obedient. As he grew spiritually, he became more naturally and enthusiastically obedient to God’s demands rather than trying to find ways around them, and as such he becomes a pattern for our spiritual growth too.

36:35 The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20); and yet into it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life. The Lord taught this when He asked us to take up the cross daily: to live each day in the exercise of the same principles which He lived and died by. Let’s not see spiritual life as a survival of a few crises, as and when they present themselves. It’s a way of life, and the principles which lead us to the little victories (when we scald ourselves with hot water, when we dirty a newly washed shirt...) will give us the greater ones also, when (e.g.) we stand before a tribunal, or face death in whatever form.

fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer;³⁸ and the five pillars of it with their hooks. He overlaid their capitals and their fillets with gold, and their five sockets were of brass.

CHAPTER 37 Feb. 24

Making the Ark

Beazael made the ark of acacia wood. Its length was two and a half cubits, and its breadth a cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half its height.² He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a moulding of gold for it around it.³ He cast four rings of gold for it, in its four feet; even two rings on its one side, and two rings on its other side.⁴ He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold.⁵ He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to bear the ark.⁶ He made a mercy seat of pure gold. Its length was two and a half cubits, and a cubit and a half its breadth.⁷ He made two cherubim of gold. He made them of beaten work, at the two ends of the mercy seat;⁸ one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. He made the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends.⁹ The cherubim spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy

seat.¹⁰ He made the table of acacia wood. Its length was two cubits, and its breadth was a cubit, and its height was a cubit and a half.¹¹ He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a gold moulding around it.¹² He made a border of a handbreadth around it, and made a golden moulding on its border around it.¹³ He cast four rings of gold for it, and put the rings in the four corners that were on its four feet.¹⁴ The rings were close by the border, the places for the poles to carry the table.¹⁵ He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, to carry the table.¹⁶ He made the vessels which were on the table, its dishes, its spoons, its bowls, and its pitchers with which to pour out, of pure gold.

Making the Lampstand

¹⁷ He made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of beaten work. Its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its flowers were of one piece with it.¹⁸ There were six branches going out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of its one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side;¹⁹ three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a bud and a flower, and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bud and a flower: so for the six

37:19 Israel was one nation under God; they were represented by one seven-branched candlestick. But in the New Testament vision of Rev. 1:20, each church is represented by an individual candlestick, and the body of Christ as a whole is represented by seven candlesticks, seven being the number of completion. This suggests that each local congregation is seen as autonomous by Christ; no other candlestick can dictate to another what they should do. If they fail to give light as they should, then this is dealt

branches going out of the lampstand. ²⁰ In the lampstand were four cups made like almond blossoms, its buds and its flowers; ²¹ and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of it. ²² Their buds and their branches were of one piece with it. The whole thing was one beaten work of pure gold. ²³ He made its seven lamps, and its snuff-ers, and its snuff dishes, of pure gold. ²⁴ He made it of a talent of pure gold, with all its vessels.

Making the Incense Altar

²⁵ He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. It was square: its length was a cubit, and its breadth a cubit. Its height was two cubits. Its horns were of one piece with it. ²⁶ He overlaid it with pure gold, its top, its sides around it, and its horns. He made a gold moulding around it. ²⁷ He made two golden rings for it under its moulding crown, on its two ribs, on its two sides, for places for poles with which to carry it. ²⁸ He made the poles of acacia wood, and

overlaid them with gold. ²⁹ He made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense of sweet spices, after the art of the perfumer.

CHAPTER 38 Feb. 25

Making the Altar of Burnt Offering and Brass Basin

He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood. It was square. Its length was five cubits, its breadth was five cubits, and its height was three cubits. ² He made its horns on its four corners. Its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with brass. ³ He made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the fire pans. He made all its vessels of brass. ⁴ He made for the altar a grating of a network of brass, under the ledge around it beneath, reaching halfway up. ⁵ He cast four rings for the four ends of brass grating, to be places for the poles. ⁶ He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with brass. ⁷ He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to carry it. He made it hollow with planks. ⁸ He made the basin of brass, and its base of brass,

with by Christ Himself, the One who walks amongst the seven candlesticks and is in their midst (Rev. 1:13); He alone can remove a candlestick (Rev. 2:5).

37:21 The language of buds, flowers and branches invites us to see the candlestick as a tree of life giving light in the darkness of the tabernacle, which had no natural light. The candlestick represents the local church in our times (Rev. 1:20); we as communities of believers are to be as the tree of life, offering eternity to a dark world; hence Prov. 11:30 likens the fruit of the righteous to the tree of life, which results in winning people for eternity.

37:22 *One beaten work* – The fact the candlestick was made from one piece of gold is emphasized; it speaks of the unity of the local church, achieved through much patient beating out of the material which comprises it.

out of the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the door of the Tent of Meeting.

Making the Court

⁹ He made the court: for the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, one hundred cubits; ¹⁰ their pillars were twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. ¹¹ For the north side one hundred cubits, their pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. ¹² For the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. ¹³ For the east side, eastward fifty cubits. ¹⁴ The hangings for the one side were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three; ¹⁵ and so also for the other side: on this hand and that hand by the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. ¹⁶ All the hangings around the court were of fine twined linen. ¹⁷ The sockets for the pillars were of brass.

The hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver; and the overlaying of their heads, of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver. ¹⁸ The screen for the gate of the court was the work of the embroiderer, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. Twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, like to the hangings of the court. ¹⁹ Their pillars were four, and their sockets four, of brass; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of the heads, and their fillets, of silver. ²⁰ All the pins of the tabernacle, and around the court, were of brass.

The Amount of Material Used for the Tabernacle

²¹ This is the amount of material used for the tabernacle, even the Tabernacle of the Testimony, as they were counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest. ²² Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that Yahweh commanded Moses. ²³ With him was Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of

38:8 Perhaps this suggests that their devotion to God led them to no longer be so concerned with their own image and appearance.

38:18 This describes the curtain over the door of the tabernacle in similar language to how the veil hiding the Most Holy is described. Christ is the door of the tabernacle through which we enter at our conversion and baptism (Jn. 10:9). By doing so we also enter, in prospect, through the veil into the Most Holy of eternity and Divine nature. The height of the curtains was such that a man would have to bow his head in order to pass underneath it, teaching the humility required to approach God's presence.

38:23 This seems to imply that Aholiab was already a master craftsman; but he could only do the work because God blessed and developed the 'natural' talent which Aholiab was willing to present to God's service. God sometimes gives us the opportunity

the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a skilful workman, and an embroiderer in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen. ²⁴ All the gold that was used for the work in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents, and seven hundred thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary. ²⁵ The silver of those who were numbered of the congregation was one hundred talents, and one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: ²⁶ a beka a head, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for each one who passed over to those who were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men. ²⁷ The one hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; one hundred sockets for the one hundred talents, a talent for a socket. ²⁸ From the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made fillets for them. ²⁹ The brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand four hundred shekels. ³⁰ From this he made the sockets to the door of the Tent of Meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, all the

vessels of the altar, ³¹ the sockets around the court, the sockets of the gate of the court, all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins around the court.

CHAPTER 39 Feb. 26

Making the Priestly Garments

Of the blue, purple, and scarlet, they made finely worked garments, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ² He made the ephod of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. ³ They beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, in the purple, in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, the work of the skilful workman. ⁴ They made shoulder straps for it, joined together. At the two ends it was joined together. ⁵ The skilfully woven band that was on it, with which to fasten it on, was of the same piece, like its work; of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ⁶ They worked the onyx stones, enclosed in settings of gold, engraved with the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the children of Israel. ⁷ He put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel, as Yahweh command-

to develop our 'natural' talents for use in His service – other times, He asks us to do that which is for us a taking up on the cross.

38:29 God remembers to this day how much everyone gave of what material, and has preserved the record in His written word. This is encouragement to us that no sacrifice for God's house is ever forgotten, but He eternally remembers it.

39:7 *Stones of memorial* – The idea wasn't that God might forget His people and so He needed to be reminded by the Priest wearing these stones with their names on;

ed Moses. ⁸ He made the breastplate, the work of a skilful workman, like the work of the ephod; of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. ⁹ It was square. They made the breastplate double. Its length was a span, and its breadth a span, being double. ¹⁰ They set in it four rows of stones: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl was the first row; ¹¹ and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; ¹² and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ¹³ and the fourth row, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper. They were enclosed in gold settings. ¹⁴ The stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, everyone according to his name, for the twelve tribes. ¹⁵ They made on the breastplate chains like cords, of braided work of pure gold. ¹⁶ They made two settings of gold, and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. ¹⁷ They put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. ¹⁸ The other two ends of the two braided chains they put on the two settings, and put

them on the shoulder straps of the ephod, in its front. ¹⁹ They made two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on its edge, which was toward the side of the ephod inward. ²⁰ They made two rings of gold, and put them on the two shoulder straps of the ephod underneath, in its front, close by its coupling, above the skilfully woven band of the ephod. ²¹ They bound the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be on the skilfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not come loose from the ephod, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²² He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue. ²³ The opening of the robe in its midst was like the opening of a coat of mail, with a binding around its opening, that it should not be torn. ²⁴ They made on the skirts of the robe pomegranates of blue, purple, scarlet, and twined linen. ²⁵ They made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates around the skirts of the robe, between the pomegranates; ²⁶ a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, around the

rather they were a reminder to Israel that they were each personally remembered by God all the time.

39:9 A span was about 22 cm. or 9 inches. The breastplate was quite small, compared to the grandiose religious clothing of other religions.

39:23 Christ died as the supreme High Priest, and the soldiers decided not to rend His garment but instead to throw dice to see which of them should get it (Jn. 19:24). As He hung on the cross, looking down and noticing what they were doing, He would have remembered this teaching about the High Priest's garment, and taken encouragement that He was indeed doing the High Priestly work to its ultimate term. His blood stained, dirty outer garment – perhaps woven by his social outcast of a mother – was equivalent of the High Priest's robe of “glory and beauty” (28:2).

skirts of the robe, to minister in, as Yahweh commanded Moses.²⁷ They made the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons,²⁸ and the turban of fine linen, and the linen headbands of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twined linen,²⁹ and the sash of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer, as Yahweh commanded Moses.³⁰ They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it a writing, like the engravings of a signet: HOLY TO YAHWEH.³¹ They tied to it a lace of blue, to fasten it on the turban above, as Yahweh commanded Moses.

The Tabernacle Components Are Completed

³² Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was finished. The children of Israel did according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses; so they did.³³ They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent, with all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets,³⁴ the covering of rams' skins dyed red, the covering of sea cow hides, the veil of the screen,³⁵ the ark of the testimony with its poles, the mercy seat,³⁶ the table, all its vessels, the show bread,

³⁷ the pure lampstand, its lamps, even the lamps to be set in order, all its vessels, the oil for the light,³⁸ the golden altar, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the screen for the door of the Tent,³⁹ the bronze altar, its grating of brass, its poles, all of its vessels, the basin and its base,⁴⁰ the hangings of the court, its pillars, its sockets, the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, its pins, all the instruments of the service of the tabernacle, for the Tent of Meeting,⁴¹ the finely worked garments for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.⁴² According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work.⁴³ Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Yahweh had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them.

CHAPTER 40 Feb. 26

The Tabernacle Is Erected

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,² On the first day of the first month you shall raise up the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.³ You shall put the ark of the testimony in it, and you shall screen the ark with the veil.⁴ You shall bring in

39:43 When Moses looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God's inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Gen. 1:31); as if now a new creation had been begun in the lives of Israel, just as it is in us through baptism into Christ (cp. the Red Sea crossing) – 2 Cor. 5:17.

40:3 *Ark of the testimony* – The “testimony” refers to the tables of the covenant, the ten commandments, which were within the ark; the connection between the ark and the “testimony” is very strong in the record. The ark was symbolic of Christ, in whom dwelt the word and covenant of God.

the table, and set in order the things that are on it. You shall bring in the lampstand, and light its lamps. ⁵ You shall set the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the screen of the door to the tabernacle. ⁶ You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting. ⁷ You shall set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and shall put water therein. ⁸ You shall set up the court around it, and hang up the screen of the gate of the court. ⁹ You shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is in it, and shall make it holy, and all its furniture; and it will be holy. ¹⁰ You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering, with all its vessels, and sanctify the altar; and the altar will be most holy. ¹¹ You shall anoint the basin and its base, and sanctify it. ¹² You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall wash them with water. ¹³ You shall put on Aaron the holy garments; and you shall anoint him, and sanctify him, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office. ¹⁴ You shall bring his sons, and put

coats on them. ¹⁵ You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office. Their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. ¹⁶ Moses did so. According to all that Yahweh commanded him, so he did. ¹⁷ It happened in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up. ¹⁸ Moses raised up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up its boards, and put in its bars, and raised up its pillars. ¹⁹ He spread the covering over the tent, and put the roof of the tabernacle above on it, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²⁰ He took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the poles on the ark, and put the mercy seat above on the ark. ²¹ He brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²² He put the table in the Tent of Meeting, on the side of the tabernacle northward, outside of the veil. ²³ He set the bread in order on it before Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²⁴ He put the lampstand

40:6 Sacrifice is necessary before we can enter God's presence. Sacrifice doesn't simply mean giving material things to God; it refers to giving up to God that which is personal and valuable to us. We're not involved with God simply in order to get from Him; in this case, spirituality would be purely selfish, as it is in many religions. Authentic relationship with God depends upon our having the spirit of sacrifice; not in the sense that we can only get to God if we give something, for that too would be too primitive and a denial of grace as the basis of our relationship with God. But His grace and the wonder of fellowship with Him cannot be accepted by us passively nor with indifference; our natural response, if we believe it, is to want to give to Him.

40:19 *As Yahweh commanded Moses* – This phrase runs as a refrain throughout the chapter, as an appropriate ending to the book. See on 36:31.

in the Tent of Meeting, opposite the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. ²⁵ He lit the lamps before Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²⁶ He put the golden altar in the Tent of Meeting before the veil; ²⁷ and he burnt incense of sweet spices on it, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²⁸ He put up the screen of the door to the tabernacle. ²⁹ He set the altar of burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ³⁰ He set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water therein, with which to wash. ³¹ Moses, Aaron, and his sons washed their hands and their feet there. ³² When they went into the Tent of Meeting, and when they came near to the altar, they washed, as Yahweh commanded Moses.

³³ He raised up the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.

God's Glory Fills the Tabernacle

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses wasn't able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud stayed on it, and Yahweh's glory filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward, throughout all their journeys; ³⁷ but if the cloud wasn't taken up, then they didn't travel until the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

40:30 Before we can come to offer acceptable sacrifice and do God's work, we must firstly wash in baptism.

40:33 *Finished the work* – Jesus had this in mind when just before His death He said that He had finished the work God had given Him to do (Jn. 17:4); and He died saying “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). He felt His work had been to build a dwelling place for God – not in a literal tabernacle, but in the hearts of willing men and women whose weakness and sin He had enabled to be overcome through His sacrifice.

40:37 They didn't know their itinerary ahead of time, each day and night they would've wondered whether they'd be called to move on or not. Their lives in this sense had no stability. If the Red Sea crossing represents our baptisms (1 Cor. 10:1,2) then this speaks of our lives afterwards being under God's leadership and guidance, we in that sense cannot map out how we would wish our journey to be.

LEVITICUS

CHAPTER 1 Feb. 27

Regulations concerning the Burnt Offering

Yahweh called to Moses and spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel and tell them, ‘When anyone of you offers an offering to Yahweh, you shall offer your offering of the livestock, from the herd and from the flock. ³ If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall offer it at the door of the Tent of Meeting, that he may be accepted before Yahweh. ⁴ He shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵ He shall slaughter the bull before Yahweh. Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall present the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ⁶ He

shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into pieces. ⁷ The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay wood in order on the fire; ⁸ and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall lay the pieces, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar; ⁹ but its inward parts and its legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall burn the whole on the altar, for a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ¹⁰ If his offering is from the flock, from the sheep, or from the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer a male without blemish. ¹¹ He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before Yahweh. Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. ¹² He shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat. The priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar, ¹³ but

1:2 From the herd – They were not to keep some animals specially for sacrifice; they were to take the sacrificial animals out of the herd. We are to be living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), not reserving just part of our lives for God. The Lord Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, and He was taken out of the common herd of humanity, not preserved specially for His work.

1:3 Without blemish – No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it. Only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

1:4 Putting the hand on the animal’s head was to show that the animal represented the offerer. He showed thereby that he deserved to die, and wished to give his total life to God just as the animal would be totally offered to God. We see here God’s principle of accepting us on the basis of the representative sacrifice of Christ; the equivalent of our putting our hand on the head of the sacrifice is the act of baptism into Christ and abiding “in Christ”, He being our representative and we being His.

1:9 Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

the inward parts and the legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall offer the whole, and burn it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ¹⁴ If his offering to Yahweh is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall offer his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. ¹⁵ The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar; ¹⁶ and he shall take away its crop with its filth, and throw it beside the altar on the east side, in the place of the ashes. ¹⁷ He shall tear it by its wings, but shall not divide it apart. The priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh’.

CHAPTER 2 Feb. 27

The Grain Offering

‘**W**hen anyone offers an offering of a grain offering to Yahweh, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. ² He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests; and he shall take his handful of its fine flour, and of its oil, with all its frankincense; and the priest

shall burn its memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ³ That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. It is a most holy thing of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. ⁴ When you offer an offering of a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil. ⁵ If your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of unleavened fine flour, mixed with oil. ⁶ You shall cut it in pieces, and pour oil on it. It is a grain offering. ⁷ If your offering is a grain offering of the pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. ⁸ You shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to Yahweh: and it shall be presented to the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar. ⁹ The priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial, and shall burn it on the altar, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ¹⁰ That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. It is a thing most holy of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. ¹¹ No grain offering, which you shall offer to Yahweh, shall be made with yeast; for you shall burn no yeast, nor any honey, as an offer-

2:6 *In pieces* – See on 1:9.

2:9 *A pleasant aroma* – This is a very common phrase. It is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15 – if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”.

2:11 Yeast represented sin (1 Cor. 5:8). Honey and yeast would’ve made the grain pleasing to men; but the lesson was that what pleases people isn’t what is necessarily pleasing to God. He wants a person as they are, from the heart.

ing made by fire to Yahweh. ¹² As an offering of firstfruits you shall offer them to Yahweh: but they shall not ascend for a pleasant aroma on the altar. ¹³ Every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; neither shall you allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt. ¹⁴ If you offer a grain offering of first fruits to Yahweh, you shall offer for the grain offering of your first fruits grain in the ear parched with fire, bruised grain of the fresh ear. ¹⁵ You shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it: it is a grain offering. ¹⁶ The priest shall burn as its memorial portion part of its crushed grain, and part of its oil, along with all its frankincense: it is an offering made by fire to Yahweh¹.

CHAPTER 3 Feb. 28

Regulations about Peace Offerings

If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings; if he offers it from the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before Yahweh. ² He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the Tent of Meeting: and Aaron's sons, the priests

shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar. ³ He shall offer of the sacrifice of peace offerings an offering made by fire to Yahweh; the fat that covers the inner parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts, ⁴ and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away. ⁵ Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on the burnt offering, which is on the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ⁶ If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh is from the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. ⁷ If he offers a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before Yahweh; ⁸ and he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the Tent of Meeting: and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. ⁹ He shall offer from the sacrifice of peace offerings an offering made by fire to Yahweh; its fat, the entire tail fat, he shall take away close to the backbone; and the fat that covers the inwards, and all the fat that is on the inwards, ¹⁰ and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the

2:13 The salt represents gracious speech (Col. 4:6) and peace with one another (Mk. 9:50); without these things, no matter how great our sacrifice, it cannot be accepted by God. Hence Jesus taught that we should not offer our sacrifices to God until we have done what we can to get at peace with our brother (Mt. 5:24).

3:6 *Without blemish* – Although peace offerings were completely voluntary, they were not to think that therefore they could not respect God's holiness and give Him that which was second best. Many of the sacrifices we make to God are likewise not compulsory, but the spirit of giving God the best which permeates the Law of Moses should remain with us.

liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away. ¹¹ The priest shall burn it on the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire to Yahweh. ¹² If his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before Yahweh; ¹³ and he shall lay his hand on its head, and kill it before the Tent of Meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. ¹⁴ He shall offer from it as his offering, an offering made by fire to Yahweh; the fat that covers the inward parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts, ¹⁵ and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away. ¹⁶ The priest shall burn them on the altar: it

is the food of the offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma; all the fat is Yahweh's. ¹⁷ It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that you shall eat neither fat nor blood'.

CHAPTER 4 Feb. 28

Sins of Ignorance

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If anyone sins unintentionally, in any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them: ³ if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bull without blemish to

3:11 *The food* – The metaphor invites us to see the altar as God's table, at which He as it were ate the sacrifices. At the breaking of bread service, we come to the table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21); the offering we bring is ourselves. And yet God has placed on the altar, on the table before us, the sacrifice of His Son, and invites us to eat with Him there. Eating with someone was understood as a sign of religious fellowship. At the breaking of bread, we are therefore celebrating our living fellowship with God Himself.

3:16 The fat was understood as the best part of the animal, although today for health reasons we tend to consider the meat to be of more interest than the fat. They were to give to God that which they perceived to be the most valuable, within the frames of understanding and perception within which they then lived.

4:3 Sins of ignorance still needed to be atoned for. Sin is a felt offence against God, whether or not we were aware of it at the time. If we accidentally step on someone's foot and they don't tell us about it until tomorrow, it doesn't mean that we didn't hurt them at the time. The sins we committed before baptism, in ignorance, were still felt by God and need atonement – which is available freely through being "in Christ". David asked to be forgiven for the sins he committed which he didn't know about (Ps. 19:12 cp. Ps. 90:8). We should pray the same. But this means we are asking for forgiveness for sin which we haven't specifically repented of. We should likewise forgive others for their sins which although we so clearly feel them, they themselves don't realize they have committed them. We can, if we wish, insist that we shall only forgive those who repent to us of their sins. But the problem with that approach is that *as* we forgive others, the basis we choose upon which to relate to them, so we will be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). If we trust we are forgiven for sins we aren't conscious of, even though they are very clear to God and felt by Him, then we ought to forgive others for

Yahweh for a sin offering. ⁴ He shall bring the bull to the door of the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh; and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull, and kill the bull before Yahweh.

⁵ The anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull, and bring it to the Tent of Meeting. ⁶ The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before Yahweh, before the veil of the sanctuary. ⁷ The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Yahweh, which is in the Tent of Meeting; and he shall pour out all of rest of the blood of the bull at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ⁸ He shall take all the fat of the bull of the sin offering off of it: the fat that covers the inward parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts, ⁹ and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away, ¹⁰ as it is taken off of the bull of the sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. ¹¹ The bull's skin, all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, its inward parts, and its dung, ¹² even the whole bull shall he carry forth outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire. Where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned. ¹³ If the whole congregation of Israel sins, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and are guilty; ¹⁴ when the sin in which they have sinned is known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for a sin offering, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁵ The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before Yahweh; and the bull shall be killed before Yahweh. ¹⁶ The anointed priest shall bring of the blood of the bull to the Tent of Meeting: ¹⁷ and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle their sins even when they don't perceive (at this point in their spiritual journey) that they have sinned.

4:5 Anointed – 'Christ' means 'the anointed one', and so Jewish minds would have associated 'Jesus Christ' with the priest who saves ['Jesus' means 'Yahweh's salvation'].

4:7 At the base of the altar – We think of the blood of Christ trickling down the stake to the ground.

4:8 Inward parts – There is huge emphasis upon this in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God.

4:15 Before Yahweh – Before the priests who represented God. God Himself is in Heaven, but His representatives on earth are functionally Him to other people. We must therefore watch our behaviour and who we are, because we who have been baptized into His Name are His representatives on earth.

it seven times before Yahweh, before the veil. ¹⁸ He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before Yahweh, that is in the Tent of Meeting; and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁹ All its fat he shall take from it, and burn it on the altar. ²⁰ Thus shall he do with the bull; as he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this; and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. ²¹ He shall carry forth the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull. It is the sin offering for the assembly. ²² When a ruler sins, and unwittingly does any one of all the things which Yahweh his God has commanded not to be done, and is guilty; ²³ if his sin, in which he has sinned, is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish. ²⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before Yahweh. It is a sin offering. ²⁵ The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. He shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. ²⁶ All its fat he shall burn on the altar, like the fat of

the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and he will be forgiven. ²⁷ If anyone of the common people sins unwittingly, in doing any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and is guilty; ²⁸ if his sin, which he has sinned, is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has sinned. ²⁹ He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering. ³⁰ The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. ³¹ All its fat he shall take away, like the fat is taken away from off of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. ³² If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish. ³³ He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering. ³⁴ The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest

4:29 The person had to personally kill the animal, not delegate it to a priest or someone else. It would've been an unpleasant experience, but designed to teach the seriousness of sin. 'This animal has done nothing wrong; it's *me* who ought to be dying for my sin' would've been the thought of all sensitive, spiritually minded people who did this. And this is our thought as we survey the cross with the son of God dying upon it for our sins.

of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.³⁵ All its fat he shall take away, like the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them on the altar, on the offerings of Yahweh made by fire; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin that he has sinned, and he will be forgiven’.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 1

The Sacrifices for Sins of Ignorance

If anyone sins, in that he hears the a legal call to testify, he being a witness, whether he has seen or known, if he doesn’t speak, then he shall bear his iniquity.² Or if anyone touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean animal, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and it is hidden from him, and he is unclean, then he shall be guilty.³ Or if he touches the uncleanness of man, whatever his uncleanness is with which he is unclean, and it is hidden from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty.⁴ Or if anyone swears rashly with his lips to

do evil, or to do good, whatever it is that a man might utter rashly with an oath, and it is hidden from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty of one of these.⁵ It shall be, when he is guilty of one of these, he shall confess that in which he has sinned:⁶ and he shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.⁷ If he can’t afford a lamb, then he shall bring his trespass offering for that in which he has sinned, two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, to Yahweh; one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering.⁸ He shall bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one which is for the sin offering, and wring off its head from its neck, but shall not sever it completely.⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar; and the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering.¹⁰ He shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him con-

5:1 Sins of omission, of turning a blind eye, are just as culpable as sins of commission.

5:2 Haggai comments that it was easier to be made unclean than to be made clean; touching holy things didn’t impart holiness to a person, whereas touching unclean things made people unclean (Hag. 2:11-14). It’s easy to be made unspiritual by association with unspiritual things, the things which are dead, which have no spiritual life in them, which are going nowhere – hence Paul alludes to this by saying “Touch not the unclean thing” in the context of appealing for believers to quit worldly associations (2 Cor. 6:17). However, on the other hand, this is no proof for the wrong idea of ‘guilt by association’. The Lord Jesus touched lepers in order to heal them.

5:10 The sin offering always preceded the burnt offering, which represented dedication to God. Before we can acceptably dedicate ourselves to God in any enterprise or

cerning his sin which he has sinned, and he shall be forgiven. ¹¹ But if he can't afford two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he shall bring his offering for that in which he has sinned, the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, neither shall he put any frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. ¹² He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as the memorial portion, and burn it on the altar, on the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. It is a sin offering. ¹³ The priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin that he has sinned in any of these things, and he will be forgiven; and the rest shall be the priest's, as the grain offering. ¹⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁵ If anyone commits a trespass, and sins unwittingly, in the holy things of Yahweh; then he shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, a ram without blemish from the flock, according to your estimation in silver by shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering. ¹⁶ He shall make restitution for that which he has done wrong in the holy thing, and shall add a fifth

part to it, and give it to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and he will be forgiven. ¹⁷ If anyone sins, and does any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done; though he didn't know it, yet he is guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸ He shall bring a ram without blemish from of the flock, according to your estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning the thing in which he sinned and didn't know it, and he will be forgiven. ¹⁹ It is a trespass offering. He is certainly guilty before Yahweh'.

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 1

Restoration after Robbery

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² If anyone sins, and commits a trespass against Yahweh, and deals falsely with his neighbour in a matter of deposit, or of bargain, or of robbery, or has oppressed his neighbour, ³ or has found that which was lost, and dealt falsely therein, and swearing to a lie; in any of all these things that a man does, sin-

aspect of our lives, we must first be right with God, cleansed from our sins; for good works alone cannot compensate for the sin we have committed.

5:11 God thirsts for relationship with us, and doesn't want human poverty to mean that we can't get atonement. In Bible times, religion was the hobby of the wealthy; yet God wants relationship with all. Although it was a principle that shedding of blood was required for forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22), God was prepared to allow a non-blood sacrifice if this was all a person had to offer. Aware of this, Heb. 9:22 says that "almost all things" under the Law were cleansed by the shedding of blood – but not literally all, because the writer knew that there was this possibility of offering flour offerings instead of the required animal. The fact God is prepared to make concessions to human weakness shouldn't lead us to any spirit of minimalism in how we consider sin or the standards of God's holiness.

ning therein; ⁴ then it shall be, if he has sinned, and is guilty, he shall restore that which he took by robbery, or the thing which he has gotten by oppression, or the deposit which was committed to him, or the lost thing which he found, ⁵ or any thing about which he has sworn falsely; he shall restore it even in full, and shall add a fifth part more to it. To him to whom it belongs he shall give it, in the day of his being found guilty. ⁶ He shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, a ram without blemish from the flock, according to your estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest. ⁷ The priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh, and he will be forgiven concerning whatever he has done to become guilty'.

The Continual Burnt Offering

⁸ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁹ Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: the burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning; and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. ¹⁰ The priest shall put on his linen garment, and he shall put on his linen breeches

upon his body; and he shall remove the ashes from where the fire has consumed the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. ¹¹ He shall take off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. ¹² The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not go out; and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. ¹³ Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out'.

The Grain Offering

¹⁴ 'This is the law of the grain offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before Yahweh, before the altar. ¹⁵ He shall take from there his handful of the fine flour of the grain offering, and of its oil, and all the frankincense which is on the grain offering, and shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma, as its memorial, to Yahweh. ¹⁶ That which is left of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten without yeast in a holy place. They shall eat it in the court

6:4 Robbery – This effectively was what the exaggeration, mind games, manipulation, white lies and deceitful dealing of :2 was reckoned as. These things creep in so easily into any business dealings between people; and God sees them as robbery.

6:5 In the day – Broken relationships were to be restored as quickly as possible, so the restoration was to be made immediately. In all human failure, reconciliation involves some level of restoration, be it verbal or material.

6:13 It shall not go out – There was fair emphasis on this, that always a bullock should be smouldering as a burnt offering to God. Our devotion to God, as a community of believers and as individuals, must be 24/7; it's not a matter of occasional flashes of devotion, weekly attendance at meetings etc.

6:16 The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the

of the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁷ It shall not be baked with yeast. I have given it as their portion of my offerings made by fire. It is most holy, as the sin offering, and as the trespass offering.

¹⁸ Every male among the children of Aaron shall eat of it, as their portion forever throughout your generations, from the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. Whoever touches them shall be holy'. ¹⁹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁰ 'This is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer to Yahweh in the day when he is anointed: the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering perpetually, half of it in the morning, and half of it in the evening. ²¹ It shall be made with oil in a griddle. When it is soaked, you shall bring it in. You shall offer the grain offering in baked pieces for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ²² The anointed priest that will be in his place from among his sons shall offer it. By a statute forever, it shall be wholly burnt to

Yahweh. ²³ Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten'.

The Sin Offering

²⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁵ Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the sin offering: in the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering shall be killed before Yahweh. It is most holy. ²⁶ The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the Tent of Meeting. ²⁷ Whatever shall touch its flesh shall be holy. When there is any of its blood sprinkled on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled in a holy place. ²⁸ But the earthen vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken; and if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, it shall be scoured, and rinsed in water. ²⁹ Every male among the priests shall eat of it: it is most holy. ³⁰ No sin offering, of which any of the blood is brought

altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them – for eating what had been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and religious fellowship with the donor.

6:20 An ephah is about 22 litres.

6:22 *Wholly burnt* – The priests were not to eat parts of their own offering, as they usually did with the offerings of others. We as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) shouldn't take any personal benefit from what we give to God, otherwise the concept of personal sacrifice to God is somewhat lacking in meaning. The priests were so used to dealing with the needs of others for atonement and acceptability with God – but they were not to forget that they too needed this, hence they too had to offer sacrifice. Our dealings with the unsaved world shouldn't lead us to forget our own personal need for reconciliation with God.

6:29 When Jesus presented Himself as the sin offering and invited His people to eat the symbol of it in the breaking of bread meeting, He was inviting us to see ourselves as a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9), no longer assuming some group of specialists would look after the spiritual concerns of others, but everyone, male and female, taking responsibility. This was a radical, difficult idea to accept for 1st century Jewish

into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be eaten: it shall be burned with fire’.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 2

A Summary of the Offerings

‘**T**his is the law of the trespass offering. It is most holy. ² In the place where they kill the burnt offering, he shall kill the trespass offering; and its blood he shall sprinkle around on the altar. ³ He shall offer all of its fat: the fat tail, and the fat that covers the inward parts, ⁴ and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, shall he take away; ⁵ and the priest shall burn them on the altar for an offering made by fire to Yahweh: it is a trespass offering. ⁶ Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. ⁷ As is the sin offering, so is the trespass offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with them shall have it. ⁸ The priest who offers any man’s burnt offering, even the priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has offered. ⁹ Every grain offering that is baked

in the oven, and all that is dressed in the pan, and on the griddle, shall be the priest’s who offers it. ¹⁰ Every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, belongs to all the sons of Aaron, one as well as another. ¹¹ This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which one shall offer to Yahweh. ¹² If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened loaves mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mixed with oil. ¹³ With loaves of leavened bread he shall offer his offering with the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving. ¹⁴ Of it he shall offer one loaf out of each offering for a gift offering to Yahweh. It shall be the priest’s who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings. ¹⁵ The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. ¹⁶ But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow, or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice; and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten: ¹⁷ but what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day

Christians, and it is hard for us today too, accustomed as we are to assigning responsibility to others rather than taking it ourselves.

7:1 There’s a difference between the trespass offering and the sin offering, which is hard to define. It seems that the trespass offering was made when a specific sin had been done more consciously, whereas the sin offering was required when sin had been committed less consciously, or when a more general recognition of the fact we are sinners was required.

7:3, 4 There is special emphasis upon the fat, which was perceived as the best part of the animal, and the most covered inward parts. After recognizing our sin, we must be prepared to offer these to God. David understood the spirit of the trespass offering when after his sin with Bathsheba he offered to God his inward parts (Ps. 51:6).

shall be burned with fire. ¹⁸ If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed to him who offers it. It will be an abomination, and the soul who eats any of it will bear his iniquity’.

Some Warnings about Offerings

¹⁹ ‘The flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned with fire. As for the flesh, everyone who is clean may eat it; ²⁰ but the soul who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings that belongs to Yahweh, having his uncleanness on him, that soul shall be cut off from his people. ²¹ When anyone touches any unclean thing, the uncleanness of man, or an unclean animal, or any unclean abomination, and eats some of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which belong to Yahweh, that soul shall be cut off from his people’. ²² Yahweh

spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘You shall eat no fat, of bull, or sheep, or goat. ²⁴ The fat of that which dies of itself, and the fat of that which is torn of animals, may be used for any other service, but you shall in no way eat of it. ²⁵ For whoever eats the fat of the animal, of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, even the soul who eats it shall be cut off from his people. ²⁶ You shall not eat any blood, whether it is of bird or of animal, in any of your dwellings. ²⁷ Whoever it is who eats any blood, that soul shall be cut off from his people’. ²⁸ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁹ Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to Yahweh shall bring his offering to Yahweh out of the sacrifice of his peace offerings. ³⁰ With his own hands he shall bring the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may

7:20 The peace offering was a voluntary sacrifice. But this didn’t mean that the offerer could be careless, or think that having made a special sacrifice to God somehow made his uncleanness of no significance. Taking the initiative in serving God is good, but it shouldn’t make us think that we are somehow above God’s principles and can be unclean in other aspects of our lives.

7:27 The blood represented the life (17:11). The lesson was that life – both our own and that of others – is God’s, and we shouldn’t assume that we are our own masters. It is not for us to do what we wish with life – it is God’s. Paradoxically, the person who thought they could eat blood, who thought that life was theirs, would lose their life. The only way to live eternally is to give our life back to God who gave it to us. In baptism, we die with Christ, giving our lives to God as He did, but this must be an ongoing principle in our daily living, as we live not to ourselves but to Him (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Pet. 4:2).

7:30 *With his own hands* – We cannot get others to do our worship and devotion to God for us. In this lies the grave error of the orthodox idea of a human priesthood who as it were do everything for us. We are to have a deeply personal relationship with God, with Christ as our only mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

be waved for a wave offering before Yahweh. ³¹ The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'. ³² The right thigh you shall give to the priest for a heave offering out of the sacrifices of your peace offerings. ³³ He among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right thigh for a portion. ³⁴ For the waved breast and the heaved thigh I have taken from the children of Israel out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their portion forever from the children of Israel. ³⁵ This is the anointing portion of Aaron, and the anointing portion of his sons, out of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, in the day when he presented them to minister to Yahweh in the priest's office; ³⁶ which Yahweh commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that He anointed them. It is their portion forever throughout their generations'. ³⁷ This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecration, and

of the sacrifice of peace offerings; ³⁸ which Yahweh commanded Moses in Mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their offerings to Yahweh, in the wilderness of Sinai.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 3

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² 'Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread; ³ and assemble all the congregation at the door of the Tent of Meeting'. ⁴ Moses did as Yahweh commanded him; and the congregation was assembled at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ⁵ Moses said to the congregation, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded to be done. ⁶ Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water. ⁷ He put the coat on him, tied the sash on him, clothed him with the robe, put the ephod on him, and he tied the skillfully woven band of the ephod on him, and fastened it to him with it.

Waved – The Hebrew word means to lift up, to shake, to move to and fro. This style of offering meant that the offerer lifted up the sacrifice to God. The wave offerings were typically eaten by the priests, but first they had to be lifted up to God in recognition that they were being given ultimately to Him and not to the priests personally. The physical lifting up of the sacrifice through the air towards God could represent the ascension of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice to God.

8:4 *Congregation* – The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint [LXX], uses the word *ekklesia*, which is used in the New Testament for the church. The body of believers in Christ today are the equivalent of the Old Testament people of God, Israel.

8:6 This washing with water looks ahead to baptism into Christ, by which we become the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

⁸ He placed the breastplate on him; and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim. ⁹ He set the turban on his head; and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ¹⁰ Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and sanctified them. ¹¹ He sprinkled it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its vessels, and the basin and its base, to sanctify them. ¹² He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him. ¹³ Moses brought Aaron's sons, and clothed them with coats, and tied sashes on them, and put headbands on them; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ¹⁴ He brought the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. ¹⁵ He killed it; and Moses took the blood, and

put it around on the horns of the altar with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar, and sanctified it, to make atonement for it. ¹⁶ He took all the fat that was on the inward parts, and the cover of the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat; and Moses burned it on the altar. ¹⁷ But the bull, and its skin, and its flesh, and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ¹⁸ He presented the ram of the burnt offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. ¹⁹ He killed it; and Moses sprinkled the blood around on the altar. ²⁰ He cut the ram into its pieces; and Moses burned the head, and the pieces, and the fat. ²¹ He washed the inward parts and the legs with water; and Moses burned the whole ram on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma. It was an offering

8:8 *Urim and thummim* – These seem to have been two stones, which at times flashed a sequence of yes / no answers to specific questions which arose amongst God's people.

8:9 *As Yahweh commanded Moses* – The careful obedience of Moses is emphasized; by it he became a type of Christ who was totally obedient to God (Heb. 3:2,5). The early chapters of Exodus present Moses as not always obedient, often arguing back with God and trying to find ways around God's commandments to him. In this we see his spiritual growth. This growing acceptance of God's authority and eagerness to obey rather than find ways around His commandments should be a feature of our spiritual growth too.

8:10 'Christ' means 'the anointed one'. All these anointed things were therefore symbolic of Him. He fulfilled their meaning in reality within His person, character and work.

8:14 Whatever special work we embark upon for God, we should always be aware of our own weakness and need for forgiveness. Therefore the consecration of Aaron and his sons for their great work began with sin offerings.

8:15 The physical furniture of the tabernacle wasn't sinful of itself. It was cleansed in order to demonstrate that whatever humanly beautiful and impressive work we make for God, it is still shadowed by our own sinfulness.

made by fire to Yahweh; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ²² He presented the other ram, the ram of consecration; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. ²³ He killed it; and Moses took some of its blood, and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. ²⁴ He brought Aaron's sons; and Moses put some of the blood on the tip of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the great toe of their right foot; and Moses sprinkled the blood around on the altar. ²⁵ He took the fat, and the fat tail, and all the fat that was on the inward parts, and the cover of the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and the right thigh; ²⁶ and out of the basket of unleavened bread, that was before Yahweh, he took one unleavened loaf, and one loaf of oiled bread, and one wafer, and placed them on the fat, and on the right thigh. ²⁷ He put all these in Aaron's hands and in his sons' hands, and waved them for a wave offering before Yahweh. ²⁸ Moses took them from their hands, and burned them on the altar on the burnt offering. They were a consecration for a pleasant aroma. It was an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ²⁹ Moses took the breast, and waved it for a wave offering before Yahweh. It was Moses'

portion of the ram of consecration, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ³⁰ Moses took some of the anointing oil, and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him, and sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him. ³¹ Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, Boil the flesh at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of consecration, as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it'. ³² What remains of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn with fire. ³³ You shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration are fulfilled: for He shall consecrate you seven days. ³⁴ What has been done this day, so Yahweh has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. ³⁵ You shall stay at the door of the Tent of Meeting day and night seven days, and keep Yahweh's command, that you don't die; for so I am commanded. ³⁶ Aaron and his sons did all the things which Yahweh commanded by Moses.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 4

The People are Sanctified

It happened on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons,

8:23 All our service to God is to be done with the awareness of the fact that Christ shed His blood for us – our way of hearing, all we do with our hands and where we go with our feet is to be influenced by our experience of His death for us.

8:34 They were insistently reminded of their own need for atonement as they commenced the work of securing the atonement of others. In all our efforts for others we must bear this in mind.

and the elders of Israel; ² and he said to Aaron, Take a calf from the herd for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before Yahweh. ³ You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without blemish, for a burnt offering; ⁴ and a bull and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before Yahweh; and a grain offering mixed with oil: for today Yahweh appears to you'. ⁵ They brought what Moses commanded before the Tent of Meeting; and all the congregation drew near and stood before Yahweh. ⁶ Moses said, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded that you should do: and the glory of Yahweh shall appear to you. ⁷ Moses said to Aaron, Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering, and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself, and for the people; and offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them as Yahweh commanded. ⁸ So Aaron drew near to the altar, and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself. ⁹ The sons of Aaron presented the blood to him; and he dipped his finger in the

blood, and put it on the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar; ¹⁰ but the fat, and the kidneys, and the cover from the liver of the sin offering, he burned upon the altar; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ¹¹ The flesh and the skin he burned with fire outside the camp. ¹² He killed the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons delivered the blood to him, and he sprinkled it around on the altar. ¹³ They delivered the burnt offering to him, piece by piece, and the head: and he burned them upon the altar. ¹⁴ He washed the inward parts and the legs, and burned them on the burnt offering on the altar. ¹⁵ He presented the people's offering, and took the goat of the sin offering which was for the people, and killed it, and offered it for sin, like the first. ¹⁶ He presented the burnt offering, and offered it according to the regulation. ¹⁷ He presented the grain offering, and filled his hand from there, and burned it upon the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning. ¹⁸ He also killed the bull and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings, which was for the people; and Aaron's sons delivered to him the blood, which he sprinkled around on the altar, ¹⁹ and

9:4 The appearing of Yahweh to His people required that they made themselves right with Him through a sequence of offerings which dealt with their sin and made them acceptable to Him. We in our day are to live in daily expectation of God's appearing to us through the return of Christ; and we too must ensure we are right with Him and can go to meet Him acceptably (Mt. 25:6).

9:15 *The goat of the sin offering* – Jesus spoke of the righteous as sheep and the sinners as goats (Mt. 25:33). A goat rather than a sheep was required because the goat was the representative of the sinful people; it was killed as a recognition by them that their sin deserved death. In baptism we make the same recognition – that I should die, and I identify myself with the dead body of Christ, and come alive again in Him.

the fat of the bull and of the ram, the fat tail, and that which covers the inward parts, and the kidneys, and the cover of the liver; ²⁰ and they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burned the fat on the altar; ²¹ and the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved for a wave offering before Yahweh, as Moses commanded. ²² Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them; and he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings. ²³ Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting, and came out, and blessed the people; and the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the people. ²⁴ There came forth fire from before Yahweh, and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 4

Nadab and Abihu Are Killed

Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense on it, and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came forth from before Yahweh, and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, This is what Yahweh spoke of, saying, ‘I will be declared holy in those who come near Me, and before all the people I will be glorified’. Aaron held his peace. ⁴ Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, Draw near, carry your brothers from before the sanctuary out of the camp. ⁵ So they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses

9:22 *Blessed them* – Blessing is often associated with forgiveness and acceptance with God. The blessings promised to Abraham and his seed likewise (Acts 3:25,26). If we are Abraham’s seed by baptism (Gal. 3:27-29) then we are to be a blessing to the world in that we offer them the way to God’s forgiveness and fellowship with Him.

When the offerings are spoken of together, they are always in this order – sin offering, then burnt offering and then peace offering. Firstly we must deal with our sin; then dedicate ourselves to God, as spoken of in the burnt offering. Only then can we have peace with God and fellowship freely with Him, as exemplified in the peace offering.

10:1 The implication of :9 could be that they were drunk when they did this.

10:2 Fire coming down from God has just occurred as a sign of His acceptance of sacrifice (9:24). We shall either be consumed by God’s fire, or we give ourselves to Him as living sacrifices and are accepted and consumed by Him. There’s a logic of devotion here – whether we live to the flesh or to the Spirit, we are to be consumed anyway. So we may as well be consumed by God’s acceptance of us rather than by His wrath.

10:3 God’s destruction of sinners is a constructive declaration of His holiness rather than an angry deity lashing out at people because they offended Him. Any disciplining of others which we may have to do, e.g. of our children or within the family of God, should be done in the same constructive spirit. This incident teaches that we cannot approach God on our own terms, in our own way, but must do so in the way He has defined in His word. The fact He doesn’t respond to human failure so visibly as He did in Moses’ time doesn’t mean that this is any less true for us today.

had said. ⁶ Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, Don't let the hair of your heads go loose, neither tear your clothes; that you don't die, and that He not be angry with all the congregation; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Yahweh has kindled. ⁷ You shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of Yahweh is on you. They did according to the word of Moses. ⁸ Yahweh spoke to Aaron, saying, ⁹ Drink no wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the Tent of Meeting, that you don't die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations; ¹⁰ and that you are to make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; ¹¹ and that you are to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Yahweh has spoken to them by Moses. ¹² Moses spoke to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, Take the grain offering that remains of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, and eat it without yeast beside the altar; for it is most holy; ¹³ and you shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your portion, and your sons' portion, of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire: for so I am commanded. ¹⁴ The waved breast and the contributed

thigh you shall eat in a clean place, you, and your sons, and your daughters with you; for they are given as your portion, and your sons' portion, out of the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the children of Israel. ¹⁵ The heaved thigh and the waved breast they shall bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave offering before Yahweh; and it shall be yours, and your sons' with you, as a portion forever, as Yahweh has commanded. ¹⁶ Moses diligently inquired about the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burned; and he was angry with Eleazar and with Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying, ¹⁷ Why haven't you eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is most holy, and He has given it to you to carry the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Yahweh? ¹⁸ Behold, its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary: you certainly should have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded. ¹⁹ Aaron spoke to Moses, Behold, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before Yahweh; and such things as these have happened to me; and if I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been pleasing in the sight of Yahweh? ²⁰ When Moses heard that, it was pleasing in his sight.

10:19 Aaron felt unable to eat with God because of his bad conscience about his sons' behaviour, or maybe because he felt angry with God for killing his sons. Moses expected Aaron to just be obedient to the letter of the law for the sake of it, but Aaron is presented as having done the right thing, living with sensitivity to our conscience and feelings rather than in unthinking obedience to the letter of the law.

CHAPTER 11 Mar. 5***Clean and Unclean Animals***

Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, ²Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘These are the living things which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. ³Whatever parts the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and chews the cud among the animals, that you may eat. ⁴Nevertheless these you shall not eat of those that chew the cud, or of those who part the hoof: the camel, because he chews the cud but doesn’t have a parted hoof, he is unclean to you; ⁵the rock badger, because he chews the cud but doesn’t have a parted hoof, he is unclean to

you; ⁶the hare, because she chews the cud but doesn’t part the hoof, she is unclean to you; ⁷the pig, because he has a split hoof, and is cloven-footed, but doesn’t chew the cud, he is unclean to you. ⁸Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean to you. ⁹These you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, that you may eat. ¹⁰All that don’t have fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of all the living creatures that are in the waters, they are to be an abomination to you, ¹¹and you are to detest

11:3 *Chews the cud* – The Hebrew means to bring the food up again, to ruminate. Perhaps this was to represent ruminating upon God’s word; and being cloven-footed perhaps speaks of being sure footed and walking stably in life. To chew the cud (ruminate on God’s word) but not walk the talk (not having a cloven foot) still makes us unclean (:4). However, it may be that there is little significance in the chewing of the cud of itself, because doing so didn’t make the animal unclean of itself – it was just an exercise for Israel to teach them the concept of discernment, self control and obedience to God even when this meant practical inconvenience for them (see on :6).

11:6 *Unclean to you* – Paul observes that there is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14). These animals were to be unclean “to you” because it was part of God’s method of teaching His people to make a moral choice in life, to recognize there is sin and righteousness, clean and unclean. There were hygienic reasons behind the prohibition of some animals, but the essential intention was to teach the concept of making a difference, of looking at something we could partake of and saying ‘No, that is not for me’. The fact God later withdrew the distinction between clean and unclean animals just confirms that they were not clean nor unclean of themselves; all had been created by God and declared “very good” in Genesis. The distinctions between them were there to simply educate Israel in practicing the concept of separation and discernment between acceptable and unacceptable things in life.

11:8 *You shall not touch* – The basis of the command to us in our age to “touch not the unclean thing” by being separate from sinful things (2 Cor. 6:17).

11:10 The parable of the drag net pictures fishermen sitting down with their catch, throwing away the “bad” fish. These would’ve been the unclean sea creatures, e.g. crabs, which had got caught up in the net. This represented the ‘sitting’ of the final judgment at the last day (Mt. 13:48,49). We are to make that same division between good and bad in the choices we make today.

them. You shall not eat of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses. ¹² Whatever has no fins nor scales in the waters, that is to be an abomination to you. ¹³ These you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the vulture, and the black vulture, ¹⁴ and the red kite, any kind of black kite, ¹⁵ any kind of raven, ¹⁶ the horned owl, the screech owl, and the gull, any kind of hawk, ¹⁷ the barn owl, the cormorant, the great owl, ¹⁸ the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, ¹⁹ the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat. ²⁰ All flying insects that walk on all fours are an abomination to you. ²¹ Yet you may eat these: of all winged creeping things that go on all fours, which have legs above their feet, with which to hop on the earth. ²² Even of these you may eat: any kind of locust, any kind of bald locust, any kind of cricket, and any kind of grasshopper. ²³ But all winged creeping things which have four feet, are an abomination to you. ²⁴ By these you will become unclean: whoever

touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁵ Whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. ²⁶ Every animal which parts the hoof, and is not cloven-footed, nor chews the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean. ²⁷ Whatever goes on its paws, among all animals that go on all fours, they are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁸ He who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. They are unclean to you. ²⁹ These are they which are unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, ³⁰ the gecko, and the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the sand lizard and the chameleon. ³¹ These are they which are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. ³² On whatever any of them falls when they are dead, it shall be unclean; whether it

11:13-16 These birds all hunt and eat other unclean animals, and many of them were totems of the idols believed in by the nations. Again the idea was to teach God's people the need to keep away from association with things which resembled sin, which would put ideas in the mind which tended towards sin rather than righteousness. This principle is so relevant today in connection with what we watch or read, for by presenting ourselves continually with sinful associations we are the more likely to ourselves fall into sin.

11:25 The more conscious was the association with uncleanness, the greater was the effort which made to be made to achieve cleansing. Thus if someone knowingly carried a carcass, they had to wash their clothes in addition to being unclean.

11:30 The animals listed were known in the land promised to Abraham. This is another proof that the Law of Moses was not intended for world-wide Gentile use but was the covenant between God and Israel during a specific time and in a specific location on the earth.

is any vessel of wood, or clothing, or skin, or sack, whatever vessel it is with which any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it will be clean. ³³ Every earthen vessel, into which any of them falls, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it. ³⁴ All food which may be eaten, that on which water comes, shall be unclean; and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean. ³⁵ Everything whereupon part of their carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it be an oven, or a range for pots, it shall be broken in pieces: they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you. ³⁶ Nevertheless a spring or a cistern in which water is gathered shall be clean; but that which touches their carcass shall be unclean. ³⁷ If part of their carcass falls on any sowing seed which is to be sown, it is clean. ³⁸ But if water is put on the seed, and part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you. ³⁹ If any animal of which you may eat, dies; he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening. ⁴⁰ He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. He also who carries

its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. ⁴¹ Every creeping thing that creeps on the earth is an abomination. It shall not be eaten. ⁴² Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, even all creeping things that creep on the earth, them you shall not eat; for they are an abomination. ⁴³ You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps, neither shall you make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled thereby. ⁴⁴ For I am Yahweh your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy; neither shall you defile yourselves with any kind of creeping thing that moves on the earth. ⁴⁵ For I am Yahweh who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. ⁴⁶ This is the law of the animal, and of the bird, and of every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, ⁴⁷ to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten’.

11:42 They were not to associate themselves with animals which hugged the earth; just as we should not keep close to earthly things (Phil. 3:19) but seek the things which are above (Col. 3:1).

11:44 The Hebrew words for sanctification and holiness include the ideas of both being negatively separated *from* and positively being separated *unto*. The whole legislation about clean and unclean animals was to try to teach Israel this principle. As such there was limited significance in the actual division of animals into clean and unclean – it was merely a teaching device.

11:45 *Who brings you up out of the land of Egypt* – This didn’t just happen at the Red Sea, just as it wasn’t completed at our baptisms (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Our being brought out of Egypt and toward God is an ongoing process.

CHAPTER 12 Mar. 6***Uncleanness at Childbirth***

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘If a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her monthly period she shall be unclean. ³ In the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴ She shall continue in the blood of purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any holy thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. ⁵ But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her period; and she shall continue in the blood of purification sixty-six days. ⁶ When the days of her purification are completed, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the door of the Tent of Meeting, a year old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering: ⁷ and he shall offer it before Yahweh, and make atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the fountain of her blood. ‘This is the law for her who bears, whether a male or a female. ⁸ If she cannot afford a lamb,

then she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons: the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean’.

CHAPTER 13 Mar. 6***The Analysis of Leprosy***

Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ² When a man shall have a rising in his body’s skin, or a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes in the skin of his body the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons, the priests: ³ and the priest shall examine the plague in the skin of the body; and if the hair in the plague has turned white, and the appearance of the plague is deeper than the body’s skin, it is the plague of leprosy; and the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean. ⁴ If the bright spot is white in the skin of his body, and its appearance isn’t deeper than the skin, and its hair hasn’t turned white, then the priest shall isolate the infected person for seven days. ⁵ The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and behold, if in his eyes the plague is ar-

12:8 The poverty of Mary the mother of Jesus is indicated by the fact she offered doves and not a lamb (Lk. 2:24). He knew poverty.

13:2 It’s doubtful whether the skin disease referred to in Leviticus is what we now call leprosy, i.e. Hansen’s disease.

13:3 Leprosy is symbolic of sin. But a person can appear to have leprosy when in fact it’s only a surface level appearance of it; but only the priest, representing Jesus, can declare this. We must of course be careful not to excuse our failings as merely surface level sin; but when it comes to judging others, we must accept that someone can appear sinful to us but it’s only a surface appearance; we must not ultimately judge whether a person will be saved or not, quite simply because we cannot do so. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can do so.

rested, and the plague hasn't spread in the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days. ⁶ The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and behold, if the plague has faded, and the plague hasn't spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is a scab. He shall wash his clothes, and be clean. ⁷ But if the scab spreads on the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall show himself to the priest again. ⁸ The priest shall examine him; and behold, if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is leprosy. ⁹ When the plague of leprosy is in a man, then he shall be brought to the priest; ¹⁰ and the priest shall examine him. Behold, if there is a white rising in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the rising, ¹¹ it is a chronic leprosy in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall isolate him, for he is unclean. ¹² If the leprosy breaks out all over the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of the infected per-

son from his head even to his feet, as far as it appears to the priest; ¹³ then the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the leprosy has covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean of the plague. It has all turned white: he is clean. ¹⁴ But whenever raw flesh appears in him, he shall be unclean. ¹⁵ The priest shall examine the raw flesh, and pronounce him unclean: the raw flesh is unclean. It is leprosy. ¹⁶ Or if the raw flesh turns again, and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest; ¹⁷ and the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the plague has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him clean of the plague. He is clean. ¹⁸ When the body has a boil on its skin, and it has healed, ¹⁹ and in the place of the boil there is a white rising, or a bright spot, reddish-white, then it shall be shown to the priest; ²⁰ and the priest shall examine it; and behold, if it appears beneath the skin, and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy. It has broken out in the boil. ²¹ But

13:6 Our life spent in Christ is represented by these periods of seven days; at the end, Christ as the true priest and judge will decide whether the sin which there is in our lives has remained at a surface, appearance level – or whether it has spread. Yeast likewise represents sin, in that it spreads its influence. Sin either spreads in our flesh or doesn't...

13:8 The temptation must have been to try to cover up the appearance of sin / leprosy rather than revealing oneself to the priest; just as we are tempted today.

13:9,10 God's people were to avoid trying to judge the appearance of leprosy / sin in others.

13:13 If a person has indulged in sin and recognizes it, although they carry in their lives the evidence of it, yet the sin has as it were died and they are clean. At baptism into Christ we became "dead to sin" (Rom. 6:2).

13:20 There may be here a distinction being drawn between sin on a surface level and that sin which is deeper, which leads to exclusion from God's family.

if the priest examines it, and behold, there are no white hairs in it, and it isn't deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him seven days. ²² If it spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a plague. ²³ But if the bright spot stays in its place, and hasn't spread, it is the scar from the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean. ²⁴ Or when the body has a burn from fire on its skin, and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white, or white, ²⁵ then the priest shall examine it; and behold, if the hair in the bright spot has turned white, and its appearance is deeper than the skin; it is leprosy. It has broken out in the burning, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy. ²⁶ But if the priest examines it, and behold, there is no white hair in the bright spot, and it isn't lower than the skin, but is faded; then the priest shall isolate him seven days. ²⁷ The priest shall examine him on the seventh day. If it has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy. ²⁸ If the bright spot stays in its place, and hasn't spread in the skin, but is faded, it is the swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar from the burn. ²⁹ When a man or woman has

a plague on the head or on the beard, ³⁰ then the priest shall examine the plague; and behold, if its appearance is deeper than the skin, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is an itch, it is leprosy of the head or of the beard. ³¹ If the priest examines the plague of itching, and behold, its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the person infected with itching seven days. ³² On the seventh day the priest shall examine the plague; and behold, if the itch hasn't spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the appearance of the itch isn't deeper than the skin, ³³ then he shall be shaved, but he shall not shave the itch; and the priest shall shut up him who has the itch seven more days. ³⁴ On the seventh day, the priest shall examine the itch; and behold, if the itch hasn't spread in the skin, and its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes, and be clean. ³⁵ But if the itch spreads in the skin after his cleansing, ³⁶ then the priest shall examine him; and behold, if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest shall not look for the yellow hair, he is unclean. ³⁷ But if in his eyes the itch is arrested, and black hair has grown in it; the itch is healed, he is

13:23 People carry the scars of their sins, but these don't mean we should treat them as sinful.

13:37 *In his eyes* – The opinion, analysis and judgment of the priest, representing Christ, is all important. Many people in primitive societies consider they have a legitimate medical opinion, based on the kind of traditions and folk wisdom which abound in relation to skin diseases. Israel were to resist these, and leave the diagnosis and

clean. The priest shall pronounce him clean. ³⁸ When a man or a woman has bright spots in the skin of the body, even white bright spots; ³⁹ then the priest shall examine them; and behold, if the bright spots on the skin of their body are a dull white, it is a harmless rash, it has broken out in the skin, he is clean. ⁴⁰ If a man's hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, he is clean. ⁴¹ If his hair has fallen off from the front part of his head, he is forehead bald, he is clean. ⁴² But if there is in the bald head, or the bald forehead, a reddish-white plague; it is leprosy breaking out in his bald head, or his bald forehead. ⁴³ Then the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the rising of the plague is reddish-white in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the flesh, ⁴⁴ he is a leprous man. He is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean. His plague is on his head. ⁴⁵ The leper in whom the plague is shall wear torn clothes, and the hair of his head shall hang loose. He shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' ⁴⁶ All the days in which the plague is in him he shall be unclean. He is unclean. He shall dwell alone. Outside of the camp shall be his dwelling.

Leprosy in a Garment

⁴⁷ The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, whether it is a woollen garment, or a linen garment; ⁴⁸ whether it is in warp, or woof; of linen, or of wool; whether in a skin, or in anything made of skin; ⁴⁹ if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, or in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything made of skin; it is the plague of leprosy, and shall be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰ The priest shall examine the plague, and isolate the plague seven days. ⁵¹ He shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in the skin, whatever use the skin is used for, the plague is a destructive leprosy. It is unclean. ⁵² He shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of skin, in which the plague is; for it is a destructive leprosy. It shall be burned in the fire. ⁵³ If the priest examines it, and behold, the plague hasn't spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; ⁵⁴ then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which the plague is, and he shall isolate it seven more days. ⁵⁵ Then the priest shall examine it, after the plague is washed; and behold, if the

judgment solely in the hands of the priest. We have a serious tendency to judge others' sin, and we really must leave this to Christ.

13:46 Christ died for us "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:11,13); he was unashamed to associate with lepers and as it were died with them and for them.

13:51 *Whatever use* – No matter how valuable the garment, this didn't somehow mean that the leprosy [cp. sin] was any less significant.

13:55 The tendency would've been to think that if the rot was only on the inside of the garment and not visible to anyone else, then this didn't require attention or cleansing.

plague hasn't changed its colour, and the plague hasn't spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in the fire. It is a mildewed spot, whether the rot is inside or outside.⁵⁶ If the priest looks, and behold, the plague has faded after it is washed, then he shall pluck it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof:⁵⁷ and if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading. You shall burn with fire that in which the plague is.⁵⁸ The garment, either the warp, or the woof, or whatever thing of skin it is, which you shall wash, if the plague has departed from them, then it shall be washed the second time, and it will be clean.⁵⁹ This is the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp, or the woof, or in anything of skin, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean.

CHAPTER 14 Mar. 7

Regulations concerning Cleansing the Leper

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,
² This shall be the law of the

leper in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest,³ and the priest shall go forth out of the camp. The priest shall examine him, and behold, if the plague of leprosy is healed in the leper,⁴ then the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two living clean birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop.⁵ The priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water.⁶ As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water.⁷ He shall sprinkle on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird go into the open field.⁸ He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water; and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days.⁹ It shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his

Hence the emphasis – “whether the rot is inside or outside”. Sin is still sin, whether or not it is visible to others or not. Some peoples’ sins are more open to our view than others (1 Tim. 5:24).

13:56 *Pluck it out* – To stop the leprosy / sin spreading. Jesus uses the same phrase in teaching that we should ‘pluck out’ of our lives whatever is likely to lead us to stumble into sin (Mt. 5:29; 18:9). Repeatedly, the seriousness of the leprosy / sin is defined by whether it spreads, either in depth or distribution.

14:7 The two birds may foreshadow the death and resurrection of Jesus. The bird which flew away in joyful, thankful freedom symbolized Christ’s resurrection and the freedom from sin which is enabled for us who were spiritual lepers; thanks to the death of Christ, represented by the death of the first bird.

14:8 The cleansed leper was to become as a baby, and be washed in water. This looked ahead to baptism by full immersion into Christ as the new birth (Jn. 3:3-5).

beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his body in water, then he shall be clean. ¹⁰ On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and three tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. ¹¹ The priest who cleanses him shall set these things and the man who is to be cleansed before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ¹² The priest shall take one of the male lambs, and offer him for a trespass offering, with the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh. ¹³ He shall kill the male lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of the sanctuary; for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering. It is most holy. ¹⁴ The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. ¹⁵ The priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ¹⁶ The priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times

before Yahweh. ¹⁷ The priest shall put some of the rest of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering. ¹⁸ The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, and the priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh. ¹⁹ The priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed because of his uncleanness; and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering; ²⁰ and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. The priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean. ²¹ If he is poor, and can't afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a trespass offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil; ²² and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford; and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering. ²³ On the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, before Yahweh. ²⁴ The priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering, and the log of oil,

14:14 The leper was to continually live under the impression of the fact he or she had been healed and cleansed, just as we should. The fact the blood of Christ was shed for us personally should affect how we hear (hence the blood was put on the ear), what we do with our hands (the right thumb) and where we go with our feet (the right big toe). The process was repeated with oil (:16), perhaps foreshadowing the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the lives of those in Christ.

and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh. ²⁵ He shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering. The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. ²⁶ The priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand; ²⁷ and the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before Yahweh. ²⁸ Then the priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the trespass offering. ²⁹ The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before Yahweh. ³⁰ He shall

offer one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can lay his hand on, ³¹ even such as he is able to afford, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, with the grain offering. The priest shall make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before Yahweh. ³² This is the law for him in whom is the plague of leprosy, who is not able to afford the sacrifice for his cleansing.

Leprosy in a House

³³ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ³⁴ When you have come into the land of Canaan which I give to you for a possession, and I put a spreading leprosy in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵ then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'There seems to me to be some sort of plague in the house'. ³⁶ The priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes in to examine the

14:30 *Such as he can lay his hand on* – Lepers had to live outside the camp of Israel and couldn't work, so they would've typically been very poor. But the concept of sacrifice was important; they weren't to assume 'I'm a leper, of course I have nothing, I don't have to sacrifice anything'. They had to lay their hand on at least some kind of animal – and the Hebrew could possibly carry the sense of '*whatever* he can lay his hand on'. It was important that they gave at least something in recognition of their need for cleansing, and their receipt of it by God's grace. We shouldn't consider our poverty, in whatever area, to mean that we don't have to sacrifice anything to God.

14:34 *Which I give to you for a possession* – Constantly Israel were reminded that God would indeed give them the promised Kingdom, even though at that time as they wandered in the wilderness it must've seemed merely a nice idea. He encourages us likewise.

14:35 It would've been tempting for the owner to just cover up the signs of disease within his house, rather than ask the priest to inspect it. We are to be open before God, freely confessing our sins and possible sins or liabilities to sin, in open dialogue before Him in prayer. When David invites God to search his heart and see if there be any wicked way in him (Ps. 139:23), he was alluding to the language of the house owner inviting the priest to inspect his house for leprosy.

plague, that all that is in the house not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to inspect the house. ³⁷ He shall examine the plague; and behold, if the plague is in the walls of the house with hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, and it appears to be deeper than the wall; ³⁸ then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days. ³⁹ The priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the plague has spread in the walls of the house, ⁴⁰ then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the plague, and cast them into an unclean place outside of the city; ⁴¹ and he shall cause the inside of the house to be scraped all over, and they shall pour out the mortar that they scraped off outside of the city into an unclean place. ⁴² They shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall

take other mortar, and shall plaster the house. ⁴³ If the plague comes again, and breaks out in the house, after he has taken out the stones, and after he has scraped the house, and after it was plastered; ⁴⁴ then the priest shall come in and look; and behold, if the plague has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew in the house. It is unclean. ⁴⁵ He shall break down the house, its stones, and its timber, and all the mortar of the house. He shall carry them out of the city into an unclean place. ⁴⁶ Moreover he who goes into the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening. ⁴⁷ He who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes; and he who eats in the house shall wash his clothes. ⁴⁸ If the priest shall come in, and examine it, and behold, the plague hasn't spread in the house, after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because

14:39 This looks forward to Christ as the ultimate priest coming again on the final [seventh] day and inspecting the degree to which sin has spread within us, or remained merely on the level of appearance. 1 Pet. 2:12 alludes here, by calling the day of Christ's return "the day of inspection" (Gk.).

14:41 The removing and scraping of diseased stones is a figure alluded to later in the Bible. The stones of Tyre were to be removed and scraped (Ez. 26:4) – for it was a sinful city. Jesus makes the same allusion when He said that the stones of the temple were to be removed one by one, because the Jews refused to accept the day of Christ's inspection (Lk. 19:44 Gk.). When He entered the temple, looked around it and then walked out, He was acting as a priest inspecting a leprous house (Mk. 11:11). But the Jews refused to accept Him as priest and insisted that their hypocrisy was in fact holiness. The new stones which were to be brought in (:42) refer to the Christian believers, who were to be built up into a new temple (1 Pet. 2:5). It was a radical thing indeed for Jesus to liken the temple, the very symbol of human piety and the very quintessence of the Jewish religion, to a leprous house which needed to be pulled down. Established religion today likely has the same judgment from Him.

14:47 There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to lie down in the unclean house required a washing of clothes, whereas just going into it merited a lesser requirement for cleansing.

the plague is healed. ⁴⁹ To cleanse the house he shall take two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop. ⁵⁰ He shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water. ⁵¹ He shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. ⁵² He shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, with the living bird, with the cedar wood, with the hyssop, and with the scarlet; ⁵³ but he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field. So shall he make atonement for the house; and it shall be clean. ⁵⁴ This is the law for any plague of leprosy, and for an itch, ⁵⁵ and for the destructive leprosy of a garment, and for a house, ⁵⁶ and for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot; ⁵⁷ to teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy.

CHAPTER 15 Mar. 8

Male Bodily Discharges

Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ² Speak to the

children of Israel, and tell them, ‘When any man has a discharge from his body, because of his discharge he is unclean. ³ This shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or if his body has stopped excreting his discharge, it is his uncleanness. ⁴ Every bed whereon he who has the discharge lies shall be unclean; and everything he sits on shall be unclean. ⁵ Whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁶ He who sits on anything whereon the man who has the discharge sat shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁷ He who touches the body of him who has the discharge shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁸ If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁹ Whatever saddle he who has the discharge rides on shall be unclean. ¹⁰ Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the

14:51 Wood, hyssop and scarlet clothing all featured in the final suffering and crucifixion of Christ. This is the basis for our cleansing from the leprosy of sin.

15:2 These laws were to teach that in essence, it is what comes from within a person which makes them unclean, rather than what enters us from outside (Mk. 7:15-23). The idea that demons, evil spirits or Satan can enter us and make us unclean must be rejected; Jesus emphasizes that sin comes from *within*, therefore it is totally our fault, and we must take responsibility rather than blaming it on cosmic forces outside of us.

15:3 *If his body has stopped excreting his discharge* – Even if we are no longer sinning, we must remember that we still stand guilty for past sins unless we have received cleansing for them. The passage of time and the fading of human memory works only a pseudo-atonement for sin; it is the blood of Christ and our conscious identity with it which alone can eternally cleanse our conscience from sins both past and present.

evening. He who carries those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹¹ Whoever he who has the discharge touches, without having rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹² The earthen vessel, which he who has the discharge touches, shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water. ¹³ When he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes; and he shall bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean. ¹⁴ On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before Yahweh to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest; ¹⁵ and the priest shall offer them, the one for a sin offer-

ing, and the other for a burnt offering. The priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh for his discharge. ¹⁶ If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁷ Every garment, and every skin, whereon the semen is, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁸ If a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening.

Female Bodily Discharges

¹⁹ If a woman has a discharge, and her discharge in her flesh is blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁰ Everything that she lies on in her impurity shall be unclean. Everything also that she sits on shall be unclean.

15:10 There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to purposefully carry something unclean required a washing of clothes, whereas just touching them merited a lesser requirement for cleansing.

15:13 *Running water* – In the dry wilderness, this would have been from the river of spring water which followed them from the smitten rock, which represented Christ who was smitten so that we might have the means of being cleansed (1 Cor. 10:4).

15:16 Like many of the commandments, there was a large element of personal choice in whether to obey this or not; intimate matters such as personal discharges were unknown to others. Under the new covenant, this is even more the case; attitudes of mind which make us unclean before God are known only to ourselves. The Law of Moses was the only legal code which had so many clauses which concerned matters which could never be publically demonstrated. God's intention even under the old covenant was to teach and inculcate personal relationship between God and His people. He did this by giving commandments whose keeping only He and the individual knew about.

15:18, 19 The whole family would have known that 'mum and dad' or just mum was unclean. Personal matters like sex and menstruation thereby became part of normal family awareness, rather than being hived off in quasi-secrecy and invested with an aura of mystery as they are in many modern cultures.

²¹ Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ²² Whoever touches anything that she sits on shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ²³ If it is on the bed, or on anything whereon she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁴ If any man lies with her, and her monthly flow is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed whereon he lies shall be unclean. ²⁵ If a woman has a discharge of her blood many days not in the time of her period, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her period; all the days of the discharge of her uncleanness shall be as in the days of her period: she is unclean. ²⁶ Every bed whereon she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her period: and everything whereon she sits shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her period. ²⁷ Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. ²⁸ But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she

shall count to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. ²⁹ On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰ The priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her before Yahweh for the uncleanness of her discharge. ³¹ Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, so they will not die in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is in their midst'. ³² This is the law of him who has a discharge, and of him who has an emission of semen, so that he is unclean thereby; ³³ and of her who has her period, and of a man or woman who has a discharge, and of him who lies with her who is unclean.

CHAPTER 16 Mar. 9

The Day of Atonement

Yahweh spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before Yahweh and died; ² and Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron your brother not to

15:28 This two stage cleansing process is common in the Mosaic rituals. She was clean, but in another sense not fully cleansed until the end of the seven days. We likewise are now cleansed in Christ, but in a full sense we will only be fully cleansed when He returns and our bodies are made like His, and the flesh no longer is a part of our condition of being.

16:2 This is one of a number of examples where the Law God gave Moses was changed by Him in consideration of human weakness. This shows that God's law isn't set in stone; those who argue that we must keep the Sabbath today must face the fact that God *can* change and abrogate His own laws. The wonderful thing in this case is that God meditated upon the sin of Aaron's sons, and didn't wish to put Aaron in the way of temptation which might be too much for him; because God never allows us to be tempted beyond our capabilities (1 Cor. 10:13). The way God here recognizes

come at all times into the Most Holy Place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, in case he die; for I will appear in the cloud on the mercy seat. ³ Herewith shall Aaron come into the sanctuary: with a young bull for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches on his body, and shall put on the linen sash, and he shall be clothed with the linen turban. They are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water, and put them on. ⁵ He shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. ⁶ Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house. ⁷ He shall take the two goats, and set them before Yahweh at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ⁸ Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for Yahweh, and the other lot for

the scapegoat. ⁹ Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for Yahweh, and offer him for a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat on which the lot fell for the scapegoat shall be presented alive before Yahweh to make atonement for him, and then sent away as the scapegoat into the wilderness. ¹¹ Aaron shall present the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull of the sin offering which is for himself. ¹² He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Yahweh, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: ¹³ and he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the testimony, so that he will not die. ¹⁴ He shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east; and before the mercy seat he shall

the extent of His own holiness and as it were seeks to protect humanity from being harmed by it is similar to how He warned Israel not to come too near to the burning mountain (Ex. 19:21), and how He urged Moses not to come too near to the burning bush (Ex. 3:5). This isn't God distancing Himself from us, but His seeking to establish understanding of His holiness whereby we can ultimately draw near to Him in Christ (Heb. 10:22). When we struggle with God's distance from us we must bear this in mind.

16:10 The two goats represent the death and resurrection of Christ. The scapegoat bounding away in relieved, joyful freedom symbolizes the genuine freedom and joy of forgiven sin which we can experience in Christ. It's clear that human beings are eager for a scapegoat, we seem wired with a psychological need for one, someone upon whom we can place our sins and thereby feel free from them personally. The scapegoat has been provided for us in Christ, and therefore we shouldn't seek to scapegoat others.

16:12 Incense represents prayer offered by Christ (Rev. 8:3,4); the way it was taken beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place reflected how prayer, be it the 'mere' words of a woman waiting at a bus stop, enters into Heaven itself.

sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. ¹⁵ Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: ¹⁶ and he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins; and so he shall do for the Tent of Meeting that is situated amongst them, in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷ No one shall be in the Tent of Meeting when he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, and has made atonement for himself and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. ¹⁸ He shall go out to the altar that is before Yahweh and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the bull's blood, and some of the goat's blood, and put it around it, on the horns of the altar. ¹⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and make it holy from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. ²⁰ When he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat.

²¹ Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness to do this. ²² The goat shall carry all their iniquities on himself to a solitary land, and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness. ²³ Aaron shall come into the Tent of Meeting, and shall take off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there. ²⁴ Then he shall bathe himself in water in a holy place, and put on his garments, and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. ²⁶ He who lets the goat go for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. ²⁷ The bull for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried forth outside the camp; and they shall burn their skins, their flesh, and their

16:18 The New Testament observes that the blood of this bull and goat could not take away sins – even though the live goat apparently carried the sins away into the wilderness. If sin had really been carried away, there would have been no need for this annual day of atonement ceremony (Heb. 10:3,4). The conclusion is therefore drawn that God only operated this system of atonement on the basis that the blood of the sacrifices pointed forward to the blood of Christ, and on the basis of His faith and knowledge that Christ would make the perfect sacrifice, God accepted the animal blood on the basis that it was symbolic of Christ's blood.

dung with fire. ²⁸ He who burns them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. ²⁹ It shall be a statute to you forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and shall do no kind of work, the native-born, or the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you: ³⁰ for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before Yahweh. ³¹ It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict your souls; it is a statute forever. ³² The priest who is anointed and who is consecrated to be priest in his father's place shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments. ³³ Then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the Tent of Meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴ This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. It was done as Yahweh commanded Moses.

CHAPTER 17 Mar. 10

Regulations concerning Animal Blood

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to Aaron, and to his

sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded, ³ Whatever man there is of the house of Israel, who kills a bull, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp, ⁴ and hasn't brought it to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to offer it as an offering to Yahweh before the tabernacle of Yahweh: blood shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people. ⁵ This is to the end that the children of Israel may bring to Yahweh their sacrifices which they sacrifice in the open field, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to the priest, and sacrifice them for sacrifices of peace offerings to Yahweh. ⁶ The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of Yahweh at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and burn the fat for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ⁷ They shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat idols, after which they play the prostitute. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations'. ⁸ You shall say to them, 'Any man there is of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, ⁹ and doesn't bring it to the door of the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to Yahweh; that man shall be cut off from his people. ¹⁰ Any man of the house of Israel, or of the stran-

16:29 *Do no kind of work* – Because this was the day of atonement (:30). The point was that *God* was providing atonement by His grace and on account of the blood which represented Christ's blood – and not on the basis of our works.

17:9 Sacrifice couldn't be offered anywhere. It wasn't the case that the fact someone had a desire to do something for God thereby made them acceptable to Him. He had

gers who live as foreigners among them, who eats any kind of blood, I will set my face against that soul who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life'. ¹² Therefore I have said to the children of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who lives as a foreigner among you eat blood. ¹³ Whatever man there is of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who takes in hunting any animal or bird that may be eaten; he shall pour out its blood, and cover it with dust. ¹⁴ For as to the life of all flesh, its blood is its life; therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any kind of flesh; for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off. ¹⁵ Every

person that eats what dies of itself, or that which is torn by animals, whether he is native-born or a foreigner, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening: then he shall be clean. ¹⁶ But if he doesn't wash them, nor bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity.

CHAPTER 18 Mar. 10

Laws against Incest

Yahweh said to Moses, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'I am Yahweh your God. ³ You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived; and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you; neither shall you walk according to their statutes. ⁴ You shall do My ordinances, and you shall keep My statutes, and walk in them: I am Yahweh your God. ⁵ You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances; which if a man does, he shall

to be approached in the way He stipulated; and Jesus said "I am the door" (Jn. 10:9). It's not therefore true that all spiritual roads lead to the same place. We can only come to God in His way.

17:10 Blood represents life; to take life to ourselves rather than recognize it is God's results in us losing our lives (:14). Just as simply as the blood was to be given to God, so we are to give our lives to God. To take the blood to themselves is in fact spoken of as being as bad as murder (:4). This seems extreme language, but it underlines how important to God is this principle – that life is His and we are to give it to Him rather than live or take it to ourselves.

17:13 *Cover it with dust* – Burying the life, as it were. In baptism, we give our lives to God and figuratively die and are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:1-10).

18:5 *If a man does, he shall live in them* – Quoted in Gal. 3:12 to prove that life with God was possible by complete obedience to the Law of Moses. The Law could not give life in practice only in that people broke it (Gal. 3:21). Paul's point in Galatians is that eternal life therefore cannot be given on the basis of doing the Law – because we all break it. But Jesus completely kept the Law, and therefore deserved to have eternal life; but He died for us. Because of His perfect obedience to it, it wasn't therefore

live in them: I am Yahweh. ⁶ None of you shall approach anyone who are his close relatives, to uncover their nakedness: I am Yahweh. ⁷ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, nor the nakedness of your mother: she is your mother. You shall not uncover her nakedness. ⁸ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife: it is your father's nakedness. ⁹ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home, or born abroad. ¹⁰ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter, or of your daughter's daughter, even their nakedness: for theirs is your own nakedness. ¹¹ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, conceived by your father, since she is your sister. ¹² You shall not uncover

the nakedness of your father's sister: she is your father's near kinswoman. ¹³ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister: for she is your mother's near kinswoman. ¹⁴ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, you shall not approach his wife: she is your aunt. ¹⁵ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife. You shall not uncover her nakedness. ¹⁶ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife: it is your brother's nakedness. ¹⁷ You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter. You shall not take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness: they are near kinswomen: it is wickedness. ¹⁸ You shall not marry your wife's sister, to be a rival, to uncover her nakedness, while her sister is

possible for Him to remain dead, He had to be raised from the dead (Acts 2:24). The principle that life was possible for those who lived in perfect obedience to the Law would have driven every humble, sensitive, Godly minded person to wonder how he or she could attain to eternal life; they would've so wished to find a person who was completely obedient to the Law whose righteousness could as it were be counted to them. In this sense, the Law was a household servant which led people to perceive their need for Christ (Gal. 3:24).

18:6 *I am Yahweh* – Who God is becomes the motive for obedience; our core desire to be like Him, rather than a legalistic, literalistic desire to keep commandments, is what will help us in practice to be like Him.

18:9 These laws teach that nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having their nakedness uncovered; we have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us.

18:18 Jacob broke this principle by taking Rachel and Leah, and his sad family life afterwards was recorded as a testimony to how if we break God's principles, we may remain His people as Jacob did, but we will suffer the consequences. David likewise

yet alive. ¹⁹ You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness. ²⁰ You shall not lie carnally with your neighbour's wife, and defile yourself with her. ²¹ You shall not give any of your children to sacrifice to Molech; neither shall you profane the name of your God: I am Yahweh.

Sexual Perversions

²² You shall not lie with a man, as with a woman. That is detestable. ²³ You shall not lie with any animal to defile yourself with it; neither shall any woman give herself to an animal, to lie down with it: it is a perversion. ²⁴ Don't defile yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations which I am casting out before you were defiled. ²⁵ The land was defiled; therefore I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out her inhabitants. ²⁶ You therefore shall keep my statutes and my ordinances, and shall not do any of these abominations; neither the native-born, nor the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you; ²⁷ (for all these abomina-

tions have the men of the land done that were before you, and the land became defiled); ²⁸ that the land not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. ²⁹ For whoever shall do any of these abominations, even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people. ³⁰ Therefore you shall keep My requirements, that you do not practise any of these abominable customs, which were practised before you, and that you do not defile yourselves with them: I am Yahweh your God'.

CHAPTER 19 Mar. 11

The Ten Commandments

Interpreted

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and tell them, 'You shall be holy; for I Yahweh your God am holy. ³ Each one of you shall respect his mother and his father. You shall keep My Sabbaths. I am Yahweh your God. ⁴ Don't turn to idols, nor make molten gods for yourselves. I am Yahweh your God. ⁵ When you offer a

took the wives of Saul and also Saul's daughter – and likewise his breaking of the Law in this didn't lead to happiness, even though he remained God's man. There seems another connection to David in :20 – for Bathsheba lived in the house next door to David's, and his taking of his neighbour's wife resulted in the destruction of his own family and, ultimately, his kingdom.

18:21 *Profane the name* – We carry God's Name too, in that we are baptized into the Name. Our behaviour must therefore be appropriate to the Name we bear (James 2:7).

18:22 God found homosexuality "detestable"; although the Law of Moses has been abrogated, His basic moral principles remain unchanged. When Christ died on the cross, God didn't suddenly change His mind and decide that homosexuality was now OK.

19:5 Freewill offerings such as the peace offering must really be of our free will. We mustn't feel any sense of obligation to others, doing voluntary things to be seen of

sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh, you shall offer it voluntarily. ⁶ It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day; and if anything remains until the third day, it shall be burned with fire. ⁷ If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It will not be accepted; ⁸ but everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the holy thing of Yahweh, and that soul shall be cut off from his people. ⁹ When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you

shall leave them for the poor and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God. ¹¹ You shall not steal, nor lie, nor shall you deceive one another. ¹² You shall not swear by My name falsely, and profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh. ¹³ You shall not oppress your neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning. ¹⁴ You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; but you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh’.

Commands Teaching Sensitivity to Others

¹⁵ ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment: you shall not be partial to the

them, but any act of freewill devotion must be genuine, motivated by our personal desire to devote our time or resources to God.

19:7 *An abomination* – If we think our freewill devotions to be God can be done as we wish without regard for His principles, then what we do is obnoxious to Him. The Hebrew word translated “abomination” is often used about idol worship; we will not be worshipping Him, but the idols of our own image and standing in the eyes of people.

19:10 *For the poor* – If all Israel were obedient to the Law of Moses, there wouldn’t have been any poor in Israelite society (Dt. 15:4). But the same Law of Moses repeatedly instructed Israel to be generous and sensitive to the poor; it tacitly recognized, as did Jesus, that there would always be poor within Israel, for the Law would never be fully kept (Mt. 26:11). We see in the structure of the Law the recognition of human failure in a way which no other law has ever equalled. There’s a tendency to assume that the poor are poor because of their own poor decision making and therefore we have no responsibility to help them – although we are all poor decision makers in various ways, especially in spiritual matters. The Law taught a principle we need to learn also – that even if folk have dug a whole and fallen into it, we are still to assist them and be sensitive to their situation.

19:11 The command not to steal is associated with not deceiving others nor lying to them. Dishonesty, even if it’s unrelated to material gain at another’s expense, is a form of theft; we are taking from another wrongfully.

19:14 *Fear your God* – As if God is especially sensitive to our abusing others’ disadvantages in whatever form, and His wrath about this is to be feared.

19:15 We are not to judge in the sense of condemn others, but it’s inevitable in daily life that we have to form opinions. But we must always remember that the person we are judging is in fact our neighbour, our brother, our equal; our judgment shouldn’t

poor, nor show favouritism to the great; but you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness. ¹⁶ You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people. You shall not endanger the life of your neighbour. I am Yahweh. ¹⁷ You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people; but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Yahweh. ¹⁹ You shall keep my statutes. You shall not crossbreed different kinds of animals, you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; neither shall there come upon you a garment made of two kinds of material. ²⁰ If a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave girl, pledged to be married to another man, and not ransomed, or given her freedom; they shall be punished. They shall not be put to death, because she was not free. ²¹ He shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, even a ram for a trespass offering. ²² The priest shall make

atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before Yahweh for his sin which he has committed; and the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him. ²³ When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden. Three years shall they be forbidden to you. It shall not be eaten. ²⁴ But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, for giving a praise offering to Yahweh. ²⁵ In the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, that it may yield its increase to you. I am Yahweh your God. ²⁶ You shall not eat any meat with the blood still in it; neither shall you use enchantments, nor practise sorcery. ²⁷ You shall not cut the hair on the sides of your heads, neither shall you clip off the edge of your beard. ²⁸ You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you. I am Yahweh. ²⁹ Don't profane your daughter, to make her a prostitute; lest the land fall to prostitution, and the land become full of wickedness. ³⁰ You shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am Yahweh.

be rooted in any sense of feeling inherently superior over him or her, spiritually or otherwise.

19:17 By not rebuking our brother, by saying nothing and not engaging with the issues when we need to, we are likely to breed anger in our hearts against him or her.

19:18 One reason we fail to love others as ourselves is because we may in fact not love ourselves in the sense of perceiving our own value before God.

19:23 Forbidden fruit naturally recalls the forbidden fruit on the tree in Eden. To grab as much as we can immediately without working for it nor recognizing that the first-fruits of all human endeavour must be given to the Lord – is all very human and common. But to do so is painted as being as bad as taking the forbidden fruit of Eden, with all the long term suffering which came as a result of short-termism.

19:29 *Lest the land fall to prostitution* – Sexual misbehaviour sets an example which spreads so easily.

³¹ Don't turn to those who are mediums, nor to the wizards. Don't seek them out, to be defiled by them. I am Yahweh your God. ³² You shall rise up before the gray head, and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh. ³³ If a stranger lives as a foreigner with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ The stranger who lives as a foreigner with you shall be to you as the native-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God. ³⁵ You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity. ³⁶ You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin. I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ³⁷ You shall observe all my statutes, and all my ordinances, and do them. I am Yahweh'.

CHAPTER 20 Mar. 12

The Sin of Molech Worship

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Moreover, you shall tell the children of Israel, 'Anyone of the

children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech; he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. ³ I also will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people because he has given of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary, and to profane My holy name. ⁴ If the people of the land all hide their eyes from that person, when he gives of his seed to Molech, and don't put him to death; ⁵ then I will set My face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all who play the prostitute after him, to play the prostitute with Molech, from among their people. ⁶ The person that turns to those who are mediums, and to the wizards, to play the prostitute after them, I will even set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people. ⁷ Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am Yahweh your God. ⁸ You shall keep My statutes, and do them. I am Yahweh who sanctifies you. ⁹ For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall

20:3 *To profane My holy name* – Our attitude to our children is our attitude to God's Name. We need to ask ourselves how in our context we might be giving our children to Molech? 'Giving' children to Molech may not only have referred to child sacrifices but also dedicating children to the service of Molech. Our children are to be dedicated to God and nobody and nothing else.

20:4 Acting as if we didn't notice something is a sin of omission just as bad as a sin of commission.

20:5 *All who play the prostitute after him* – The seriousness of sin is partly in the influence it has upon others. To give children to Molech encouraged others to sin by the example set. The power of our example upon others is far greater than we realize. Verse 14 likewise teaches that sexual perversion in one case could easily lead to wickedness being practiced amongst the whole congregation.

surely be put to death: he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him’.

Regulations about Sexual Relationships

¹⁰ The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, even he who commits adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. ¹¹ The man who lies with his father’s wife has uncovered his father’s nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them. ¹² If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have committed a perversion; their blood shall be upon them. ¹³ If a man lies with a male, as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. ¹⁴ If a man takes a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burned with fire, both he and they; that there may be no wickedness among you. ¹⁵ If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; and you shall kill the animal. ¹⁶ If a woman approaches any animal, and lies down with it, you shall kill the woman, and the animal: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. ¹⁷ If a man

takes his sister, his father’s daughter, or his mother’s daughter, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness; it is a shameful thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people: he has uncovered his sister’s nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸ If a man lies with a woman having her monthly period, and uncovers her nakedness; he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. ¹⁹ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister, nor of your father’s sister; for he has made naked his close relative: they shall bear their iniquity. ²⁰ If a man lies with his uncle’s wife, he has uncovered his uncle’s nakedness: they shall bear their sin: they shall die childless. ²¹ If a man takes his brother’s wife, it is an impurity: he has uncovered his brother’s nakedness; they shall be childless. ²² You shall therefore keep all My statutes, and all My ordinances, and do them; that the land, where I am bringing you to dwell, may not vomit you out. ²³ You shall not walk in the customs of the nation, which I am casting out before you: for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. ²⁴ But I have said to you, You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess it, a

20:10 *Another man’s wife, even... his neighbour’s wife* – This definition suggests that every man in the community was to be treated as one’s neighbour. Hence in the New Testament, loving our neighbour is interpreted as meaning loving all others within the community of God’s people (Gal. 5:13,14). We shouldn’t think that because someone is unknown to us or distant from us in whatever sense, that we can act differently to them than we would to the one living next door to us.

land flowing with milk and honey. I am Yahweh your God, Who has separated you from the peoples. ²⁵ You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves abominable by animal, or by bird, or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have separated from you as unclean for you. ²⁶ You shall be holy to me; for I, Yahweh, am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, that you should be Mine. ²⁷ A man or a woman that is a medium, or is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them’.

CHAPTER 21 Mar. 13

Regulations about the Private Lives of Priests

Yahweh said to Moses, Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘A priest shall not

defile himself for the dead among his people; ² except for his relatives that are near to him: for his mother, for his father, for his son, for his daughter, for his brother, ³ and for his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband; for her he may defile himself. ⁴ He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself. ⁵ They shall not shave their heads, neither shall they shave off the corners of their beards, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. ⁶ They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, the food of their God; therefore they shall be holy. ⁷ They shall not marry a woman who is a prostitute, or profane; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God. ⁸ You shall sanctify him therefore; for he offers the bread of your God: he shall be holy to you; for I

20:25 You shall therefore make a distinction – The fact God had separated His people from this world (:24) was the reason for the commandments about them making a distinction between clean and unclean. There is nothing unclean of itself, the commands were given as a mechanism for teaching and reminding Israel in their daily lives of their separation from uncleanness. Those animals designated by God as “unclean” were “unclean for you” – not that they were in themselves.

21:6 *Food of their God* – God invited Israel to eat with Him at the altar, which became His table. The equivalent for us is eating with God at the Lord’s table, the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 10:21). Eating together was understood in Semitic culture as a sign of religious acceptance and fellowship.

21:7 *A woman who is a prostitute* – Another tacit recognition within the Law that it would not be fully kept; for prostitution was outlawed. Thus in the very structure of the Law we see God’s sensitive recognition of the fact it would not be fully kept. His sensitivity to and provision for our failures in advance, both individually and collectively, shouldn’t lead us to think that therefore we needn’t take His principles seriously; His foreknowledge of our weakness shouldn’t be perceived by us as a safety net for our sinfulness.

Yahweh, who sanctify you, am holy.
⁹ The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the prostitute, she profanes her father: she shall be burned with fire. ¹⁰ He who is the high priest among his brothers, upon whose head the anointing oil is poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose, nor tear his clothes; ¹¹ neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; ¹² neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him. I am Yahweh. ¹³ He shall take a wife in her virginity. ¹⁴ A widow, or one divorced, or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these he shall not marry; but a virgin of his own people shall he take as a wife. ¹⁵ He shall not profane his seed among his people; for I am Yahweh who sanctifies him’.

Priests to Be without Blemish

¹⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁷ Say to Aaron, ‘None of your seed throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸ For whatever man he is that has a blemish, he shall not draw near: a blind man, or a lame, or he who has a flat nose, or any deformity, ¹⁹ or a man who has an injured foot, or an injured hand, ²⁰ or hunchbacked, or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye, or an itching disease, or scabs, or who has damaged testicles; ²¹ no man of the seed of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. Since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. ²² He shall eat the food of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. ²³ He shall not come near to the veil, nor come near to the altar, because he has a blemish; that he may not profane My sanctuaries, for I am Yahweh who sanctifies them’. ²⁴ So Moses spoke to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel.

21:10 *Not let the hair of his head hang loose* – This is not to say that long hair is wrong in itself for a male. The pagan priests of Egypt, from where Israel had just been brought out, were noted for their long hair, which stood out from the rest of the male population in Egypt who generally had shaved heads at that time. The principle is that we shouldn’t perceive our religion as merely just one of many other religions; there is something utterly unique about our way to God through Christ, who is our only mediator, the only way, “the truth”. Whilst on one hand God doesn’t judge the outward appearance but the heart, we should also be careful not to have externalities which make us appear to be ‘pagan’ and not the unique people of God.

21:22 Whatever blemish the man had, he could still personally fellowship with God, but he was not to publically offer the offerings of others. The priests at that moment were to be consciously representative of the sacrifices, which are the only other things which have the language of ‘blemish’ and ‘unblemished’ applied to them (e.g. 22:20).

CHAPTER 22 Mar. 14***Regulations about Eating Holy Things***

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Tell Aaron and his sons to separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, which they make holy to Me, and that they don't profane My holy name. I am Yahweh. ³ Tell them, 'If anyone of all your descendants throughout your generations approaches the holy things, which the children of Israel make holy to Yahweh, having his uncleanness on him, that soul shall be cut off from before Me. I am Yahweh. ⁴ Whoever of the seed of Aaron is a leper or has an issue shall not eat of the holy things, until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goes from him; ⁵ or whoever touches any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean; or a man from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever unclean-

ness he has; ⁶ the person that touches any such shall be unclean until the evening, and shall not eat of the holy things, until he bathe his body in water. ⁷ When the sun is down, he shall be clean; and afterward he shall eat of the holy things, because it is his food. ⁸ That which dies of itself, or is torn by animals, he shall not eat, defiling himself by it. I am Yahweh. ⁹ They shall therefore follow My requirements, lest they bear sin for it, and die therein, if they profane it. I am Yahweh who sanctifies them. ¹⁰ No foreigner shall eat of the holy thing: a foreigner living with the priests, or a hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing. ¹¹ But if a priest buys a slave, purchased by his money, he shall eat of it; and such as are born in his house, they shall eat of his bread. ¹² If a priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she shall not eat of the heave offering of the holy things. ¹³ But if a priest's daughter is a widow, or divorced,

22:6 As we as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) read of these requirements not to eat the holy things whilst unclean, we may wonder how we as sinners can ever eat the bread and drink the wine as required to remember Christ's death. But the fact is, we have been washed and sanctified for service by baptism into the Name of Christ (1 Cor. 6:11 alludes here). This is a status we are continually in – for this is the wonder of the concept of our being “in Christ”.

22:10 *A foreigner living with the priests* – The Law has a lot to say about welcoming foreigners and being hospitable to them. We as the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) should likewise be open rather than closed to the people of the world around us, even though we are in another sense separated *from* them and *unto* the things of our God.

22:11 Gentiles who had been bought for a price by a priest to be his servants were treated as Israelites. This looked forward to Christ, the final Priest, buying us with His own blood that we might be His servants, and thereby we are fully part of His family and the people of God (1 Cor. 7:23).

22:13 *No stranger shall eat* – But if the stranger had been bought by the Priest, he or she was no longer a stranger (:11). Paul has this passage in mind when he rejoices that those baptized into Christ are no longer strangers and foreigners but members of

and has no child, and has returned to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's bread: but no stranger shall eat any of it. ¹⁴ If a man eats something holy unwittingly, then he shall add the fifth part of its value to it, and shall give the holy thing to the priest. ¹⁵ The priests shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer to Yahweh, ¹⁶ and so cause them to bear the iniquity that brings guilt, when they eat their holy things; for I am Yahweh who sanctifies them'.

The Importance of Unblemished Sacrifices

¹⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'Whoever is of the house of Israel, or of the foreigners in Israel, who offers his offering, whether it be any of their vows, or any of their freewill offerings, which they offer to Yahweh for a burnt offering; ¹⁹ that you may be accepted, you shall offer a male without blemish, of the bulls, of the sheep, or of the goats. ²⁰ But whatever has a blemish, that you shall not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. ²¹ Whoever offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh to accomplish a vow, or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it shall be

perfect to be accepted: no blemish shall be therein. ²² Blind, injured, maimed, having a wart, festering, or having a running sore, you shall not offer these to Yahweh, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to Yahweh. ²³ A bull or a lamb that has any deformity or is lacking in his parts, that you may offer for a free-will offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted. ²⁴ That which has its testicles bruised, crushed, broken, or cut, you shall not offer to Yahweh; neither shall you do thus in your land. ²⁵ Neither shall you offer any of these as the food of your God from the hand of a foreigner; because their corruption is in them. There is a blemish in them. They shall not be accepted for you'. ²⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁷ When a bull, or a sheep, or a goat, is born, then it shall remain seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for the offering of an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ²⁸ Whether it is a cow or ewe, you shall not kill it and its young both in one day. ²⁹ When you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Yahweh, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted. ³⁰ It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall leave none of it until the morning. I am Yahweh. ³¹ Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and do them. I am Yahweh. ³² You shall

God's family and fellow citizens with "the saints", a term which he may well have understood in this context as referring to the community of Israel (Eph. 2:19).

22:24 *Neither shall you do thus in your land* – Animals weren't to be castrated. We see in this not only a reflection of the huge value God places upon life in general, but also His sensitivity to animals. Verses 27 and 28 may reflect the same.

not profane My holy name, but I will be made holy among the children of Israel. I am Yahweh Who makes you holy, ³³ Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 23 Mar. 15

The Feasts of Yahweh

The Passover

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, ‘The set feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies, even these are My set feasts. ³ Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy assembly; you shall do no kind of work. It is a Sabbath to Yahweh in all your dwellings. ⁴ These are the set feasts of Yahweh, even holy assemblies, which you shall proclaim in their appointed season. ⁵ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is Yahweh’s Passover. ⁶ On the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to Yahweh. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ⁷ In the first day you shall have a holy assembly. You shall do no regular work, ⁸ but you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh seven days. In the seventh day is a holy assembly: you shall do no regular work’.

The Feast of First Fruits

⁹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, ‘When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest: ¹¹ and he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹² On the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb without blemish a year old for a burnt offering to Yahweh. ¹³ The grain offering with it shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire to Yahweh for a pleasant aroma; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin. ¹⁴ You shall eat neither bread, nor roasted grain, nor fresh grain, until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God. This is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

The Feast of Pentecost

¹⁵ ‘You shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed: ¹⁶ even to the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall

22:32 *I will be made holy... I am Yahweh who makes you holy* – They as us were to live out in practice the status which God had given them. He had made them holy and acceptable in His sight, and they were therefore to live in a holy manner.

23:4 *You shall proclaim* – Paul alludes here when he says that the breaking of bread meeting – the only ‘feast’ we have under the New Covenant – is a proclaiming of Christ’s death (1 Cor. 11:26).

number fifty days; and you shall offer a new grain offering to Yahweh. ¹⁷ You shall bring out of your habitations two loaves of bread for a wave offering made of two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour. They shall be baked with yeast, for first fruits to Yahweh. ¹⁸ You shall present with the bread seven lambs without blemish a year old, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to Yahweh, with their grain offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of a sweet aroma to Yahweh. ¹⁹ You shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. ²⁰ The priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering before Yahweh, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to Yahweh for the priest. ²¹ You shall make proclamation on the same day: there shall be a holy assembly to you; you shall do no regular work. This is a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. ²² When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not

wholly reap into the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest: you shall leave them for the poor, and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God’.

The Day of Atonement

²³ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest to you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy assembly. ²⁵ You shall do no regular work; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh’. ²⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁷ However on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement: it shall be a holy assembly to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ²⁸ You shall do no kind of work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before Yahweh your God. ²⁹ For whoever it is who shall not bow himself down in that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ Whoever

23:17 *Baked with yeast* – Yeast represents human sin (1 Cor. 5:8), and was often banned from being offered. But here it was required – to remind the people that they were sinners, and yet God still accepts the offerings of sinners.

23:20 The two lambs offered for a burnt offering at the end of harvest contrast with the single lamb offered at the start of it (:12). This was to underline that the receipt of blessing from God must be responded to in dedication to Him – which is what the burnt offering represented.

23:22 The Israelites were reminded of this principle at this point in the legislation lest they become so caught up with realizing their own material blessings that they forgot that others were not so blessed. Whenever we reflect upon our material blessings we are to immediately remind ourselves that others somewhere are not so blessed, and we have a duty towards them.

23:30 *That person I will destroy from among his people* – Whilst work was forbidden during the other feasts, this threat is added only here concerning the Day of Atonement.

it is who does any kind of work in that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You shall do no kind of work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³² It shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall bow down yourselves. In the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbath.

The Feast of Tents

³³ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁴ Speak to the children of Israel, and say, ‘On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tents for seven days to Yahweh. ³⁵ On the first day shall be a holy assembly: you shall do no regular work. ³⁶ Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day shall be a holy assembly to you; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a solemn assembly; you shall do no regular work. ³⁷ These are the appointed feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies, to offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, a burnt offering, and a grain offering, a sac-

rifice, and drink offerings, each on its own day; ³⁸ besides the Sabbaths of Yahweh, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to Yahweh. ³⁹ So on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruits of the land, you shall keep the feast of Yahweh seven days: on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. ⁴⁰ You shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God seven days. ⁴¹ You shall keep it a feast to Yahweh seven days in the year: it is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths seven days. All who are native-born in Israel shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God’. ⁴⁴ Moses declared to the children of Israel the appointed feasts of Yahweh.

ment. This was how important it was for them to realize that atonement for our sins is in the end by God’s grace through the sacrifice of the animals who represented Christ; and not according to our works.

23:38 The repeated use of the word “besides” emphasized that times of special commitment to God shouldn’t lead us to forget the regular sacrifices and devotions which we are to make. An example of this would be that if one spends some days away at a church gathering, we are not to forget our own personal quiet time with God, prayer and Bible reading.

23:43 It’s not recorded in the account of the Exodus that God made Israel dwell in booths. Often later Scripture gives us extra information about what happened at a historical event. This is why we need to use the entire Bible in order to get the correct picture about what happened in the historical sections.

CHAPTER 24 Mar. 16***The Showbread***

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually. ³ Outside of the veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aaron keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh continually: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. ⁴ He shall keep in order the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before Yahweh continually. ⁵ You shall take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes of it: two tenth parts of an ephah shall be in one cake. ⁶ You shall set them in two rows, six on a row, on the pure gold table before Yahweh. ⁷ You shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may make the bread be for a memorial, even an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ⁸ Every Sabbath day he shall set it in order before Yahweh

continually. It is on the behalf of the children of Israel an everlasting covenant. ⁹ It shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire by a perpetual statute.

A Case of Blasphemy

¹⁰ The son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and the son of the Israelite woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp. ¹¹ The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and cursed; and they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. ¹² They put him in custody, until the will of Yahweh about this should be declared to them. ¹³ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁴ Bring out of the camp him who cursed; and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the

24:2 The whole congregation of Israel were to bring a small amount of oil and flour for the bread each week. The constantly burning oil and presence of the small loaves was a symbol of how Israel were continually before Him. Yet the amount of oil and flour required each week was miniscule in comparison to the size of all Israel – there were probably three million of them at the time this law was given (Ex. 12:37). But God is the God of small things. In the very small things we offer Him, we are remembered before Him. Israel were taught that this tiny offering of oil and flour each week was so highly significant; offering even very small things shouldn't be seen by us as unnecessary or insignificant before God. The way Jesus noticed the widow offering two tiny coins and commented upon it is proof of this (Lk. 21:2).

24:6 The bread on the table connects with the breaking of bread at the table of the Lord under the New Covenant. The bread was replaced – as it were eaten by God – each week (:8). Whilst there is no specific command as to how frequently we should break bread, it would seem from Acts 20:7 that some of the early Christians did it weekly, and this is no bad example for us to follow.

24:11 If we marry out of the family of faith, our children may well not have the reverence towards the true God which they should have.

congregation stone him. ¹⁵ You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. ¹⁶ He who blasphemes the name of Yahweh, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him: the foreigner as well as the native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. ¹⁷ He who strikes any man mortally shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ He who strikes an animal mortally shall make it good, life for life. ¹⁹ If anyone injures his neighbour; as he has done, so shall it be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has injured someone, so shall it be done to him. ²¹ He who kills an animal shall make it good; and he who kills a man shall be put to death. ²² You shall have one kind of law, for the foreigner as well as the native-born; for I am Yahweh your God’. ²³ Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and they brought out him who had cursed out of the camp, and stoned him with stones. The children of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses.

CHAPTER 25 Mar. 17

The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee

Yahweh said to Moses in Mount Sinai, ² Speak to the children

of Israel, and tell them, ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to Yahweh. ³ Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruits; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to Yahweh. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵ What grows of itself in your harvest you shall not reap, and the grapes of your undressed vine you shall not gather. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. ⁶ The Sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for yourself, for your servant, for your maid, for your hired servant, and for your stranger, who lives as a foreigner amongst you. ⁷ For your livestock also, and for the animals that are in your land, shall all its increase be for food. ⁸ You shall count off seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven years; and there shall be to you the days of seven Sabbaths of years, even forty-nine years. ⁹ Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰ You shall make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a ju-

24:22 *For the foreigner as well as the native-born* – If we have unbelievers into our homes or any situation where we are in charge of the social situation, we are to ensure that God’s principles are upheld. Again translating this into modern terms – if parents have unbelieving children in their home to play with their own children, God’s principles are still to be upheld by the visitors.

25:10 *You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants* – This is alluded to in Lk. 4:19 where we read that Jesus proclaimed “the **acceptable year** of

bilee to you; and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.

¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee to you. In it you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself, nor gather from the undressed vines.

¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat of its increase out of the field. ¹³ In this Year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property. ¹⁴ If you sell anything to your neighbour, or buy from your neighbour, you shall not wrong one another. ¹⁵ According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbour. Relative to the number of years of the crops he shall sell to you. ¹⁶ According to the length of the years you shall increase its price, and according to the shortness of the years you shall diminish

its price; for he is selling the number of the crops to you. ¹⁷ You shall not wrong one another; but you shall fear your God; for I am Yahweh your God. ¹⁸ Therefore you shall do My statutes, and keep My ordinances and do them; and you shall dwell in the land in safety. ¹⁹ The land shall yield its fruit, and you shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. ²⁰ If you were to say, What shall we eat the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase; ²¹ know that I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for the three years. ²² You shall sow the eighth year, and eat of the fruits, the old store; until the ninth year, until its fruits come in, you shall eat the old store. ²³ The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for

the Lord". We are to make the same proclamation in preaching the good news to all people – "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached [**proclaimed**, s.w. Lk. 4:19] in his name among all nations" (Lk. 24:47). The year of Jubilee began with the Day of Atonement, which is understood in the New Testament as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins. We are now to live in a permanent state of Jubilee, announcing it to all people. The Hebrew word translated "jubilee" carries the idea of forgiveness, release, freedom. This is our message to all the people of the world.

25:15 The ultimate time of Jubilee will be at the return of Christ. We are to perceive the value of all things we buy relative to this. Effectively, the Jubilee was a time of release from debt. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt. 6:12) is probably another allusion to the Jubilee. We release / forgive men their debt to us, as God does to us. If we choose not to participate in this Jubilee by not releasing others, then we cannot expect to receive it ourselves.

25:20 The Lord Jesus implied that we are in a permanent Jubilee year situation when He said that we should "take no thought what you shall eat... Sow not nor gather into barns" and not think "What shall we eat?" (Mt. 6:26,31 = Lev. 25:20). If we put God's principles first, somehow materially everything works out. We shall not starve.

25:23 The principles of the Jubilee taught that all persons and land belong to God; we are only temporarily using them, and nothing ultimately belongs to us personally; all is God's. This helps us cope better with 'loss' of possessions, and should keep us from

you are strangers and live as foreigners with Me. ²⁴ In all the land of your possession you shall grant a redemption for the land. ²⁵ If your brother becomes poor, and sells some of his possessions, then his kinsman who is next to him shall come, and redeem that which his brother has sold. ²⁶ If a man has no one to redeem it, and he becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it; ²⁷ then let him reckon the years since its sale, and restore the surplus to the man to whom he sold it; and he shall return to his property. ²⁸ But if he isn't able to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hand of him who has bought it until the Year of Jubilee: and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession. ²⁹ If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it has been sold. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption. ³⁰ If it isn't redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be

made sure in perpetuity to him who bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee. ³¹ But the houses of the villages which have no wall around them shall be reckoned with the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the Jubilee. ³² Nevertheless the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities of their possession, the Levites may redeem at any time. ³³ The Levites may redeem the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, and it shall be released in the Jubilee; for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel. ³⁴ But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession'.

How to Deal with the Poor

³⁵ 'If your brother has become poor, and his hand can't support him among you; then you shall uphold him. He shall live with you like an alien and a temporary resident. ³⁶ Take no interest from him or profit, but fear

the manic materialism which has been bred by capitalism, whereby all seek personal ownership of land and resources.

25:28 Eph. 1:13 speaks of our place in God's Kingdom as our possession which has been purchased by the blood of Christ, and which we will receive as an inheritance at His return. This is all Jubilee language. The eternal time of Jubilee will be when the Kingdom is established upon earth, and we will each receive both literally and more abstractly an eternal inheritance in that Kingdom on earth, each with a varying number of towns to rule over (Lk. 19:17). Whether we are rich or poor in this life, whether or not we purchase our 'own' homes (:29), we are assured that our very own personal possession is assured, and we will return to it eternally in the Kingdom of God at Christ's return. The Israelite who became "poor", either by his own failures, others' manipulations or his own poor decision making, would have continually looked forward to the year of Jubilee – when finally he and his family would be free, no longer in servitude, and could return to their very own land and inheritance as their eternal possession (:34). We look forward to Christ's return with the same spirit.

your God; that your brother may live among you. ³⁷ You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. ³⁸ I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. ³⁹ If your brother has grown poor among you, and sells himself to you; you shall not make him to serve as a slave. ⁴⁰ As a hired servant and as a temporary resident he shall live with you; he shall serve with you until the Year of Jubilee: ⁴¹ then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and shall return to his own family, and to the possession of his fathers. ⁴² For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. They shall not be sold as slaves. ⁴³ You shall not rule over him with harshness, but shall fear your God. ⁴⁴ As for your male and your female slaves whom you may have; of the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves. ⁴⁵ Moreover of the children of the aliens who live among you, of them you may buy, and of their families who are with you, which they have conceived in your land; and they will be your property. ⁴⁶ You may make them an inheritance for your children after you, to hold for a possession; of them may you take your slaves forever; but over your brothers the children of Israel you shall not rule,

one over another, with harshness. ⁴⁷ If an alien or temporary resident with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him has grown poor, and sells himself to the stranger or foreigner living among you, or to a member of the stranger's family; ⁴⁸ after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him; ⁴⁹ or his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any who is a close relative to him of his family may redeem him; or if he has grown rich, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰ He shall reckon with him who bought him from the year that he sold himself to him relative to the Year of Jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according to the number of years; according to the time of a hired servant shall he be with him. ⁵¹ If there are yet many years, according to them he shall give back the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. ⁵² If there remain but a few years to the year of jubilee, then he shall reckon with him; according to his years of service he shall give back the price of his redemption. ⁵³ As a servant hired year by year shall he live with him: he shall not rule with harshness over him in your sight. ⁵⁴ If he isn't redeemed by these means, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee, he, and his children with him. ⁵⁵ For to Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants whom I brought

25:53 *With harshness* – Any social superiority we may have over others is temporary, and must be seen in the context of the year of Jubilee which has been announced in Christ. The whole concept was designed to teach humility and gentleness in relationships.

25:55 Those who had servants were to remember that they themselves were servants. Maybe Paul had this in mind when he reminded us that all our brothers and sisters are

out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God’.

CHAPTER 26 Mar. 18

Blessings for Obedience

‘**Y**ou shall make for yourselves no idols, neither shall you raise up an engraved image or a pillar, neither shall you place any figured stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am Yahweh your God. ² You shall keep My Sabbaths, and have reverence for My sanctuary. I am Yahweh. ³ If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them; ⁴ then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵ Your threshing shall reach to the vintage, and the vintage shall reach to the sowing time; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. ⁶ I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one will make you afraid; and I will remove evil animals out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. ⁷ You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸ Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and

your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹ I will have respect for you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish My covenant with you. ¹⁰ You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall move out the old because of the new. ¹¹ I will set My tent among you: and My soul won’t abhor you. ¹² I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you will be My people. ¹³ I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright’.

Curses for Disobedience

¹⁴ ‘But if you will not listen to Me, and will not do all these commandments; ¹⁵ and if you shall reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances, so that you will not do all My commandments, but break My covenant; ¹⁶ I also will do this to you: I will appoint terror over you, even consumption and fever, that shall consume the eyes, and make the soul to pine away; and you will sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it. ¹⁷ I will set My face against you, and you will be struck down before your enemies. Those

servants of Christ and not of us, and we therefore have no right to judge another man’s servant (Rom. 14:4). As Israel were to be a nation of servants, so should the Christian community be today.

26:9 That God can “respect” mere humans indicates not only His humility but also His extreme sensitivity to us and His delight in our feeble attempts to please Him; rather like a parent may be thrilled by the responses of a baby, totally insignificant as they are in themselves.

26:17 *Flee when no one pursues you* – A spirit of fear, nervousness and negativity can be given by God as a result of wilful disobedience to His ways. He can give a spirit (mental attitude) of fear (2 Tim. 1:7).

who hate you will rule over you; and you will flee when no one pursues you. ¹⁸ If you in spite of these things will not listen to Me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins. ¹⁹ I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your sky like iron, and your soil like brass; ²⁰ and your strength will be spent in vain; for your land won't yield its increase, neither will the trees of the land yield their fruit. ²¹ If you walk contrary to Me, and won't listen to Me, then I will bring seven times more plagues on you according to your sins. ²² I will send wild animals among you, which will rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your roads will become desolate. ²³ If by these things you won't be returned to Me, but will walk contrary to Me; ²⁴ then I will also walk contrary to you; and I will strike you, even I, seven times for your sins. ²⁵ I will bring a sword upon you, that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; and you will be gathered together within your cities: and I will send the plague among you; and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

²⁶ When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight, and you shall eat, and not be satisfied. ²⁷ If you in spite of this won't listen to Me, but walk contrary to Me; ²⁸ then I will walk contrary to you in wrath; and I also will chastise you seven times for your sins. ²⁹ You will eat the flesh of your sons, and you will eat the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰ I will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and cast your dead bodies upon the bodies of your idols; and My soul will hate you. ³¹ I will lay your cities waste, and will bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not take delight in the sweet fragrance of your offerings. ³² I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies that dwell therein will be astonished at it. ³³ I will scatter you among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you; and your land will be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. ³⁴ Then the land will enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land. Even then the land will rest and enjoy its Sab-

26:23 *If by these things* – It seems that the curses mentioned in this chapter aren't just a general list, but there is an intended chronological sequence. God had planned from the start that if Israel were disobedient, then He would bring various judgments, in order to help them be obedient; and if they failed, He would bring more, again with the intention that they responded to them. The curses for disobedience weren't therefore merely an offended deity lashing out at a people who had irritated Him; God has purpose and positive spiritual intention even in the judgments He brings into peoples' lives. He is constantly seeking our return to Him, just as the shepherd searched for the lost sheep until He found it (Lk. 15:4).

26:24 *Even I* – To have God against you is a terrible thing (Heb. 10:31).

26:26 *Not be satisfied* – So many of the judgments are mental attitudes (especially :16,36). God gives people attitudes of mind, positive and negative.

baths. ³⁵ As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, even the rest which it didn't have in your Sabbaths, when you lived on it. ³⁶ As for those of you who are left, I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a driven leaf will put them to flight; and they shall flee, as one flees from the sword; and they will fall when no one pursues. ³⁷ They will stumble over one another, as it were before the sword, when no one pursues: and you will have no power to stand before your enemies. ³⁸ You will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will eat you up. ³⁹ Those of you who are left will pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. ⁴⁰ If they confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and also recognize that because they walked contrary to Me, ⁴¹ I also walked contrary to them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity; ⁴² then I will remember My covenant

with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land. ⁴³ The land also will be left by them, and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them: and they will accept the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they rejected My ordinances, and their soul hated My statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am Yahweh their God; ⁴⁵ but I will for their sake remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am Yahweh'. ⁴⁶ These are the statutes, ordinances and laws, which Yahweh made between Him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by Moses.

CHAPTER 27 Mar. 19

Regulations concerning Vows

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'When a man makes a vow, the persons shall be for

26:43 If we hate or despise God's word, He will hate us (:30). Our attitude to God's word is related to His attitude to us. The very least we can do is to read His word daily and love it, through all our weakness.

27:1 This chapter is as it were an appendix to the Law because it concerns vows which were freewill decisions to give something to God and weren't part of the legal demands which God made upon His people in the previous chapters. It's good for us to at times make a special commitment to God from a joyful heart. The values attached to people in the next verses seem to speak of the price that should be paid if a person wished to cancel the dedication of themselves or even of others which they had made. It seems Jephthah may have been ignorant of these provisions and therefore suffered immensely from not paying attention to all God's law (Jud. 11:31-40).

Yahweh by your valuation. ³ Your valuation shall be of a male from twenty years old even to sixty years old, even your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴ If it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels. ⁵ If the person is from five years old even to twenty years old, then your valuation shall be for a male twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁶ If the person is from a month old even to five years old, then your valuation shall be for a male five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver. ⁷ If the person is from sixty years old and upward; if it is a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁸ But if he is poorer than your valuation, then he shall be set before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to the ability of him who vowed shall the priest value him. ⁹ If it is an animal, of which men offer an offering to Yahweh, all that any man gives of such to Yahweh becomes holy. ¹⁰ He shall not

alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good; and if he shall at all change animal for animal, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy. ¹¹ If it is any unclean animal, of which they do not offer as an offering to Yahweh, then he shall set the animal before the priest; ¹² and the priest shall value it, whether it is good or bad. As you the priest values it, so shall it be. ¹³ But if he will indeed redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of it to its valuation. ¹⁴ When a man dedicates his house to be holy to Yahweh, then the priest shall evaluate it, whether it is good or bad: as the priest shall evaluate it, so shall it stand. ¹⁵ If he who dedicates it will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall be his. ¹⁶ If a man dedicates to Yahweh part of the field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to the seed for it: the sowing of a homer of barley shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver. ¹⁷ If he dedicates his field from the Year of Jubilee, according to your

27:8 This provision seems to foresee the possibility that a totally poor person would dedicate themselves to God's service (e.g. doing some work related to the maintenance of the sanctuary) and yet need to change that commitment (perhaps to care for a sick and dying relative), and yet have nothing to pay for his own redemption. This freewill dedication of oneself to God's service is alluded to when Paul praises some of the Macedonian believers for devoting their own selves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5), and the family of Stephanas for having 'ceremonially consecrated' themselves to serving their fellow believers (1 Cor. 16:15 Gk.). What could we devote ourselves to do, remembering that wealth is no barrier to making this kind of devotion?

27:10 Changing what we have given to God according to new circumstances isn't encouraged; we should give and assume that what we gave is now not ours any longer. Giving should be frank and final, with no thought of regret afterwards or considering what might have been if we had not given it – e.g. letting our mind wander around the possibilities of what we could have used money for if we'd not given it to God.

valuation it shall stand. ¹⁸ But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall reckon to him the money according to the years that remain to the Year of Jubilee; and a reduction shall be made from your valuation. ¹⁹ If he who dedicated the field will indeed redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall remain his. ²⁰ If he will not redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore; ²¹ but the field, when it goes out in the Jubilee, shall be holy to Yahweh, as a field devoted; it shall be owned by the priests. ²² If he dedicates to Yahweh a field which he has bought, which is not of the field of his possession, ²³ then the priest shall reckon to him the worth of your valuation up to the Year of Jubilee; and he shall give your valuation on that day, as a holy thing to Yahweh. ²⁴ In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, even to him to whom the possession of the land belongs. ²⁵ All your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel. ²⁶ Only the firstborn among animals, which is made a firstborn to Yahweh,

no man may dedicate it: whether an ox or sheep, it is Yahweh's. ²⁷ If it is an unclean animal, then he shall buy it back according to your valuation, and shall add to it the fifth part of it; or if it isn't redeemed, then it shall be sold according to your valuation. ²⁸ Notwithstanding, no devoted thing that a man shall devote to Yahweh of all that he has, whether of man or animal, or of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy to Yahweh. ²⁹ No one devoted, who shall be devoted from among men, shall be ransomed: he shall surely be put to death. ³⁰ All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is Yahweh's. It is holy to Yahweh. ³¹ If a man redeems anything of his tithe, he shall add a fifth part to it. ³² All the tithe of the herds or the flocks, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to Yahweh. ³³ He shall not analyze whether it is good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he changes it at all, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy. It shall not be redeemed'. ³⁴ These are the commandments which Yahweh commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.

27:23 The value of all things is relative to the Year of Jubilee, which speaks of the return of Christ (see on 25:10,15,20).

27:26 We should avoid the temptation to give what we owe to God anyway as if it is a gift of special freewill devotion.

27:33 *Not analyze whether it is good or bad* – We should not be carefully calculating in our giving to God, trying to do so at minimal cost to ourselves.

NUMBERS

CHAPTER 1 Mar. 20

A Census Taken

Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, ² Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, every male, one by one; ³ from twenty years old and upward, all who are able to go out to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their divisions. ⁴ With you there shall be a man of every tribe; each one the head of his fathers' house. ⁵ These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: Of Reuben, Elizur the son of She-deur; ⁶ of Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai; ⁷ of Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab; ⁸ of Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar; ⁹ of Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon; ¹⁰ of the children of Joseph, of Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud, of Man-

asseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur; ¹¹ of Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni; ¹² of Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai; ¹³ of Asher, Pagiel the son of Ochran; ¹⁴ of Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel; ¹⁵ of Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan. ¹⁶ These are those who were called of the congregation, the princes of the tribes of their fathers; they were the heads of the thousands of Israel. ¹⁷ Moses and Aaron took these men who are mentioned by name. ¹⁸ They assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month; and they declared their ancestry by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, one by one. ¹⁹ As Yahweh commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.

The Number of the Tribes of Israel

²⁰ The children of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the

1:2 *One by one* – Here we see the value and meaning attached to the human person by God.

1:18 The implication is that every single Israelite was part of a family. In such a large community there inevitably would have been some who had no family. In commenting upon the Exodus, Ps. 68:6 observes that God set the lonely in families. This may have happened at this point. Those who had no family were arranged into one, so that God's people moved through the wilderness in family units. In this we see how God is a family God; the family is His desired way of human organization, and we should seek to preserve it.

1:20 *The number of the names* – Implies there was a written list. Moses had been educated in Egypt and therefore would've been able to write (Acts 7:22). We should use what worldly wisdom we have in the service of God's people.

names, one by one, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ²¹ those who were numbered of them of the tribe of Reuben, were forty-six thousand five hundred. ²² Of the children of Simeon, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, those who were numbered of it, according to the number of the names, one by one, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ²³ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty-nine thousand three hundred. ²⁴ Of the children of Gad, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ²⁵ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Gad, were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. ²⁶ Of the children of Judah, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ²⁷ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Judah, were sixty-four thousand six hundred. ²⁸ Of the children of Issachar, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ²⁹ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty-four thousand four hundred. ³⁰ Of the children of

Zebulun, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ³¹ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty-seven thousand four hundred. ³² Of the children of Joseph, of the children of Ephraim, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ³³ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand five hundred. ³⁴ Of the children of Manasseh, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ³⁵ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty-two thousand two hundred. ³⁶ Of the children of Benjamin, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war; ³⁷ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty-five thousand four hundred. ³⁸ Of the children of Dan, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war; ³⁹ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of

Dan, were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.⁴⁰ Of the children of Asher, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war;⁴¹ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Asher, were forty-one thousand five hundred.⁴² Of the children of Naphtali, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war;⁴³ those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty-three thousand four hundred.⁴⁴ These are those who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: they were each one for his fathers' house.⁴⁵ So all those who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' families, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war in Israel;⁴⁶ even all those who were numbered were six hundred

and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

The Levites

⁴⁷ But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them.⁴⁸ For Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁹ Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, neither shall you take a census of them among the children of Israel;⁵⁰ but appoint the Levites over the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and over all its furnishings, and over all that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle, and all its furnishings; and they shall serve it, and shall encamp around it.⁵¹ When the tabernacle is to move, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death.⁵² The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, according to their divisions.⁵³ But the Levites shall encamp around the Tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be

1:46 Over a period of 430 years (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40), the Israelites grew from 70 people (Gen. 46:27; Dt. 10:22) to 603,550 men. This was a primary fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, that his descendants would greatly multiply (Gen. 22:17; Heb. 11:12). We who are in the same covenant relationship with God will experience some element of blessing and fulfilment of the covenant promises in this life too. The large numbers may also have been due to the Egyptians joining the people of Israel.

1:50 We are a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). The spirit of the Levites should be ours. As they encamped around the tabernacle, having it as the centre of their lives, so the things of God's ecclesia, His church, should be central to our lives and have far more importance to us than our careers and associations in this world.

1:53 *That there may be no wrath on the congregation* – The wellbeing of others is dependent upon our efforts. If we don't do our part for them, we cannot assume that God will raise up someone else. There really can be Divine wrath on others because of our lack of attention to them.

no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be responsible for the Tabernacle of the Testimony.⁵⁴ Thus the children of Israel did. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so they did.

CHAPTER 2 Mar. 21

The Order of the Twelve Tribes in the Camp and on the March

Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,² The children of Israel shall encamp every man

by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' families: at a distance from the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp around it.³ Those who encamp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah, according to their divisions, and the prince of the children of Judah shall be Nahshon the son of Amminadab.⁴ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were seventy-four thousand six hundred.⁵ Those who encamp next to him shall be the tribe of Issa-

2:1 Encamping around standards and by their tribes was different to how they had filed out of Egypt as one long stream of humanity (Ex. 13:18). After our exodus from the world through our Red Sea baptism, we find our place within the larger family of God. Their sense of which tribe they belonged to had probably been eroded in the 430 years they spent in Egypt; now even the isolated and lonely were given family groups to belong to (Ps. 68:6; see on 1:18).

2:2 The standards of the tribes were a pole with a symbol upon it. Israel marched through the wilderness towards the promised land, as we walk through the wilderness of life towards the Kingdom, carrying and walking behind poles – foreshadowing the cross or stake of Christ, which we are asked to daily pick up and walk behind. Is. 11:10-12 speaks of the cross of Christ as a standard lifted up, to which the believing Gentiles come and camp around – as if they take their place in the Israel of God.

2:3 Three tribes camped on each of the four sides, around the tabernacle. This place of meeting with God was to be central to the community. It is the things of Christ and our relationship with God which should be at the core of the Christian community; we're not held together by geography, personal friendship or shared denominational history. We are to be Christ centred. The language of the numbering of Israel according to how many fighting men there were in each tribe, and the ideas of encamping and breaking up, all suggest that Israel were God's army on earth. According to Jewish tradition, Judah carried a lion emblem on their standard, Reuben a man, Joseph an ox, and Dan an eagle. In this case, the cherubim vision of Ezekiel 1 would allude to Israel, as if to say that above them there hovered an Angelic army organized the same way, and the armies of God's people on earth were a reflection of them. The tent of meeting in the midst of the troops of Israel would've been understood in military terms as the tent or pavilion of a general in the centre of an army. But there was nobody within that pavilion – just the presence of God over the sprinkled blood. We aren't just sitting around waiting for Christ's return; we are God's army in this world, with a very present although invisible Heavenly commander in our midst. But His invisibility led Israel many times to ask 'Is the Lord among us?', and we face the same doubt in our weak moments. But this is the essence of faith.

char, and the prince of the children of Issachar shall be Nethanel the son of Zuar. ⁶ His division, and those who were numbered of it, were fifty-four thousand four hundred. ⁷ The tribe of Zebulun, and the prince of the children of Zebulun shall be Eliab the son of Helon. ⁸ His division, and those who were numbered of it, were fifty-seven thousand four hundred. ⁹ All who were numbered of the camp of Judah were one hundred eighty-six thousand four hundred, according to their divisions. They shall set out first. ¹⁰ On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben according to their divisions. The prince of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur. ¹¹ His division, and those who were numbered of it, were forty-six thousand five hundred. ¹² Those who encamp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon. The prince of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. ¹³ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were fifty-nine thousand three hundred. ¹⁴ The tribe of Gad, and the prince of the children of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel. ¹⁵ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. ¹⁶ All who were numbered of the camp of Reuben were one hundred fifty-one thousand four hundred fifty, according to their armies. They shall set out second. ¹⁷ Then the Tent of Meeting shall set out, with the camp of the

Levites in the midst of the camps. As they encamp, so shall they march out, every man in his place, by their standards. ¹⁸ On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their divisions, and the prince of the children of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud. ¹⁹ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were forty thousand five hundred. ²⁰ Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh, and the prince of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. ²¹ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were thirty-two thousand two hundred. ²² The tribe of Benjamin, and the prince of the children of Benjamin shall be Abidan the son of Gideon. ²³ His army, and those who were numbered of them, were thirty-five thousand four hundred. ²⁴ All who were numbered of the camp of Ephraim were one hundred eight thousand one hundred, according to their divisions. They shall set out third. ²⁵ On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan according to their divisions, and the prince of the children of Dan shall be Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. ²⁶ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were sixty-two thousand seven hundred. ²⁷ Those who encamp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, and the prince of the children of Asher shall be Pagiel the son of Ochran. ²⁸ His division, and those who were numbered of them,

2:17 *As they encamp, so shall they march out* – Our attitude and position at rest or leisure is to be our attitude when on the move for Christ.

were forty-one thousand and five hundred.²⁹ The tribe of Naphtali, and the prince of the children of Naphtali shall be Ahira the son of Enan.³⁰ His division, and those who were numbered of them, were fifty-three thousand four hundred.³¹ All who were numbered of the camp of Dan were one hundred fifty-seven thousand six hundred. They shall set out last by their standards.³² These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' families. All who were numbered of the camps according to their armies were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.³³ But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as Yahweh commanded Moses.³⁴ Thus the children of Israel did. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so they encamped by their standards, and so they marched out, everyone by their families, according to their fathers' families.

CHAPTER 3 Mar. 22

The Levites Appointed

Now this is the history of the generations of Aaron and Moses in

the day that Yahweh spoke with Moses in Mount Sinai.² These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests who were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.⁴ Nadab and Abihu died before Yahweh, when they offered strange fire before Yahweh in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the presence of Aaron their father.⁵ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,⁶ Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him.⁷ They shall keep his requirements, and the requirements of the whole congregation before the Tent of Meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.⁸ They shall keep all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, and the obligations of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.⁹ You shall give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons. They are wholly given to him on the behalf of the children of Israel.¹⁰ You shall appoint Aaron and

2:32 The size of Israel's encampment would've been huge – maybe twenty square kilometres, like a moveable city, with streets and lanes. The continual commands to move on, to follow the leading of the Angel in the pillar of fire and cloud, would've likely been received without enthusiasm because the breaking of camp would've been a long and tedious process. Yet as with us, God works things so that His people are always on the move. God looked down upon their orderly encampment and thought His people were beautiful (24:5,6). Perhaps Paul alludes to their order when he says that the body of Christ should likewise be characterized by orderliness when they are beheld by others (Col. 2:5).

3:4 *They had no children* – That is, no children who ministered as priests. Ultimately, from the perspective of the Kingdom, if our children don't serve God it will be as if we have no children. Hence the need in this life to train them up to be God's servants.

3:9 This meant that Moses' sons were Levites and not priests, and were given to serve

his sons, and they shall keep their ministry. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death. ¹¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn who open the womb among the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be mine: ¹³ for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I made holy to me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and animal. They shall be mine. I am Yahweh.

The Number and Duties of the Levites

¹⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, ¹⁵ Count the children of Levi by their fathers' families, by their families. You shall count every male from a month old and upward. ¹⁶ Moses numbered them according to the word of Yahweh, as he was commanded. ¹⁷ These

were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari. ¹⁸ These are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei. ¹⁹ The sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, and Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. ²⁰ The sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' families. ²¹ Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimeites: these are the families of the Gershonites. ²² Those who were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those who were numbered of them were seven thousand five hundred. ²³ The families of the Gershonites shall encamp behind the tabernacle westward. ²⁴ The prince of the fathers' house of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael. ²⁵ The duty of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting shall be the taber-

Aaron's sons. Yet Moses time and again is revealed as the undoubted leader of the people, and more spiritually mature and committed than Aaron. Verse 38 could imply that Moses even camped separately to his children. There were no special privileges for the children of the leader, and Moses' humility would have been exercised by seeing his sons serve Aaron's sons. If all we want to see is God's work go forward, we will likewise not become resentful of such things as they work out in church life today.

3:10 *Keep their ministry* – The phrase from the Septuagint version is quoted by Paul about our service of the ecclesia / church today (Rom. 12:7). Whatever day job or career we have in this world, our real work is our ministry to God's people.

3:13 Those who had been spared from death by the blood of the lamb on Passover night weren't just free to do as they wished with their saved lives, but were to be devoted to God. We are those who have likewise been spared from eternal death by Christ's blood, and we are therefore not to see ourselves as having merely escaped eternal death but must go further to perceive ourselves as thereby dedicated to God's service. Hence the Christian community is called "the church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23) – we are all as it were the firstborn who were saved by grace on Passover night, because we are in Christ, the firstborn (Col. 1:18).

nacle, and the tent, its covering, and the screen for the door of the Tent of Meeting, ²⁶ and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and around the altar, and its cords for all of its service. ²⁷ Of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the Kohathites. ²⁸ According to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, there were eight thousand six hundred, keeping the requirements of the sanctuary. ²⁹ The families of the sons of Kohath shall encamp on the south side of the tabernacle. ³⁰ The prince of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. ³¹ Their duty shall be the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all its service. ³² Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be prince of the princes of the Levites, with the oversight of those who keep the requirements of the sanctuary. ³³ Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites. These are the families of Merari. ³⁴ Those who were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old

and upward, were six thousand two hundred. ³⁵ The prince of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. They shall encamp on the north side of the tabernacle. ³⁶ The appointed duty of the sons of Merari shall be the tabernacle's boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its instruments, all its service, ³⁷ the pillars of the court around it, their sockets, their pins, and their cords. ³⁸ Those who encamp before the tabernacle eastward, in front of the Tent of Meeting toward the sunrise, shall be Moses and Aaron and his sons, keeping the requirements of the sanctuary for the duty of the children of Israel. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death. ³⁹ All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of Yahweh, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty-two thousand. ⁴⁰ Yahweh said to Moses, Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. ⁴¹ You shall take the Levites for Me (I am Yahweh) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel. ⁴² Moses numbered, as Yahweh com-

3:28 Some original manuscripts read 8,300. This could solve the apparent discrepancies in the numbers later on. The difference between the Hebrew letters for 8,300 and 8,600 is miniscule. Although the word of God itself is inspired and infallible, this isn't to say that there aren't minor errors of copyists as the manuscripts were passed on over the generations.

3:38 See on :9.

manded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. ⁴³ All the firstborn males according to the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

⁴⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁵ Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock; and the Levites shall be Mine. I am Yahweh.

⁴⁶ For the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who exceed the number of the Levites, ⁴⁷ you shall take five shekels for each one; after the shekel of the sanctuary you shall take them (the shekel is twenty gerahs): ⁴⁸ and you shall give the money, with which their remainder is redeemed, to Aaron and to his sons. ⁴⁹ Moses took the redemption money from those who exceeded

the number of those who were redeemed by the Levites; ⁵⁰ from the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: ⁵¹ and Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses.

CHAPTER 4 Mar. 23

The Work of the Kohathites

Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ² Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' families, ³ from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all who enter into the service, to do the work in the Tent of Meeting. ⁴ This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting, in the most holy things. ⁵ When the camp moves forward, Aaron shall

3:43 Levi was by far the smallest tribe – the numbers of the males over 20 in the other tribes (as recorded in Num. 1) is far larger than the number of males of the tribe of Levi. God uses as His special workers those who are weakest in human terms. It could be argued that Levi grew less in number than the other tribes because of some spiritual weakness – for at this time, Divine blessing was reckoned in terms of number of offspring. So perhaps spiritually as well as numerically they were the weakest, yet were chosen by God for His special work. God seems to love to work in this way.

4:1 Kohath wasn't the firstborn nor the senior born amongst the three sons listed here, but the Kohathites are numbered first and had the greatest responsibility. Again we see how God prefers to work not with the humanly best, strongest or most senior.

4:3 *Enter into the service* – The original words have a military connotation. Whatever our occupation in this world, we are to see ourselves as soldiers fighting for the only truly good and worthy cause on earth. There should therefore be in our lives an element of discipline, regimentation and focus on specific objectives. The New Testament is full of military metaphors (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:4).

4:5 The taking down of the tabernacle is turned by Paul and Peter into a metaphor for our death (2 Cor. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:14). The implication is that all the valuable things within the tabernacle through which God was manifest can on one level be interpreted

go in, and his sons, and they shall take down the veil of the screen, and cover the ark of the Testimony with it, ⁶ and shall put a covering of sealskin on it, and shall spread over it a cloth all of blue, and shall put in its poles. ⁷ On the table of show bread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the spoons, the bowls, and the cups with which to pour out; and the continual bread shall be on it. ⁸ They shall spread on them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of sealskin, and shall put in its poles. ⁹ They shall take a blue cloth, and cover the lampstand of the light, and its lamps, and its snuffers, and its snuff dishes, and all its oil vessels, with which they minister to it. ¹⁰ They shall put it and all its vessels within a covering of sealskin, and shall put it on the frame. ¹¹ On the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of sealskin, and shall put in its poles. ¹² They shall take all the vessels of ministry, with which they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of sealskin, and shall put them on the frame. ¹³ They shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth on it. ¹⁴ They shall put on it all its vessels, with which they minister for it, the fire pans, the flesh hooks, the shovels, and the basins; all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread on it a covering of sealskin, and put in its poles. ¹⁵ When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary, and all the furniture of the sanctuary, as the camp moves forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to carry it: but they shall not touch the sanctuary, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁶ The duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the continual grain offering, and the anointing oil, the requirements of all the tabernacle, and of all that is in it, the sanctuary, and its furnishings. ¹⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ¹⁸ Don't cut off the as our lives. In this metaphor alone we see the immense value and meaning of human life if it is lived in God's service.

4:8 *Sealskin* – Taken by the Israelites from the shores of the Red Sea? Whatever we pick up along the wilderness journey of life we are to give to God's service.

4:15 In 2 Sam. 6:8, God slew Uzzah because he touched the ark when David brought it back to Jerusalem on a cart. Yet the Law clearly stated that the ark was to be carried only by the Levites, and was to be carried on poles rather than on a cart. Throughout Ps. 119, David declares how he loves God's law and studies and recites it by day and night. That surely included this passage in Numbers 4. But we have a tendency to read God's word, to know it well, speaking of it to others – and yet somehow assume that it doesn't apply to us personally, and we can take shortcuts as convenient to us. If righteous David did this, how much more should we be aware of our temptation to fail in the same way.

4:18 *Don't cut off the clan* – By Moses' inattention, a whole group of people could have died. Our sensitivity, or lack of it, to others' likely failings can lead to their los-

cloth, and cover them with a covering of sealskin, and shall put them on the frame. ¹³ They shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth on it. ¹⁴ They shall put on it all its vessels, with which they minister for it, the fire pans, the flesh hooks, the shovels, and the basins; all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread on it a covering of sealskin, and put in its poles. ¹⁵ When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary, and all the furniture of the sanctuary, as the camp moves forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to carry it: but they shall not touch the sanctuary, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁶ The duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the continual grain offering, and the anointing oil, the requirements of all the tabernacle, and of all that is in it, the sanctuary, and its furnishings. ¹⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ¹⁸ Don't cut off the

clan of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; ¹⁹ but thus do to them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach to the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them each one to his service and to his burden; ²⁰ but they shall not go in to see the sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die.

The Work of the Gershonites

²¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²² Take a census of the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers' families, by their families; ²³ you shall count them from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old; all who enter in to wait on the service, to do the work in the Tent of Meeting. ²⁴ This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and in bearing burdens: ²⁵ they shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the Tent of Meeting, its covering, and

the covering of sealskin that is above it, and the screen for the door of the Tent of Meeting, ²⁶ and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and around the altar, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and whatever shall be done with them. In this will be their service. ²⁷ At the commandment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burden, and in all their service; and you shall appoint their duty to them in all their responsibilities. ²⁸ This is the service of the families of the sons of the Gershonites in the Tent of Meeting: and their duty shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

The Work of the Merarites

²⁹ As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families, by their fathers' families; ³⁰ you shall

ing their part amongst the family of the redeemed. We can't reason that human failure is simply their fault; we also bear some responsibility if we don't do what we can to mitigate against it.

4:19 Not touching holy things connects with the command not to touch the forbidden fruit of Eden (Gen. 3:3). Time and again, Adam's sin is presented (by way of such allusions) as the sin of everyman; elements of it are to be found in all human sin, and therefore we can never blame Adam as the source of our present discomfort under the curse; for we would have done the same. In this sense, all humanity sinned as it were in Adam (Rom. 5:12 Gk.). It's no bad exercise to analyze our own sins in the light of Adam's failure and see wherein are the essential similarities.

4:20 This law was applied even to Gentiles who looked into the ark (1 Sam. 6:19). God still feels sin as a committed offence against Him personally, even when it's performed by those not responsible to His law. It must be hard being God, seeing and feeling so much offence against Him every moment. In this we see not only His sensitivity to sin, but His grace in allowing the whole of human society to exist in its disobedient, sinful state, minute by minute. And thereby we can appreciate more fully the way that He delays judging this world and ending sin, all because He is so earnest that we and others might come to repentance and salvation (2 Pet. 3:9).

count them from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who enters on the service, to do the work of the Tent of Meeting.³¹ This is the duty of their burden, according to all their service in the Tent of Meeting: the tabernacle's boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets,³² and the pillars of the court around it, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name you shall appoint the instruments of the duty of their burden.³³ This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the Tent of Meeting, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

The Numbers of Aaron's Sons

³⁴ Moses and Aaron and the princes of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families, and by their fathers' families,³⁵ from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service, for work in the Tent of Meeting.³⁶ Those who were numbered of them by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty.³⁷ These are those who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who served in the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses.

³⁸ Those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families, and by their fathers' families,³⁹ from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service, for work in the Tent of Meeting,⁴⁰ even those who were numbered of them, by their families, by their fathers' families, were two thousand six hundred and thirty.⁴¹ These are those who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, all who served in the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of Yahweh.⁴² Those who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, by their families, by their fathers' families,⁴³ from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service, to do work in the Tent of Meeting,⁴⁴ even those who were numbered of them by their families, were three thousand two hundred.⁴⁵ These are those who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses.⁴⁶ All those who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the princes of Israel numbered, by their families, and by their fathers' families,⁴⁷ from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered in to do

4:44 The Merarites had 3200 workers out of a total of 6200. Although they were the smallest of the three families, they had the most number of workers (Gershon had 2630 out of 7500; Kohath 2750 out of 8600). This may have been for various reasons, but it's also a fact that the smaller the group, the higher percentage are willing to work. God doesn't need great numbers to do His work.

the work of service, and the work of bearing burdens in the Tent of Meeting, ⁴⁸ even those who were numbered of them, were eight thousand five hundred and eighty. ⁴⁹ According to the commandment of Yahweh they were numbered by Moses, everyone according to his service, and according to his burden. Thus were they numbered by him, as Yahweh commanded Moses.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 24

Rebuilding Relationships after Sin

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, and everyone who has an issue, and whoever is unclean by the dead. ³ Both male and female you shall put outside of the camp that they not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell. ⁴ The children of Israel did so, and put them out outside of the camp; as Yahweh spoke to Moses, so did the children of Israel. ⁵ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁶ Speak to

the children of Israel: ‘When a man or woman commits any sin that people commit, so as to trespass against Yahweh, and that soul is guilty; ⁷ then he shall confess his sin which he has done, and he shall make restitution for his guilt in full, and add to it the fifth part of it, and give it to him in respect of whom he has been guilty. ⁸ But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the guilt, the restitution for guilt which is made to Yahweh shall be the priest’s; besides the ram of the atonement, by which atonement shall be made for him. ⁹ Every heave offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they present to the priest, shall be his. ¹⁰ Every man’s holy things shall be his: whatever any man gives the priest, it shall be his’.

The Trial of Jealousy

¹¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them: ‘If any man’s wife goes

4:49 Each man having his own burden to bear is an idea picked up in the New Testament (Gal. 6:5). We are each asked to carry the cross of Christ, and yet that cross is articulated in unique ways for each of us.

5:4 *The children of Israel did so* – Israel’s obedience was mainly when it came to disciplining others, giving materially and making things. But the Pentateuch emphasizes their disobedience when it came to personal morality, internal spirituality and worshipping God alone rather than any idols. We must analyze our own acts of obedience and see if they follow a similar pattern. To be externally religious isn’t difficult, indeed we can rather enjoy being like that.

5:6-8 *When a man or woman commits any sin... he shall confess... the man* – Proof that the Bible often uses the masculine singular to mean ‘any person’, of either gender.

5:7 Both confession and restitution were required. These two elements are still required if we are to truly resolve broken relationships.

5:12 There were various possibilities for how a man should respond in this situation. He could have his wife stoned; divorce her; put her through this ‘trial of jealousy’; or simply forgive her. We too have a range of options open to us when wrong is done to

astray, and is unfaithful to him,¹³ and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and is kept close, and she is defiled, and there is no witness against her, and she isn't taken in the act;¹⁴ and the spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, and she is defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, and she isn't defiled;¹⁵ then the man shall bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal. He shall pour no oil on it, nor put frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to memory.¹⁶ The priest shall bring her near, and set her before Yahweh;¹⁷ and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water.¹⁸ The priest shall set the woman before Yahweh, and let the hair of the woman's head go loose, and put the grain offering of memorial in her hands, which is the grain

offering of jealousy. The priest shall have in his hand the water of bitterness that brings a curse.¹⁹ The priest shall cause her to swear, and shall tell the woman, If no man has lain with you, and if you haven't gone aside to uncleanness, being under your husband, be free from this water of bitterness that brings a curse.²⁰ But if you have gone astray, being under your husband, and if you are defiled, and some man has lain with you besides your husband;²¹ then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall tell the woman, Yahweh make you a curse and an oath among your people, when Yahweh allows your thigh to fall away, and your body to swell;²² and this water that brings a curse will go into your bowels, and make your body swell, and your thigh fall away. The woman shall say, Amen, Amen.²³ 'The priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness.²⁴ He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that causes the curse;

us or when we suspect it has been. The very existence of these options encourages us to think through our responses, and surely inspires us to choose the way of grace over the way of personal revenge or justification.

5:14 This provision for the trial of jealousy appears to have been a concession to human weakness, in this case, male weakness. For the New Testament outlaws envy (the Hebrew word translated "jealousy" here has this sense): Rom. 1:29; Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4; Tit. 3:3. It could be that James 4:5 alludes to the spirit of male jealousy which this legislation sought to make a concession to (:14). The simple lesson for us can be that God does indeed make concessions to our human weakness; but we are to use them sparingly, and realize that their very existence is actually intended to inspire us *not* to make use of them but to serve God on the highest level we can.

5:24 The Corinthians were told that they would "provoke the Lord to jealousy" by breaking bread and yet also worshipping idols (1 Cor. 10:22). This is surely an allusion to the "trial of jealousy". A curse was recited and then the believer drank a cup; if

and the water that causes the curse shall enter into her and become bitter. ²⁵ The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the grain offering before Yahweh, and bring it to the altar. ²⁶ The priest shall take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial, and burn it on the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. ²⁷ When he has made her drink the water, then it shall happen. If she is defiled, and has committed a trespass against her husband, that the water that causes the curse will enter into her and become bitter, and her body will swell, and her thigh will fall away; and the woman will be a curse among her people. ²⁸ If the woman isn't defiled, but is clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed. ²⁹ This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, being under her husband, goes astray, and is defiled; ³⁰ or when the spirit of jealousy comes on a man, and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before Yahweh, and

the priest shall execute on her all this law. ³¹ The man shall be free from iniquity, and that woman shall bear her iniquity'.

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 25

The Nazirite Vow

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them: 'When either man or woman shall make a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to Yahweh, ³ he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of fermented drink, neither shall he drink any juice of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or dried. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is made of the grapevine, from the seeds even to the skins. ⁵ All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall come on his head, until the days are fulfilled, in which he separates himself to Yahweh. He shall be holy. He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long. ⁶ All the days that he sep-

they were unfaithful, they drunk to their condemnation. Paul's allusion suggests that each day we break bread and drink the cup, we as the bride of Christ are going through the trial of jealousy. Brutal honesty and self-examination, and not merely of our lives in the last few days, is therefore crucial before drinking the cup.

6:3 Any Israelite could vow him or herself to special service to God; we too shouldn't see our service to God in terms of doing the minimum. Realizing the wonder of His grace and the certainty of our eternal life in His Kingdom, we should be moved to special devotions. In this vow, the ordinary Israelite willingly submitted to some of the regulations specific to the priests on duty. The growing of long hair could be seen as an imitation of the High Priest's mitre. They were not to see the priesthood as something reserved just for specialists, those born into it; nor were they to see the High Priest as so distant from themselves that he could never be imitated, in spirit at least. We likewise can take to ourselves some aspects of the personal work of the Lord Jesus; for all that is true of Him becomes true of us who are baptized into Him. As He was the light of the world, so are we to be.

arates himself to Yahweh he shall not go near a dead body. ⁷ He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. ⁸ All the days of his separation he is holy to Yahweh. ⁹ If any man dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles the head of his separation, then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing. On the seventh day he shall shave it. ¹⁰ On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting. ¹¹ The priest shall offer one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead, and shall make his head holy that same day. ¹² He shall consecrate to Yahweh the days of his separation, and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a trespass offering; but the

former days shall be void, because his separation was defiled. ¹³ This is the law of the Nazirite: when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the Tent of Meeting, ¹⁴ and he shall offer his offering to Yahweh, one male lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings, ¹⁵ and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering, and their drink offerings. ¹⁶ The priest shall present them before Yahweh, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering. ¹⁷ He shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh, with the basket of unleavened bread. The priest shall offer also its grain offering, and its drink offering. ¹⁸ The Nazirite shall shave the head of his

6:6 The Nazirite was not only to not touch a corpse, but not to go near one; likewise they were not only to not drink wine, but to not drink grape juice nor eat seeds or skins of grapes, from which wine is made. This is the classic 'hedge around the law' – forbidding something not because it is unlawful of itself but because the associations may lead to breaking an actual law. We in Christ are freed from all legalism and casuistry; and yet in our daily struggle against temptation, it's no bad idea to remove far from us those things, associations, images etc. which may stimulate temptation and the power of sin.

6:11 It hardly sounds sinful for a person who has made a special dedication to God to be made unclean by a person unexpectedly falling dead next to him or her. But in this legislation God is seeking to teach us how sensitive He is to uncleanness. This principle can carry over into our lives today; if we love to view, read and talk about unclean things, even if we don't do them, then we are not respecting the distance which God seeks to set between the clean and unclean, right and wrong, good and evil.

6:14 The need for a sin offering at the end of his period of dedication was maybe to remind him that his extra special devotion didn't take away his sin and need for grace; for relationship with God depends upon this rather than upon our works and special efforts. Again, we can take that principle to ourselves in our age.

separation at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings. ¹⁹ The priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them on the hands of the Nazirite, after he has shaved the head of his separation; ²⁰ and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh. This is holy for the priest, together with the breast that is waved and the thigh that is offered. After that the Nazirite may drink wine. ²¹ This is the law of the Nazirite who vows, and of his offering to Yahweh for his separation, besides that which he is able to put his hand on. According to his vow which he vows, so he must do after the law of his separation'. ²² Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is how you shall bless the children of Israel'. You shall tell them, ²⁴ 'Yahweh bless you, and keep you. ²⁵ Yahweh make His face to shine on you, and be gracious to you. ²⁶ Yahweh lift up His face toward you, and give you peace'. ²⁷ So they shall put My name on the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 26

A Major Freewill Offering from the Tribes

It happened on the day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed it and made it holy, with all its furniture, and the altar with all its vessels, and had anointed and sanctified them; ² that the princes of Israel, the heads of their fathers' families, offered. These were the princes of the tribes. These are they who were over those who were numbered; ³ and they brought their offering before Yahweh, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen - a wagon for every two of the princes, and for each one an ox - and they presented them before the tabernacle. ⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁵ Accept these from them that they may be used in doing the service of the Tent of Meeting; and you shall give them to the Levites, to every man according to his service. ⁶ Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. ⁷ He gave two wagons and four oxen to the sons of Gershon, according to their service; ⁸ and he gave four wagons and eight oxen to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. ⁹ But to the sons of Kohath

7:2 Continuing the voluntary spirit of the Nazirite vow explained in chapter 6, we read that the heads of the tribes now offered a voluntary offering. They weren't commanded to bring these things; they chose to bring them. The constant repetition of chapter 7 can seem boring, but the point is that God remembered their freewill offerings, in every detail; and recorded and preserved them for millennia. He likewise remembers all our sacrifices for His sake (Ps. 20:3).

7:9 Significantly, David carried the ark on a wagon rather than have it carried on shoulders as commanded. One wonders whether his slip in this matter was because

he gave none, because the service of the sanctuary belonged to them: they carried it on their shoulders. ¹⁰ The princes gave offerings for the dedication of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes gave their offerings before the altar. ¹¹ Yahweh said to Moses, They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedication of the altar.

A Detailed Record of the Offerings

¹² He who offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah, ¹³ and his offering was: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ¹⁴ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ¹⁵ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ¹⁶ one male goat for a sin offering; ¹⁷ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab. ¹⁸ On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, gave his offering. ¹⁹ He offered for his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty

shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ²⁰ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ²¹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ²² one male goat for a sin offering; ²³ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nethanel the son of Zuar. ²⁴ On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, prince of the children of Zebulun, ²⁵ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ²⁶ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ²⁷ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ²⁸ one male goat for a sin offering; ²⁹ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon. ³⁰ On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur, prince of the children of Reuben, ³¹ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of

the Kohathites had resented seeing how their brothers got to transport their parts of the tabernacle in wagons, whereas they had to carry their parts on their shoulders; and therefore they began to use wagons, because their brother did. We can also too easily do what our brothers do, and for us it can become sin, because we each have an individual calling. What may be permissible for them may not be for us. The fact they do it doesn't mean we can, because our context and calling is different from theirs.

seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ³² one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ³³ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ³⁴ one male goat for a sin offering; ³⁵ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur. ³⁶ On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the children of Simeon, ³⁷ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ³⁸ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ³⁹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁴⁰ one male goat for a sin offering; ⁴¹ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. ⁴² On the sixth day, Eliasaph the son of Deuel, prince of the children of Gad, ⁴³ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁴⁴ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁴⁵ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁴⁶ one male goat for a sin offering; ⁴⁷ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel. ⁴⁸ On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim, ⁴⁹ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁵⁰ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁵¹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁵² one male goat for a sin offering; ⁵³ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud. ⁵⁴ On the eighth day Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, prince of the children of Manasseh, ⁵⁵ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁵⁶ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁵⁷ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁵⁸ one male goat for a sin offering; ⁵⁹ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. ⁶⁰ On

the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, prince of the children of Benjamin, ⁶¹ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁶² one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁶³ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁶⁴ one male goat for a sin offering; ⁶⁵ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni. ⁶⁶ On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the children of Dan, ⁶⁷ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁶⁸ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁶⁹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁷⁰ one male goat for a sin offering; ⁷¹ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. ⁷² On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ochran, prince of the children of Asher, ⁷³ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after

the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁷⁴ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁷⁵ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁷⁶ one male goat for a sin offering; ⁷⁷ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ochran. ⁷⁸ On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, prince of the children of Naphtali, ⁷⁹ gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; ⁸⁰ one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense; ⁸¹ one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; ⁸² one male goat for a sin offering; ⁸³ and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan. ⁸⁴ This was the dedication of the altar, on the day when it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve silver plates, twelve silver bowls, twelve golden spoons - ⁸⁵ each silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, and each bowl seventy; all the silver of the vessels two thousand four hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; ⁸⁶ the twelve golden spoons, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, after the shekel of the sanctu-

ary; all the gold of the spoons weighed one hundred and twenty shekels.⁸⁷ All the cattle for the burnt offering: twelve bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs a year old twelve, and their grain offering; and the male goats for a sin offering twelve;⁸⁸ and all the cattle for the sacrifice of peace offerings: twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, the year old male lambs sixty. This was the dedication of the altar, after it was anointed.⁸⁹ When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Yahweh, he heard His voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim: and He spoke to him.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 27

The Sanctifying of the Levites

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,² Speak to Aaron, and tell him, ‘When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand’.³ Aaron did so. He lit its

lamps to light the area in front of the lampstand, as Yahweh commanded Moses.⁴ This was the workmanship of the lampstand, beaten work of gold. From its base to its flowers, it was beaten work: according to the pattern which Yahweh had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.⁵ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,⁶ Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.⁷ You shall do this to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of cleansing on them, let them shave their whole bodies with a razor, and let them wash their clothes, and cleanse themselves.⁸ Then let them take a young bull, and its grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil; and another young bull you shall take for a sin offering.⁹ You shall present the Levites before the Tent of Meeting. You shall assemble the whole congregation of the children of Israel.¹⁰ You shall present the Levites before Yahweh. The children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites,¹¹ and Aaron

7:89 The blood of atonement, pointing forward to the blood of Christ, was permanently on the mercy seat, i.e. the cover of the ark of the covenant, with the Angel-like cherubim peering down onto it. There in that most Holy of places, God spoke. The fact that the voice of God was associated with the blood which represented the blood of His Son is alluded to in Heb. 12:24-26, which likens the blood of Christ to a voice more powerful than the sound which accompanied the shaking of Sinai. God’s word becomes powerful to us over the blood of Christ in that beholding Him there, we cannot walk away passively. We are spurred to action. Yet as we behold His blood in our mind’s eye, in our reconstruction of how it all maybe happened on Golgotha, we face an insistent question: What can I do, what must I do, in response to this? That question is answered in God’s word, and it is in this sense that His word becomes of especial power to us over the blood of Christ. In this sense He is that word made flesh, supremely in His time of dying.

8:7 Washing and becoming like new born children, with no body hair, looks forward to baptism. We’re not baptized just for the sake of it; we do this so that we may be made holy or separated unto the service of God. We are God’s, just as they were (:14).

shall offer the Levites before Yahweh for a wave offering, on the behalf of the children of Israel, that it may be theirs to do the service of Yahweh.

¹² The Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and you shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering to Yahweh, to make atonement for the Levites. ¹³ You shall set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them as a wave offering to Yahweh. ¹⁴ Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. ¹⁵ After that, the Levites shall go in to do the service of the Tent of Meeting: and you shall cleanse them, and offer them as a wave offering. ¹⁶ For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; instead of all who open the womb, even the firstborn of all the children of Israel, I have taken them to Me. ¹⁷ For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and animal. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of

Egypt, I sanctified them for Myself.

¹⁸ I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel. ¹⁹ I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near to the sanctuary. ²⁰ Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel did so to the Levites. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel did to them. ²¹ The Levites purified themselves from sin, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them for a wave offering before Yahweh; and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. ²² After that, the Levites went in to do their service in the Tent of Meeting before Aaron, and before his sons, as Yahweh had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so

8:12 The sin offering always preceded the burnt offering. Dedication to God, represented by the burnt offering, is on the basis of our recognizing first of all our sinfulness and need for His grace. This is why the sin offering always precedes the burnt offering in the Mosaic rituals. We too have been cleansed by the blood of Christ in order to serve Him and His Father (Heb. 9:14; 1 Thess. 1:9).

8:14 *Separate* – The Levites were separated unto God's service; it wasn't so much that they were separate *from* others in a negative sense; rather they were positively separated *unto* God's service. We shouldn't see holiness as negative – that we can no longer do certain things; but instead focus on what positively we have been separated *unto*.

8:19 *That there be no plague among the children of Israel* – The spiritual and physical wellbeing of others can depend upon third parties, in this case the faithfulness of the Levites. Others can suffer because of our lack of diligence; it's not that if we don't do our part for them, then God will raise up others to do what we ought to have done. He *may* do this, as He was prepared to at the time of Esther, but He wishes us to see the eternal consequence of our actions upon others.

they did to them. ²³ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ This is that which belongs to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall go in to serve in the service in the work of the Tent of Meeting; ²⁵ and from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting on the work, and shall serve no more, ²⁶ but shall minister with their brothers in the Tent of Meeting, to perform the duty, and shall do no service. You shall do thus to the Levites concerning their duties.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 27

The Passover Regulations

Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, ² Moreover let the children of Israel keep the Passover in its appointed season. ³ On the fourteenth day of this month, at evening, you shall keep it in its appointed time. According to all its statutes, and according to all its ordinances, you shall

keep it. ⁴ Moses spoke to the children of Israel, that they should keep the Passover. ⁵ They kept the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening, in the wilderness of Sinai. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did. ⁶ There were certain men, who were unclean because of the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day, and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day. ⁷ Those men said to him, We are unclean because of the dead body of a man. Why are we kept back, that we may not offer the offering of Yahweh in its appointed time among the children of Israel? ⁸ Moses answered them, Wait, that I may hear what Yahweh will command concerning you. ⁹ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ Say to the children of Israel, 'If any man of you or of your generations is unclean by reason of a dead body, or is on a journey far away, he shall still keep the Passover to Yahweh. ¹¹ In the second month, on the

8:24 *That which belongs to* – A reference to the fact the Levites had no possessions of land within Israel. What belonged to them was the honour of serving God; whether or not we own property in this present age, our eternal possession is the honour of being God's servants. To be a servant, in a world where perceived 'freedom' is so cherished, is to be our greatest possession.

9:6 These men are similar to us. We wish to keep the Passover, which for us is the breaking of bread service (1 Cor. 5:8), but we feel the burden of our uncleanness. But this is no barrier to God; He found a way for them to keep it, so eager was He for fellowship with His people. In our times, God has likewise found a way – and that way is through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus which cleanses us and enables us to legitimately have fellowship with God. This desire of God to 'find a way' for His weak people to approach Him is found throughout the Law of Moses, e.g. in the possibility for a very poor person to offer a flour sacrifice rather than a blood one requiring an animal. This is a comfort to us, and should also be a pattern for us in how we deal with the weakness of others.

fourteenth day at evening they shall keep it: they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹² They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break a bone of it. According to all the law of the Passover they shall keep it. ¹³ But the man who is clean, and is not on a journey, and fails to keep the Passover, that soul shall be cut off from his people. Because he didn't offer the offering of Yahweh in its appointed time, that man shall bear his sin. ¹⁴ If a foreigner lives among you, and desires to keep the Passover to Yahweh according to the statute of the Passover, and according to its ordinance, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the foreigner, and for him who is born in the land'.

Israel Led by Cloud and Fire

¹⁵ On the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, even the Tent of the Testimony, and at evening it was over the tabernacle as if it were the appearance of fire, until morning. ¹⁶ Thus it was continually. The cloud covered it, and the appearance of fire by night.

¹⁷ Whenever the cloud was taken up

from over the Tent, then after that the children of Israel took their journey; and in the place where the cloud remained, there the children of Israel encamped. ¹⁸ At the commandment of Yahweh the children of Israel travelled, and at the commandment of Yahweh they encamped. As long as the cloud remained on the tabernacle they remained encamped. ¹⁹ When the cloud stayed on the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept Yahweh's command, and didn't travel. ²⁰ Sometimes the cloud was a few days on the tabernacle; then according to the commandment of Yahweh they remained encamped, and according to the commandment of Yahweh they travelled. ²¹ Sometimes the cloud was from evening until morning; and when the cloud was taken up in the morning, they travelled: by day and by night, when the cloud was taken up, they travelled. ²² Whether it was two days, or a month, or a year that the cloud stayed on the tabernacle, remaining on it, the children of Israel remained encamped, and didn't travel; but when it was taken up, they travelled. ²³ At the commandment of Yahweh they

9:14 The Passover was open to Gentiles who wished to identify themselves with Israel, and to see in the Red Sea deliverance something of their own deliverance from this world. We should not be exclusive but rather inclusive when it comes to the breaking of bread service which was typified by the Passover.

9:22, 23 There was no prior warning how long they were to remain in any one place; sometimes they stayed a year in one place, at other times they had to travel even by night. This was all at the commandment or word of the Lord. If the Red Sea deliverance represents our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), the wilderness journey is like our journey through life towards the promised land of God's Kingdom. We are led by an Angel, and the path we take is determined by God. Sometimes we are suddenly and unexpectedly asked to move forward; sometimes quickly, travelling by night, as it were; other

encamped, and at the commandment of Yahweh they took up their journey. They kept Yahweh's command, at the commandment of Yahweh by Moses.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 28

The Use of the Trumpets

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Make two trumpets of silver. You shall make them of beaten work. You shall use them for the calling of the congregation, and for the journeying of the camps. ³ When they blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ⁴ If they blow just one, then the princes, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves to you. ⁵ When you blow an alarm, the camps that

lie on the east side shall go forward.

⁶ When you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall go forward. They shall blow an alarm for their journeys. ⁷ But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm.

⁸ The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. This shall be to you for a principle forever throughout your generations. ⁹ When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets. Then you will be remembered before Yahweh your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.

¹⁰ Also in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts, and in the be-

periods of our lives can appear static and leading nowhere. But in all these situations we are still being led – if we remain obedient to the word of God. A community of three million people would've been very hard to organize; setting up and breaking camp demanded a huge amount of time and effort. When they only remained a short time, even a day, in one place, the tendency would've been to complain 'Must we really break camp and move on so quickly?'. We too are tempted to resent the unstable nature of our lives; for those whose lives are led by the Spirit, as the Angel was in a sense the Spirit of God (Ps. 104:4), life will never be static and boring; even if we geographically remain in one place all our lives, we are being actively led forward by God's direction.

10:9 *When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you* – If Israel were obedient, they were promised that they would live *in their land* in peace with no oppressors; they would only be oppressed if they were disobedient. So here we have another reflection of God's sensitivity to the weakness of His people; the very structure of His law foresaw their likely weakness, and offered a way out. In this case, it was through the blowing of the trumpets. The perceptive Israelite would have seen that the same blowing of trumpets was what had been done to command Israel to move forward during their wilderness journey (:5). Even in the settled existence in Canaan, they were to still see themselves as on a wilderness journey – just as we should in our settled lives. And when we fail, we are to rally ourselves and move onwards, rather like a 'Play on!' command in some sports, when a player has tumbled and fallen. We have to move on, as quickly as possible.

10:10 *Also in the day of your gladness* – The trumpet call was an appeal to God. It wasn't only to be made in times of crisis (:9), but in good times too. We shouldn't

ginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God. I am Yahweh your God.

The First Journey of Israel

¹¹ It happened in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, that the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony. ¹² The children of Israel went forward according to their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud stayed in the wilderness of Paran. ¹³ They first went forward according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses. ¹⁴ First, the standard of the camp of the children of Judah went forward according to their armies. Nahshon the son of Amminadab was over his army. ¹⁵ Nethanel the son of Zuar was over the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar. ¹⁶ Eliab the son of Helon was over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun. ¹⁷ The tabernacle was taken down, and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who bore the tabernacle, went forward. ¹⁸ The standard of the camp of Reuben went forward according to their armies. Elizur the son of Shedeur was over his army.

¹⁹ Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai was over the army of the tribe of the children of Simeon. ²⁰ Eliasaph the son of Deuel was over the army of the tribe of the children of Gad. ²¹ The Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary. The others set up the tabernacle before they arrived. ²² The standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies. Elishama the son of Ammihud was over his army. ²³ Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur was over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh. ²⁴ Abidan the son of Gideon was over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin. ²⁵ The standard of the camp of the children of Dan, which was the rear guard of all the camps, set forward according to their armies. Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai was over his army. ²⁶ Pagiel the son of Ochran was over the army of the tribe of the children of Asher. ²⁷ Ahira the son of Enan was over the army of the tribe of the children of Naphtali. ²⁸ Thus were the travels of the children of Israel according to their armies, and they went forward. ²⁹ Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying to the place of which Yahweh said, 'I will give it to you'. Come with us, and we will treat you

treat God as someone we rush to only in times of crisis, but should share with Him our good times as well as the bad times.

10:11 *The tabernacle of the testimony* – The tent of meeting is sometimes called the tent of the “testimony”, a reference to God’s word on the tables of stone which were within the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place. Out of all the tabernacle furniture, the symbol of God’s word was seen as central. God’s word – the Bible, in our times – is to be utterly central to our lives and collective sense of community.

well; for Yahweh has spoken good concerning Israel. ³⁰ He said to him, I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my relatives. ³¹ He said, Don't leave us, please, because you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you can be to us instead of eyes. ³² It shall be, if you go with us, yes, it shall be, that whatever good Yahweh does to us, we will do the same to you. ³³ They set forward from the Mount of Yahweh three days' journey. The ark of the covenant of Yahweh went before them three days' journey, to seek out a camping place for them. ³⁴ The cloud of Yahweh was over them by day, when they set forward from the camp. ³⁵ It happened, when the ark went forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Yahweh, and let your enemies be scattered! Let those who hate you flee before you! ³⁶ When it rested,

he said, Return, Yahweh, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel.

CHAPTER 11 Mar. 29

The People Complain and Moses Becomes Desperate

The people started complaining in the ears of Yahweh. When Yahweh heard it, His anger was kindled; and Yahweh's fire burnt among them, and consumed some of those in the outskirts of the camp. ² The people cried to Moses, and Moses prayed to Yahweh, and the fire abated. ³ The name of that place was called Taberah, because Yahweh's fire burnt among them. ⁴ The mixed multitude that was among them lusted exceedingly; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who will give us flesh to eat? ⁵ We remember the fish, which we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, and the melons,

10:30 There's something very sad about this; Hobab could've identified himself with Israel and shared a place in the promised land with them, if he had travelled with them through the wilderness. But he preferred his own family rather than God's family, and so he turned back. We too invite people to share our future hope, but they turn back, even if they journey with us for a while as Hobab did with Israel.

10:31 *You can be to us instead of eyes* – This may have been a moment of weakness in Moses, for the Angel went before Israel to find them camping places (:33), and the Angels are God's eyes (2 Chron. 16:9; Rev. 4:6-8). Like Moses, we tend to seek for human guidance in our wilderness journey, rather than trusting in God's Angelic Spirit guidance of us.

11:1 *In the ears of Yahweh* – They doubtless grumbled amongst themselves. But what we say secretly, as we think, to ourselves and to each other is spoke right into the ears of God Himself.

Those in the outskirts of the camp – The implication could be that it was those who camped furthest away from the tabernacle who complained. An encampment of three million people (:21) would've been large, and for them to walk to the tabernacle would've been quite a journey. If we are wholeheartedly devoted to God, we won't want to be on the edge of God's people, just peripherally associated with the things of God.

11:5 They forgot their misery in the slave camps of Egypt, and imagined life had

and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now we have lost our appetite. There is nothing at all except this manna to look at. ⁷ The manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like the appearance of bdellium. ⁸ The people went around, gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes of it. Its taste was like the taste of fresh oil. ⁹ When the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it. ¹⁰ Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, every man at the door of his tent; and the anger of Yahweh was kindled greatly; and Moses was

displeased. ¹¹ Moses said to Yahweh, Why have You dealt with Your servant so badly? Why haven't I found grace in Your sight- for You lay the burden of all this people on me? ¹² Have I conceived all this people? Have I brought them forth, that You should tell me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing infant', to the land which You swore to their fathers? ¹³ From where can I get meat to give to all this people? For they weep to me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat'. ¹⁴ I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If You treat me this way, please kill me right

been much better there than it was. In our weakness, there are times on our wilderness journey towards the Kingdom when we look back to this world and think it was all far better than it was.

11:6 In the same way as Israel became ungrateful for the manna and became bored with it, so we can become bored with God's word in Christ which it represents (Jn. 6:63 and context). It all can become the same old scene – unless we remember the daily miracle God is performing in giving us His word and guiding us as Israel were daily guided by the fire and cloud, with His presence clearly amongst them. These things were soon taken for granted by them. We at times long for a more visible declaration of God's presence in our lives; but Israel had this daily, and yet it didn't result in their faith remaining. For faith isn't related to what we can see with our eyes (Heb. 11:1,2).

11:11 Moses earlier had had the same doubt, as to whether he had really found grace in God's sight; and God had magnificently assured Moses that indeed he had (Ex. 33:13-17). Yet Moses still struggled to accept this; the complex difficulties of his life coupled with what appears to have been some form of depression led him to again doubt it. We too struggle with accepting our salvation by pure grace; one moment we may grasp it, but life's difficulties trigger again the old doubt. Only perhaps at the day of judgment, as he see ourselves as it were from outside of ourselves, standing in the promised land of God's Kingdom, shall we finally realize that all is ultimately OK, His grace to me is for real.

11:13 The disciples had the same question – from where to find food to feed a great multitude in the desert (Mk. 8:4). If their minds had been more spiritually attune, they would have perceived that they were in essence in the same situation as Moses – and God would likewise provide. The more we are familiar with Scripture, the more we will realize that our life situations and the crises we face have in fact been faced and overcome, in essence, in previous Biblical situations.

11:15 Here we surely have Moses in depression; but God doesn't seem to rebuke him

now, if I have indeed found grace in Your sight; and don't let me see my wretchedness. ¹⁶ Yahweh said to Moses, Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. ¹⁷ I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit which is on you, and will put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you not bear it yourself alone.

The Giving of Quails

¹⁸ Say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and you will eat flesh; for you have wept in the ears of Yahweh, saying, Who will give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt. Therefore Yahweh will give you flesh, and you will eat. ¹⁹ You will not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days, ²⁰ but a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it is loathsome to you; because that you have rejected Yahweh Who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why did we come out of Egypt?' ²¹ Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand men on foot; and you have said, 'I will

give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month'. ²² Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them? ²³ Yahweh said to Moses, Has Yahweh's hand grown short? Now you will see whether My word will happen to you or not. ²⁴ Moses went out, and told the people the words of Yahweh; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them around the Tent. ²⁵ Yahweh came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was on him, and put it on the seventy elders: and it happened that when the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did so no more. ²⁶ But two men remained in the camp. The name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the Spirit rested on them; and they were of those who were written, but had not gone out to the Tent; and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ A young man ran, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp! ²⁸ Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his chosen men, answered, My lord Moses, forbid them! ²⁹ Moses said to him, Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all Yahweh's people were prophets,

(although He does rebuke him for other failures at other times). He recognizes our humanity with incredible sensitivity; and depression isn't sin.

11:29 This incident has similarities with the disciples asking Jesus to forbid the disciples of John the Baptist from using the Spirit (Mk. 9:40). Because other believers aren't with us or in our group, we aren't to forbid them. This isn't to say that unity amongst God's people isn't important; but where there is fracture amongst them, this doesn't mean that God only works with one of the groups.

that Yahweh would put His Spirit on them! ³⁰ Moses went into the camp, he and the elders of Israel. ³¹ A wind from Yahweh went out and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the earth. ³² The people rose up all that day, and all the night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails. He who gathered least gathered ten homers, and they spread them all abroad for themselves around the camp. ³³ While the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the people, and Yahweh struck the people with a very great plague. ³⁴ The name of that place was called Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who lusted. ³⁵ From Kibroth Hattaavah the people travelled to Hazeroth, and they stayed at Hazeroth.

CHAPTER 12 Mar. 30

A Challenge to Moses' Authority

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman. ² They said, Has Yahweh indeed spoken only with Moses? Hasn't He spoken also with us? And Yahweh heard it. ³ Now the man Moses was very humble, above all the men who were on the surface of the earth. ⁴ Yahweh spoke suddenly to Moses, to Aaron, and to Miriam, You three come out to the Tent of Meeting! The three of them came out. ⁵ Yahweh came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward. ⁶ He said, Hear now My words. If there is a prophet among you, I Yahweh will make Myself known to him in a vision. I will speak with him in a dream. ⁷ My servant Moses is not so. He is so faithful in all My house ⁸ that with him I will

11:33 Ps. 78:31 adds the detail that those who were killed were the "fattest" – those who weren't really hungry, but simply wanted a better life in the wilderness with the delicacies of Egypt, rather than the basic provision of daily food which God had faithfully promised His people. This attitude can easily happen amongst us – discontent because we seek both eternity in the future, and the life of Egypt right now too. Jesus clearly teaches that we must carry the cross in this life before we can enter the eternal joys of His future Kingdom.

12:2 *Yahweh heard it* – It is a theme of the record of the wilderness journeys that God heard the thoughts and secret complaints of His people. His total knowledge and sensitive awareness of every word and thought of our wilderness journey should have an abiding impression on how we think and talk.

12:3 *Moses was very humble* – The Hebrew could imply 'made very humble'. Moses appears to have been very angry at times, but this may be understandable in terms of his depression, and this great commendation, that he was the humblest person, must be allowed its full weight in our interpretation of his character. True greatness is in humility, as the New Testament often teaches. Moses was the leader because he was the most humble.

speak mouth to mouth, even plainly, and not in riddles; and he shall see Yahweh's form. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses? ⁹ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against them; and He departed. ¹⁰ The cloud departed from over the Tent; and behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. Aaron looked at Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. ¹¹ Aaron said to Moses, Oh, my lord, please don't count this sin against us, in which we have done foolishly, and in which we have sinned. ¹² Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb. ¹³ Moses cried to Yahweh, saying, Heal her, God, I beg You! ¹⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, shouldn't she be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut up outside of the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again. ¹⁵ Miriam was shut up outside of the camp seven days, and the people didn't travel until Miriam was brought in again. ¹⁶ Afterward the people travelled from Hazeroth, and encamped in the wilderness of Paran.

CHAPTER 13 Mar. 30

Spies Sent Out and Return with a Negative Message

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Send men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel. Of every tribe of their fathers, you shall send a man, every one a prince among them.

³ Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the commandment of Yahweh: all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel. ⁴ These were their names. Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. ⁵ Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. ⁶ Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. ⁷ Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. ⁸ Of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun. ⁹ Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. ¹⁰ Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. ¹¹ Of the tribe of Joseph, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi. ¹² Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. ¹³ Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. ¹⁴ Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. ¹⁵ Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi. ¹⁶ These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun 'Joshua'. ¹⁷ Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, Go up this way by the South, and go up into the hill country; ¹⁸ and see the land, what it is, and the people who dwell therein, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many; ¹⁹ and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it is good or bad; and what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in fenced cities; ²⁰ and what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there is wood therein, or not. Be courageous, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of

the first-ripe grapes. ²¹ So they went up, and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, to the entrance of Hamath. ²² They went up by the South, and came to Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ They came to the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a staff between two. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the valley of Eshcol because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from there. ²⁵ They returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days. ²⁶ They went and came to Moses and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, to the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh, and brought back word to them, and to all the congregation, and showed

them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ They told him, and said, We came to the land where you sent us and surely it flows with milk and honey and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. ²⁹ Amalek dwells in the land of the South; and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanite dwells by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan. ³⁰ Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. ³¹ But the men who went up with him said, We aren't able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. ³² They brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out to the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to spy it out,

13:28 *The people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified* – Rahab informed the later spies that the cities were fortified from fear of Israel, and the Canaanites were weak and fearful before Israel at this time (Josh. 2:10,11). Those obstacles to our inheritance of the Kingdom which seem to us huge and too strong for us may actually be very weak and far easier to overcome than we imagine.

13:30 *Let us go up at once* – The Bible often records the immediacy of response in faithful people. Procrastination and endlessly weighing up the difficulties often leads to failure to act as we should.

13:32 *A land that eats up its inhabitants* – This was effectively calling God's descriptions of the promised land untrue. If we don't believe we can inherit the Kingdom prepared for us (Mt. 25:34), then we are effectively calling God a liar. Ps. 106:24 says that they didn't believe God's word of promise that they would possess the land (Gen. 15:18; 17:8; Ex. 23:30). These promises were clear and unambiguous; but the immediate and the visible seemed more true to them than the promises of God's word. Perhaps they had forgotten those promises, not recited them to themselves, not bothered to attend Moses' sessions of instruction, of which the Pentateuch is likely a transcript. Unless God's words of promise are regularly in our consciousness, we will likewise fail to believe it when we come up against the human obstacles in our paths.

is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people who we saw in it are men of great stature. ³³ There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

CHAPTER 14 Mar. 31

The People Want to Return to Egypt

All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. ² All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³ Why does Yahweh bring us to this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be a prey: wouldn't it be better for us to return into Egypt? ⁴ They said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. ⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. ⁶ Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who

were of those who spied out the land, tore their clothes: ⁷ and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to spy it out is an extremely good land. ⁸ Since Yahweh delights in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us - a land which flows with milk and honey. ⁹ Only don't rebel against Yahweh, neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us. Their defence is removed from over them, and Yahweh is with us. Don't fear them. ¹⁰ But all the congregation threatened to stone them with stones. The glory of Yahweh appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the children of Israel. ¹¹ Yahweh said to Moses, How long will this people despise Me? and how long will they not believe in Me, for all the signs which I have worked among them? ¹² I will strike them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.

God and Moses in Dialogue

¹³ Moses said to Yahweh, Then the Egyptians will hear it; for You

14:3 There should be no question amongst us, not in our deepest heart, about returning to the world / Egypt, the life we knew before our baptism (cp. the Red Sea crossing, 1 Cor. 10:1,2). If we do allow this question, then it will lead to actually doing this in practice (:4).

14:4 *A captain* – Human beings so want human leadership. God through Moses was their captain, but they wanted a leader who would lead them where *they* wanted. The large number of human religions and religious leaders is proof enough of this desire for human leadership.

14:11 *How long will they not believe in Me* – It's not that the people were atheists. They speak about the existence of Yahweh quite freely (:3). But to not believe that He will give us the Kingdom, the promised land, is to effectively be in denial of Him. We too can be effective atheists when we doubt our salvation by grace.

brought up this people in Your might from among them; ¹⁴ and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Yahweh, are in the middle of this people; for You, Yahweh, are seen face to face, and Your cloud stands over them and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ Now if You killed this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of You will speak, saying, ¹⁶ ‘Because Yahweh was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore to them, therefore He has slain them in the wilderness’. ¹⁷ Now please let the power of the Lord be great, according as You have spoken, saying, ¹⁸ ‘Yahweh is slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and disobedience; and that will

by no means justify the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and on the fourth generation’. ¹⁹ Please pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your grace, and according as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. ²⁰ Yahweh said, I have pardoned according to your word: ²¹ but in very deed, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh; ²² because all those men who have seen My glory and My signs which I worked in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tempted Me these ten times, and have not listened to My voice; ²³ surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of those who despised Me see it. ²⁴ But My servant Caleb, because he had

14:13 To have done this would’ve resulted in God changing His stated purpose with Israel. He is prepared to alter His intentions, according to human behaviour. And He shows Himself here open to dialogue, to persuasion, from His faithful children like Moses who reason according to a desire to see *God’s* glory rather than their own glory. It may be that it becomes clear that God intends to do something – perhaps to end a life, to relocate us geographically, to close one road and open another. Our prayers shouldn’t be simply asking Him to do or not do something. Rather should we reason with Him, giving our reasons as to why we wish Him to act in the way we are asking. This is for our benefit and reveals our motives to ourselves; and also deepens our faith that we are really asking according to God’s will as revealed in His word.

14:14 *They have heard that You, Yahweh, are... seen face to face* – It was only Moses who saw Yahweh face to face. But his personal relationship with God had been shared not only with Israel, but somehow the Gentile world of Canaan had got to hear about it. If we have a close relationship with God, we will not need to boast of this to others, it will become apparent, and the knowledge of it will somehow spread widely.

14:20 *I have pardoned according to your word* – Others can be forgiven because of our intercession (see too Mk. 2:5,6). This has huge implications; for in this case we should be praying constantly for others, if the prayers of a third party can have such power in another’s life.

14:24 *Followed Me faithfully* – ‘Caleb’ means ‘dog’ in Hebrew, and God alludes to this in describing Caleb as His faithful follower. The intimacy between a man and his dog can be seen between God and His man.

another spirit with him, and has followed Me faithfully, him will I bring into the land into which he went; and his seed shall possess it. ²⁵ Now the Amalekite and the Canaanite dwell in the valley. Tomorrow, turn and go into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.

The Punishment of the People

²⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷ How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, that murmur against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me. ²⁸ Tell them, ‘As I live, says Yahweh, surely as you have spoken in My ears, so will I do to you. ²⁹ Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all who were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against Me, ³⁰ surely you shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore that I would make you dwell therein, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹ But your little ones, that you said should be for a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which you have rejected. ³² But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ Your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years,

and shall bear your prostitution, until your dead bodies be consumed in the wilderness. ³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year, you will bear your iniquities, even forty years; and you will know the altering of My purpose’. ³⁵ I Yahweh have spoken, surely this will I do to all this evil congregation, who are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. ³⁶ The men, whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against Him, by bringing up an evil report against the land, ³⁷ even those men who brought up an evil report about the land, died by the plague before Yahweh. ³⁸ But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land. ³⁹ Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. ⁴⁰ They rose up early in the morning, and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, Behold, we are here, and will go up to the place which Yahweh has promised; for we have sinned. ⁴¹ Moses said, Why now do you disobey the commandment of Yahweh, since disobedience shall not prosper? ⁴² Don’t go up, for Yahweh isn’t among you; that

14:33 *Your prostitution* – To disbelieve we will enter the promised land of God’s Kingdom is effectively prostitution against God. The Bible often describes unfaithfulness in terms which are startling to us, but this is to show how serious is unbelief.

14:34 *The altering of My purpose* – That God can change His mind is an indication of the extreme sensitivity He has to human behaviour. The only thing in which He is unchanging is His patience with sinners (Mal. 3:6).

you not be struck down before your enemies.⁴³ There the Amalekite and the Canaanite are before you, and you shall fall by the sword, because you are turned back from following Yahweh; therefore Yahweh will not be with you.⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain; nevertheless the ark of the covenant of Yahweh and Moses didn't depart out of the camp.⁴⁵ Then the Amalekite came down, and the Canaanite who lived in that mountain, and struck them and beat them down, even to Hormah.

CHAPTER 15 Apr. 1

The Importance of the Grain Offering

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,² Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you have come into the land of your habitations, which I give to you,³ and will make an offering by fire to Yahweh, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice, to accomplish a vow, or as a freewill offering, or in your set feasts, to make a pleasant aroma to Yahweh, of the herd, or of the flock;⁴ then he who offers his offering shall offer to Yahweh a grain offering of a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the fourth part of a hin of oil;⁵ and wine

for the drink offering, the fourth part of a hin, you shall prepare with the burnt offering, or for the sacrifice, for each lamb.⁶ Or for a ram, you shall prepare for a grain offering two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the third part of a hin of oil;⁷ and for the drink offering you shall offer the third part of a hin of wine, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh.⁸ When you prepare a bull for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice, to accomplish a vow, or for peace offerings to Yahweh,⁹ then shall he offer with the bull a grain offering of three tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil;¹⁰ and you shall offer for the drink offering half a hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh.¹¹ Thus shall it be done for each bull, or for each ram, or for each of the male lambs, or of the young goats.¹² According to the number that you shall prepare, so you shall do to each one according to their number.¹³ All who are native-born shall do these things in this way, in offering an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh.¹⁴ If a stranger lives as a foreigner with you, or whoever may be among you throughout your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire,

14:44 Those rejected by God at His judgment still desperately want to enter His Kingdom (Mt. 25:11). In that day of final judgment, all present will desperately want only one thing – to enter the Kingdom. Nothing else will matter. We should have that spirit with us now.

15:4 This section seems to be reminding Israel of the need not to forget to offer a grain offering at the same time as a major sacrifice; as if to underline that God is magnified in the little things of life, and these shouldn't be left outside the sphere of His influence just because we consider we have made a major sacrifice to Him.

for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh; as you do, so he shall do. ¹⁵ For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner, a statute forever throughout your generations: as you are, so shall the foreigner be before Yahweh. ¹⁶ One law and one ordinance shall be for you, and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner with you’.

Sins of Ignorance

¹⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, ‘When you come into the land to which I bring you, ¹⁹ then it shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up a wave offering to Yahweh. ²⁰ Of the first of your dough you shall offer up a cake for a wave offering: as the wave offering of the threshing floor, so you shall heave it. ²¹ Of the first of your dough you shall give to Yahweh a wave offering throughout your generations. ²² When you shall err, and not observe all these commandments which Yahweh has spoken to Moses, ²³ even all that Yahweh has commanded you by Moses, from the day that Yahweh gave command-

ment, and onward throughout your generations; ²⁴ then it shall be, if it be done unknowingly, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bull for a burnt offering, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh, with the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a sin offering. ²⁵ The priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they shall be forgiven; for it was an error, and they have brought their offering, an offering made by fire to Yahweh, and their sin offering before Yahweh, for their error. ²⁶ And all the congregation of the children of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them; for in respect of all the people it was done unknowingly. ²⁷ If one person sins unknowingly, then he shall offer a female goat of a year old for a sin offering. ²⁸ The priest shall make atonement for the soul who errs when he sins unknowingly, to make atonement for him before Yahweh; and he shall be forgiven. ²⁹ You shall have one law for him who does any-

15:17 *When you come into the land to which I bring you* – The Law of Moses, like the whole of God’s word, is studded with such incidental reminders that truly we shall enter the promised land.

15:24 Sins of ignorance still required atonement. The passage of time doesn’t work a quasi-atonement for our sins; confession of sin and earnest searching of our lives, both past and present, is one of the disciplines which characterize the spiritually healthy believer. It’s likely we will come to the day of judgment with sins of ignorance still counted to us, and yet we believe God will forgive them – hence we ask to be forgiven for such sins which aren’t perceived by us (Ps. 19:12). This means we will be forgiven without repentance. If we look forward to such forgiveness, we should show it to our brethren today, forgiving without demanding their repentance, hoping that they will later on in their journey perceive things more maturely.

thing unknowingly, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them’.

The Sin of Presumption

³⁰ But the soul who does anything in presumption, whether he is native-born or a foreigner, the same blasphemes Yahweh; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹ Because he has despised the word of Yahweh, and has broken His commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be on him’. ³² While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. ³⁴ They put him in custody, because it had not been declared what should be done to him. ³⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp. ³⁶ All the congregation brought him outside of the camp, and stoned him to death

with stones, as Yahweh commanded Moses.

Blue Fringes

³⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁸ Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them that they should make themselves fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put on the fringe of each border a cord of blue: ³⁹ and it shall be to you for a fringe, that you may look on it, and remember all the commandments of Yahweh, and do them; and that you do not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you use to play the prostitute; ⁴⁰ that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Yahweh your God.

CHAPTER 16 Apr. 2

The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons

15:31 *Despised the word* – These words are used about David’s sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:9,10). But God’s grace is such that even in this case, when David deserved to die for knowingly doing wrong, still a way was found for David to live. We are all in essence in the same situation, for our sins are often knowingly done.

15:35 *Outside the camp* – Heb. 13:12 stresses that the Lord Jesus died in the same place, outside the camp of God’s people. Although Jesus never sinned, in His time of dying He so closely identified with condemned sinners that even in our moments of sin He can still identify with us (Gal. 3:13).

15:38 People touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, the fringes mentioned here, in search of healing (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). By doing so, they were recognizing that their healing was possible because of His righteous obedience to the Father’s commandments. His power to heal has a basis – not merely that He is powerful of Himself, but because of His moral obedience.

of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; ² and they rose up before Moses with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation, men called to lead the assembly, men of renown. ³ They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, You take too much on yourself, since all the congregation are holy, each one of them, and Yahweh is among them. Why then lift yourselves up above the assembly of Yahweh? ⁴ When Moses heard it, he fell on his face, ⁵ and he spoke to Korah and to all his company, saying, In the morning Yahweh will show who are His, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. Even him whom He shall choose He will cause to come near to Him. ⁶ Do this: take censers, Korah, and all his company, ⁷ and put fire in them, and put incense on them before Yahweh tomorrow; and it shall be that the man whom Yahweh chooses, he shall be holy. You have gone too far, you sons of Levi! ⁸ Moses said to Korah, Hear now, you sons of Levi! ⁹ Is it a small thing to you, that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near

to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of Yahweh, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; ¹⁰ and that He has brought you near, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? Do you seek the priesthood also? ¹¹ Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against Yahweh; and Aaron, who is he that you murmur against him? ¹² Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; and they said, We won't come up. ¹³ Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, but you must also make yourself a prince over us? ¹⁴ Moreover you haven't brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We won't come up. ¹⁵ Moses was very angry, and said to Yahweh, Don't respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, neither have I hurt one of them. ¹⁶ Moses said to Korah, You and all your company go before Yahweh, you, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow; ¹⁷ and let each man take his censer, and put incense on them, and each man bring before Yahweh

16:9 They didn't consider servanthood within the family of God to be a very great honour; they wanted leadership and personal honour from those they would be over. This is the great paradox, the acme of humility, that serving is actually an honour. But there are so few who really grasp this. Leadership, like respect, is something which can never be demanded nor sought after if we are truly God's people. Notice that to serve others in God's family is to come "near to [God] Himself".

16:16 *Moses was very angry* – Yet he was the humblest man on planet earth at the time (12:3). Anger isn't advisable for us, as it can easily lead us into sin; but of itself, anger isn't necessarily incompatible with humility.

his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; you also and Aaron, each his censer. ¹⁸ They each took his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood at the door of the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron. ¹⁹ Korah assembled all the congregation against them to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the congregation. ²⁰ Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²¹ Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment! ²² They fell on their faces, and said, God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will You be angry with all the congregation? ²³ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from around the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!' ²⁵ Moses rose up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. ²⁶ He spoke to the congregation, saying, Depart, I beg you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins! ²⁷ So they went away from

the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side; and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones. ²⁸ Moses said, Hereby you shall know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these works; for they are not from my own mind. ²⁹ If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then Yahweh hasn't sent me. ³⁰ But if Yahweh make a new thing, and the ground open its mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain to them, and they go down alive into Sheol; then you shall understand that these men have despised Yahweh. ³¹ It happened, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground split apart that was under them; ³² and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who appertained to Korah, and all their goods. ³³ So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into Sheol; and the earth closed on them, and they perished from among the assembly.

16:22 *Shall one man sin* – It's clear from the record in this chapter that the architect of the rebellion was Korah, the "one man" whom Moses referred to (see too :40,49; Jude 11). But he influenced others to sin, and they were still guilty for their sin. Although God doesn't count people as guilty merely by association, He expects us not to identify ourselves with sinful behaviour – hence verses 23-25 are God's response to Moses' concern that God might be indiscriminately applying the unfair principle of 'guilt by association'.

16:32 *All the men who appertained to Korah* – Korah's sons didn't die (26:11); they separated themselves from their father and his supporters in time. There are times when our loyalty to the Lord will result in us having to experience some kind of separation from family members who choose not to go the Lord's way; Jesus foretold this would happen frequently (Mt. 10:34-37).

³⁴ All Israel that were around them fled at their cry; for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up! ³⁵ Fire came forth from Yahweh, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men who offered the incense. ³⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁷ Speak to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter the fire yonder, for they are holy, ³⁸ even the censers of these sinners against their own lives. Let them be made beaten plates for a covering of the altar; for they offered them before Yahweh, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel. ³⁹ Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burnt had offered, and they beat them out for a covering of the altar, ⁴⁰ to be a memorial to the children of Israel, to the end that no stranger, who isn't of the seed of Aaron, comes near to burn incense before Yahweh; that he not be as Korah, and as his company - as Yahweh spoke to him by Moses. ⁴¹ But on the next day all the congregation of the

children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, You have killed Yahweh's people! ⁴² It happened, when the congregation was assembled against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the Tent of Meeting; and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of Yahweh appeared. ⁴³ Moses and Aaron came to the front of the Tent of Meeting. ⁴⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁵ Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment! They fell on their faces. ⁴⁶ Moses said to Aaron, Take your censer, and put fire from off the altar in it, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation, and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from Yahweh! The plague has begun. ⁴⁷ Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and behold, the plague has begun among the people: and he put on the incense, and made atonement for the people. ⁴⁸ He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague

16:34 These people who “were around them” were saved by grace, considering the warning of :24-26, that whoever stood near those men would also perish. All the time in the Old Testament we are seeing examples of people breaking God's law and yet being saved by grace.

16:38 The example of sinners from previous generations ought to be a warning to us. Asaph in Psalm 73 explains how he struggled with the fact that sinners appear to have a blessed life and the righteous suffer; but when he entered the sanctuary, “then understood I their end” (Ps. 73:17), probably a reference to him beholding the plates on the altar made from the censers of these sinners.

16:46 Again we see Moses acting on his own initiative to persuade God to change His intended plan. Moses and Aaron could only have brought about this change of mind in God by intense, fervent prayer and desire – and it was for people who had just tacitly supported a revolution against them. No matter how much we are slandered and manipulated against by our brethren, they are still God's people and we should respect them and intercede for them as that.

was stayed. ⁴⁹ Now those who died by the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides those who died about the matter of Korah. ⁵⁰ Aaron returned to Moses to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the plague was stayed.

CHAPTER 17 Apr. 3

God Confirms His Choice of Aaron

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and take of them rods, one for each father's house, of all their princes according to their fathers' families, twelve rods. Write every man's name on his rod. ³ You shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi; for there shall be one rod for each head of their fathers' families. ⁴ You shall lay them up in the Tent of Meeting before the testimony, where I meet with you. ⁵ It shall happen, that the rod of the man whom I shall choose shall bud; and I will make to cease from Me the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against you. ⁶ Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and all their princes gave him rods, for each prince one, according to their fathers' families, even twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. ⁷ Moses laid

up the rods before Yahweh in the tent of the testimony. ⁸ It happened on the next day that Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds. ⁹ Moses brought out all the rods from before Yahweh to all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. ¹⁰ Yahweh said to Moses, Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the children of rebellion; that you may make an end of their murmurings against me, that they not die. ¹¹ Moses did so. As Yahweh commanded him, so he did. ¹² The children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, Behold, we perish! We are undone! We are all undone! ¹³ Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of Yahweh, dies! Will we all perish?

CHAPTER 18 Apr. 3

The Allowance for the Priests to Eat the Sacrifices

Yahweh said to Aaron, You and your sons and your fathers' house with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the

17:5 Their murmuring against Moses was a murmuring against God; our attitude to our brethren is our attitude to God.

17:8 The language of budding, blossoming and bearing fruit is used in Is. 27:6 about *all* Israel. The initial hearers of Isaiah's words would have thought back to how Aaron's rod budded, blossomed and bore fruit as a sign that God had chosen that family and not all Israel. However, Is. 27:6 makes it clear that God's ideal intention was that all Israel would be a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6). This came to fulfilment in essence with the end of the Levitical priesthood and the establishment of all those in Christ as a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

iniquity of your priesthood. ² Your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, bring near with you, that they may be joined to you, and minister to you; but you and your sons with you shall be before the tent of the testimony. ³ They shall keep your commands, and the duty of all the Tent; only they shall not come near to the vessels of the sanctuary and to the altar, that they not die, neither they, nor you. ⁴ They shall be joined to you, and keep the responsibility of the Tent of Meeting, for all the service of the Tent, and a stranger shall not come near to you. ⁵ You shall perform the duty of the sanctuary, and the duty of the altar, that there be no more wrath on the children of Israel. ⁶ I, behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the children of Israel. To you they are given as a gift, given to Yahweh, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting. ⁷ You and your sons with you shall keep your priesthood for everything of the altar, and for that within the veil; and you shall serve. I give you the priesthood as a gift, and the stranger who comes near shall be put to death. ⁸ Yahweh spoke to Aaron, I, behold, I have given you

the responsibility for My wave offerings, even all the holy things of the children of Israel. To you have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to your sons, as a portion forever. ⁹ This shall be yours of the most holy things from the fire: every offering of theirs, even every grain offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons. ¹⁰ You shall eat of it like the most holy things. Every male shall eat of it. It shall be holy to you. ¹¹ This is yours, too: the wave offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the children of Israel. I have given them to you, and to your sons and to your daughters with you, as a portion forever. Everyone who is clean in your house shall eat of it. ¹² All the best of the oil and all the best of the vintage and of the grain, the first fruits of them which they give to Yahweh, to you have I given them. ¹³ The first-ripe fruits of all that is in their land which they bring to Yahweh shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house shall eat of it. ¹⁴ Everything devoted in Israel shall be yours. ¹⁵ Every-

18:6 The Levites were given to God, through having been given to the priests. What we give to God's people we give to God (see too on 17:5). Constantly we are being taught to see God as manifest in His people, and to treat them appropriately.

18:7 Serving God is presented as an honour, a gift from God (see on 16:9). Although the Levites had no physical land inheritance amongst the people of Israel, this was compensated for by being given the gift of serving God. Of course, this would only have been perceived as a gift by the more spiritually minded. We are to see service to God even in repetitive things as a gift we have been given to do.

18:11 The theme of giving gifts continues; what was given as a gift to God, He gave as a gift to the priests. See on :6.

thing that opens the womb, of all flesh which they offer to Yahweh, both of man and animal shall be yours; nevertheless you shall surely redeem the firstborn of man, and you shall redeem the firstborn of unclean animals. ¹⁶ You shall redeem those who are to be redeemed of them from a month old, according to your estimation, for five shekels of money, after the shekel of the sanctuary (the same is twenty gerahs). ¹⁷ But you shall not redeem the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat. They are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and shall burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ¹⁸ Their flesh shall be yours, as the wave offering breast and as the right thigh, it shall be yours. ¹⁹ All the wave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel give to Yahweh, have I given you and your sons and your daughters with you as a portion forever. It is a covenant of salt

forever before Yahweh to you and to your seed with you.

The Tithe

²⁰ Yahweh said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel. ²¹ To the children of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, even the service of the Tent of Meeting. ²² Henceforth the children of Israel shall not come near the Tent of Meeting, lest they bear sin, and die. ²³ But the Levites shall do the service of the Tent of Meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. ²⁴ For the tithe of the children of Israel, which they offer as a wave offering to Yahweh, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said

18:20 *I am your portion and your inheritance* – The Levites had no land nor great material wealth to leave to their children; but they had this unique relationship with God to pass on. Jeremiah in depression, having lost all he had, concludes that God is his portion (Lam. 3:24), clearly alluding to this verse. Even if materially we lose all we have – our relationship with God is our true portion and inheritance, which we will eternally receive in the Kingdom. The writers of the Psalms, some of whom like David weren't Levites, could use the same Hebrew word to describe how God was their "portion" and inheritance (Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5). This should be our self-perception, whether or not we leave any material inheritance to anyone or not. Not for us the obsession with building up ownership of property, under the excuse we want to leave something to our children. Our service of God and His people is our inheritance, which we shall eternally receive back at the resurrection and the time of the Kingdom of God on earth. The priests and Levites were provided with enough to eat, but no great wealth. So it should be for all full time servants in God's house. By contrast, the priests of the surrounding tribes were generally more wealthy than the other people, and owned land, which was seen as especially holy (see Gen. 47:22).

to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance’.²⁵ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,²⁶ Moreover you shall speak to the Levites, and tell them, ‘When you take of the children of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up a wave offering of it for Yahweh, a tithe of the tithe.’²⁷ Your wave offering shall be reckoned to you, as though it were the grain of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress.²⁸ Thus you also shall offer a wave offering to Yahweh of all your tithes, which you receive of the children of Israel; and of it you shall give Yahweh’s wave offering to Aaron the priest.²⁹ Out of all your gifts you shall offer every wave offering of Yahweh, of all its best, even the holy part of it out of it’.³⁰ Therefore you shall tell them, ‘When you heave its best from it, then it shall be reck-

oned to the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the winepress.’³¹ You shall eat it in every place, you and your households; for it is your reward in return for your service in the Tent of Meeting.³² You shall bear no sin by reason of it, when you have heaved from it the best of it, and you shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, that you not die’.

CHAPTER 19 Apr. 4

The Red Heifer

Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,² This is the statute of the law which Yahweh has commanded: Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without spot, in which is no blemish, and which was never yoked.³ You shall give her to Eleazar the priest, and he shall bring her forth outside of the camp, and one

18:26 The Levites numbered 22,000 males over one month old (3:34); they were to receive the tithe of 600,000 grown men from the other tribes (1:46). This may appear to mean that the Levites were to be extremely well provided for. However it’s more likely that this is an example of where God foresaw the likely failure of His people to obey His Law fully, and built into that very Law some provision for this. In this we see His sensitivity to our human failure.

18:30 The tithes were to be paid to the Levites, not the priests. The priests survived by eating the sacrifices made by Israel. It’s therefore incorrect for modern church leaders to demand a tithe be paid to them because they are equivalent of the priests. In any case, we are to be a community of priests (1 Pet. 2:5). The tithes were produce from the land, not money; although seeing money existed in some form, God could have commanded money to be given them. But the tithe was of agricultural produce, simply so that the Levites would have something to eat as they concentrated on God’s service – not in order to make them wealthy.

19:2 This sacrifice was to provide purification from death through its ashes, which were to be mixed with water (:9), perhaps the running water from the rock, which water followed them through the wilderness – for what other source of “running [Heb. ‘springing’] water” (:17) could they have had in the wilderness? It speaks very clearly of Christ’s death; for He was without blemish and never came under the yoke of sin;

shall kill her before his face. ⁴ Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle her blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times. ⁵ One shall burn the heifer in his sight: her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn; ⁶ and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. ⁷ Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the evening. ⁸ He who burns her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the evening. ⁹ A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside of the camp in a clean place; and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water for impurity. It is a sin offering. ¹⁰ He who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. It shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them, for a statute forever. ¹¹ He who touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. ¹² The same shall purify himself with water on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if

he doesn't purify himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. ¹³ Whoever touches a dead person, the body of a man who has died, and doesn't purify himself, defiles the tent of Yahweh; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet on him. ¹⁴ This is the law when a man dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent, and everyone who is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. ¹⁵ Every open vessel, which has no covering bound on it, is unclean. ¹⁶ Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. ¹⁷ For the unclean they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the sin offering; and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: ¹⁸ and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, and on all the vessels, and on the persons who were there, and on him who touched the bone, or the slain, or the dead, or the grave. ¹⁹ The clean person shall sprinkle on the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day, and on the seventh day he shall purify him; and he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening. ²⁰ But the man

He too was killed outside the camp of Israel (:3 cp. Heb. 13:12). Heb. 9:13 specifically alludes to how the ashes of this heifer were typical of Christ's sacrifice.

19:6 *Wood, and hyssop, and scarlet* – All associated with the crucifixion of Christ.

19:13 The sacrifice of the red heifer, like that of Christ, became meaningful and effective for the individual when mixed with water, which could suggest our need to appropriate the sacrifice of Christ to ourselves through baptism.

who shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of Yahweh. The water for impurity has not been sprinkled on him: he is unclean. ²¹ It shall be a perpetual statute to them. He who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes, and he who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening. ²² Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the soul that touches it shall be unclean until evening.

CHAPTER 20 Apr. 5

Moses and Aaron Strike the Rock and Are Punished

The children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried there. ² There was no water for the congregation. They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. ³ The people strove with Moses and spoke, saying,

We wish that we had died when our brothers died before Yahweh! ⁴ Why have you brought the assembly of Yahweh into this wilderness that we should die there, we and our animals? ⁵ Why have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in to this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. ⁶ Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and fell on their faces, and the glory of Yahweh appeared to them. ⁷ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸ Take the rod and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water; and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock; so you shall give the congregation and their livestock drink. ⁹ Moses took the rod from before Yahweh as He commanded him. ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring water out of this rock for you?

19:21 Perpetual statute – The implication is that this process of cleansing from the results of death was to be permanent; but the whole style of the command for Eleazar to kill the red heifer in :2,3 sounds as if only one red heifer was killed for all time. There is no command as to continuing to kill a red heifer, nor by whom or how often it should be done. The record may be framed to present the result of the red heifer's sacrifice as if it were eternal, clearly typifying Christ's sacrifice. Another option is that this entire ritual is to be understood in the context of the death of so many Israelites in the rebellion described in chapter 16. Chapters 17 and 18 provide the answer to the peoples' concerns arising out of that incident, and chapter 19 may also be in that context – describing how to avoid defilement by all the dead bodies which died in the plague.

20:6 When faced with unreasonable criticism and aggression, even from those amongst the people of God, our response should be not to argue back immediately, but take the situation to God.

¹¹ Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice: and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. ¹² Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, Because you didn't believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them. ¹³ These are the waters of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with Yahweh, and He was sanctified in them.

Edom Refuses Israel Passage

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the travail that has happened to us: ¹⁵ how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and our fathers: ¹⁶ and when we cried to Yahweh, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought

us forth out of Egypt; and behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost extremity of your border. ¹⁷ Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or through vineyard, neither will we drink of the water of the wells. We will go along the king's highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed your border. ¹⁸ Edom said to him, You shall not pass through me, lest I come out with the sword against you. ¹⁹ The children of Israel said to him, We will go up by the highway; and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then will I give its price. Let me only, without doing anything else, pass through on my feet. ²⁰ He said, You shall not pass through. Edom came out against him with many people, and with a strong hand. ²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border, so Israel turned away from him.

20:11 Moses had previously struck the rock and water came out (Ex. 17:6), but this time he was asked to speak to it – yet instead, he struck it. He became over familiar with God, assuming he could do as he wished without careful respect for God's word. He failed to believe in the power of the spoken word (:12), effectively he rebelled against the commandment (27:14); he assumed that detailed obedience wasn't necessary to God's commandment; and he gave the impression that he rather than God was giving the water ("shall we bring you water...?", :10). One angry sentence can reveal so much about our attitudes. Moses had earlier asked that he be excluded from entering the land so that Israel might enter (Ex. 32:32 – see note there). In a strange way, that prayer was heard. Although Moses sinned, repeatedly we read that he didn't himself enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). They are blamed for provoking him to speak poorly (Ps. 106:33). God works through our sins in a strange way; and what we ask for in prayer, we have a way of receiving, in essence.

20:12 Although Moses didn't believe in God as he should have done, God still did the miracle. He is prepared to accept even imperfect faith.

20:21 Soon after this incident, Israel were commanded not to despise an Edomite (Dt. 23:7) – although this is just what Edom had done to them. We aren't to treat others as they treat us, but leave their judgment with God. These incidents took place in the 40th

The Death of Aaron

²² They travelled from Kadesh: and the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. ²³ Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom, saying, ²⁴ Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against my word at the waters of Meribah. ²⁵ Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; ²⁶ and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be taken, and shall die there. ²⁷ Moses did as Yahweh commanded; and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. ²⁸ Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain; and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. ²⁹ When all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

CHAPTER 21 Apr. 5***The Bronze Serpent***

The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive. ² Israel vowed a vow to Yahweh, and said, If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. ³ Yahweh listened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. The name of the place was called Hormah. ⁴ They travelled from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. ⁵ The people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loathes this light bread. ⁶ Yahweh sent fiery snakes among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, We

year of their wanderings (33:38), and the commands of Deuteronomy were given at the same time.

21:2 *Then I will utterly destroy their cities* – But it was in any case a command to “utterly destroy” the Canaanites (Dt. 7:2; 12:2; 20:17). We shouldn’t consider that which is our duty to do as some kind of special dedication to God which deserves His reward. But so eager is God for relationship with His people that He all the same agreed (:3).

21:4 *By the way to the Red Sea* – Their route took them back on themselves at this point, heading back towards Egypt. This may have been the psychological trigger for their desire to be back in Egypt (:5). We must try to avoid things and situations which may stimulate a desire to leave the way to the Kingdom and return to the world.

21:7 *Moses prayed for the people* – Previously in such situations, God had just accepted Moses’ prayer. But now He asked the people to additionally make some personal effort to demonstrate their faith. Quickly dashing off a request for Christ’s mediation

have sinned, because we have spoken against Yahweh, and against you. Pray to Yahweh, that He take away the serpents from us. Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ Yahweh said to Moses, Make a fiery snake, and set it on an ensign pole; and it shall happen, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks to it, shall live. ⁹ Moses made a snake of brass, and set it on the ensign pole; and it happened, that if a snake had bitten any man, when he looked toward the snake of brass, he lived.

The Journeys of Israel

¹⁰ The children of Israel travelled, and encamped in Oboth. ¹¹ They

travelled from Oboth, and encamped at Iyeabarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrise. ¹² From there they travelled, and encamped in the valley of Zered. ¹³ From there they travelled, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness, that comes out of the border of the Amorites (for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites). ¹⁴ Therefore it is said in the book of the Wars of Yahweh, Vaheb in Suphah, the valleys of the Arnon, ¹⁵ the slope of the valleys that incline toward the dwelling of Ar, leans on the border of Moab. ¹⁶ From there

in the case of sin may sometimes be met by God seeking to convict us more deeply of our sin and asking us to make some more concrete effort.

21:8 This is interpreted in Jn. 3:14–16 as a symbol of Christ lifted up on the pole at His death; looking toward the snake is seen as faith in Him; and healing from the snake bite as eternal life. This is another reason for thinking that the ‘cross’ of Christ wasn’t as traditionally understood; the Greek word *stauros* translated “cross” means a tree trunk or pole. The snake was a symbol of sin – but it was as it were dead in Christ. As He hung there, He was so deeply identified with our sins (despite never sinning personally) that a snake can legitimately be used as a symbol for Him there. We are in the position of the Israelites feeling the poisonous venom rising within them, knowing they had limited time left in this life, recognizing they had indeed sinned and deserved death and yet didn’t wish to die. In an encampment of over three million people living in single storey dwellings, i.e. tents, it would have taken some people several kilometres walk to get to the bronze snake. To walk when you have been bitten by a snake is dangerous; you shouldn’t let your heart work any more than necessary so that the venom isn’t spread. So they were commanded to do that which is counter-instinctive, what is totally against worldly wisdom and sense. Our faith in Christ is similar. But it could be that the people were told about the existence of the bronze snake, and had to look toward it in faith from where they were, believing it was there, although not seeing it. This would be similar to our faith in Christ’s death. We didn’t see it, there is no physical representation of it within our sight, but we look to it from far away in time, space and understanding, and believe it was there – and believe that really, 2000 years ago, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon, on a hill outside Jerusalem, it really did happen. We can imagine the relief of the people as they felt the temperature subside, the fever go; and their gratitude afterwards, their eager vowing to give their saved lives to God and not rebel again. These should be our emotions as we reflect on our salvation in Christ.

they travelled to Beer; that is the well of which Yahweh said to Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. ¹⁷ Then sang Israel this song: Spring up, O well; sing to it: ¹⁸ the well, which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people dug, with the sceptre, and with their poles. From the wilderness they travelled to Mattanah; ¹⁹ and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; ²⁰ and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the field of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looks down on the desert ²¹ Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, ²² Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into field, or into vineyard; we will not drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's highway, until we have passed your border. ²³ Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his border; but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness, and came to Jahaz; and he fought against Israel. ²⁴ Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, even to the children of Ammon; for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. ²⁵ Israel took all these cities; and Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its towns. ²⁶ For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even to the Arnon. ²⁷ Therefore those who speak in proverbs say, Come to Heshbon.

Let the city of Sihon be built and established; ²⁸ for a fire has gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon. It has devoured Ar of Moab, The lords of the high places of the Arnon. ²⁹ Woe to you, Moab! You are undone, people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, to Sihon king of the Amorites. ³⁰ We have shot at them. Heshbon has perished even to Dibon. We have laid waste even to Nophah, which reaches to Medeba. ³¹ Thus Israel lived in the land of the Amorites. ³² Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its towns, and drove out the Amorites who were there. ³³ They turned and went up by the way of Bashan; and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. ³⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Don't fear him; for I have delivered him into your hand, and all his people, and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon. ³⁵ So they struck him, and his sons and all his people, until there was none left him remaining; and they possessed his land.

CHAPTER 22 Apr. 6 *Balak Encourages Balaam to Curse Israel*

The children of Israel travelled, and encamped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. ² Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ Moab was very afraid of the people, because they were many; and

Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. ⁴ Moab said to the elders of Midian, Now this multitude will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field. Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. ⁵ He sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the River, to the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people who came out from Egypt. Behold, they cover the surface of the earth, and they are staying opposite me. ⁶ Please come now therefore and curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall prevail, that we may strike them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. ⁷ The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards for the divination in their hand; and they came to Ba-

laam, and spoke to him the words of Balak. ⁸ He said to them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as Yahweh shall speak to me. The princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. ⁹ God came to Balaam and said, Who are these men with you? ¹⁰ Balaam said to God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has said to me, ¹¹ ‘Behold, the people that has come out of Egypt, it covers the surface of the earth. Now, come curse me them; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them, and shall drive them out’. ¹² God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people; for they are blessed. ¹³ Balaam rose up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, Go to your land; for Yahweh refuses to permit me to go with you. ¹⁴ The princes of Moab rose up, and they went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us. ¹⁵ Balak sent yet again princes, more, and

22:3 The fear of the tribes surrounding Israel is stressed in the record, yet Israel were so fearful of *them*. The obstacles to our inheriting the Kingdom aren’t as insurmountable as they appear.

22:7 The simple lesson is that God’s blessing is one of those things which money can’t buy.

22:8 *Lodge here this night* – He should surely have immediately sent them away. He knew that whoever cursed Abraham’s seed would be cursed, and had had experience of this (:6; Gen. 12:3). The longer we keep the possibility of sinning before us, the more likely it is that we shall fall into it.

22:9 *Who are these men with you?* – God knew. It was a rhetorical question, designed to make Balaam reflect that here in his home he had the enemies of God’s people. God likewise at times makes us stop and think, sometimes making us put into words out loud the situation we are really in.

22:13 *Yahweh refuses to permit me to go with you* – There’s a hint of resentment against God here; and Balaam should’ve told them direct that he was not going to curse God’s people. It’s rather like us excusing ourselves from doing something sinful by telling people that our “stupid religion” doesn’t allow it – rather than personally identifying ourselves with the reason why we will not do it.

more honourable than they. ¹⁶ They came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me: ¹⁷ for I will promote you to very great honour, and whatever you say to me I will do. Please come therefore, and curse this people for me'. ¹⁸ Balaam answered the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can't go beyond the word of Yahweh my God, to do less or more. ¹⁹ Now therefore, please wait also here this night, that I may know what Yahweh will speak to me more. ²⁰ God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men have come to call you, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that you shall do. ²¹ Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his don-

key, and went with the princes of Moab. ²² God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of Yahweh placed himself in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and the donkey turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the way. ²⁴ Then the angel of Yahweh stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. ²⁵ The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh, and she thrust herself to the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he struck her again. ²⁶ The angel of Yahweh went further, and stood in

22:19 *Please wait also here this night* – Clearly Balaam wanted to go with them, because he loved the idea of getting the promised wealth (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11). If he had sent them away immediately, the spiritual crisis would've passed. But instead, God confirmed Balaam in the sinful way he wished to go – for He now permitted Balaam to go with them, but to only speak His word (:20). By going with them – and it was a very long journey – Balaam was going deeper into temptation. This is an example of how whilst the process of temptation is internal (James 1:13-15), God can lead sinful people further into situations of temptation if this is what they wish in their hearts. Hence we should pray that God will not lead *us* into temptation (Mt. 6:13). Hence God was angry with Balaam because he went (:22), even though God told him to go (:20) – God led him further into temptation, but was angered that Balaam went that way.

22:22 *For an adversary* – The Hebrew word for adversary is “satan”. Good people, Angels, even God Himself, can be ‘satans’ or adversaries. ‘Satan’ carries no bad connotation of itself as a word; it has been loaded with this meaning by the wrong idea that there is a personal ‘satan’ out in the cosmos who is in radical opposition to God. This isn't a Biblical idea.

22:24 The two times Balaam faces the Angel, albeit unknowingly, refer to the two times that Balak's messengers had come to him. Balaam didn't see God in it all; and he was angry with the donkey for perceiving God in a situation where he himself couldn't perceive God.

22:26 The New Testament describes Balaam as rushing headlong on this journey, run-

a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. ²⁷ The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh, and she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. ²⁸ Yahweh opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times? ²⁹ Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have mocked me, I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would have killed you. ³⁰ The donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Was I ever in the habit of doing so to you? He said, No. ³¹ Then Yahweh opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed his head, and fell on his face. ³² The angel of Yahweh said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come forth as an adversary, because your way is perverse before me: ³³ and the donkey saw me, and turned aside before me these three times. Unless

she had turned aside from me, surely now I would have killed you, and saved her alive. ³⁴ Balaam said to the angel of Yahweh, I have sinned; for I didn't know that you stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases you, I will go back again. ³⁵ The angel of Yahweh said to Balaam, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak to you, that you shall speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. ³⁶ When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him to the City of Moab, which is on the border of the Arnon, which is in the utmost part of the border. ³⁷ Balak said to Balaam, Didn't I earnestly send to you to call you? Why didn't you come to me? Am I not able indeed to promote you to honour? ³⁸ Balaam said to Balak, Behold, I have come to you. Have I now any power at all to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak. ³⁹ Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath Huzoth. ⁴⁰ Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes who were with him. ⁴¹ It happened in the morning, that Balak took Balaam, and brought

ning greedily for the money (Jude 11), in "madness" (2 Pet. 2:15). This is the effect which the hope of wealth can have upon people.

22:29 *I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would have killed you* – Moments later, Balaam sees the Angel with a sword in his hand, thinking of killing him, but refraining by grace. God was trying to teach Balaam that He is indeed gracious.

22:34 *If it displeases you, I will go back again* – Still Balaam doesn't get it. Surely he knew his journey was displeasing to God. Sometimes people are pulled up by God in their path – and still they refuse to understand. They are blinded by the immediate rather than seeing God's perspective.

22:35 Again God leads him further into temptation, seeing he didn't himself decide to return home. God was pushing him onwards down the destructive road he so eagerly chose to go.

him up into the high places of Baal; and he saw from there the utmost part of the people.

CHAPTER 23 Apr. 6

Balaam Blesses Israel

Balaam said to Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bulls and seven rams. ² Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bull and a ram. ³ Balaam said to Balak, Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps Yahweh will come to meet me; and whatever He shows me I will tell you. He went to a bare height. ⁴ God met Balaam, and he said to Him, I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on every altar. ⁵ Yahweh put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak. ⁶ He returned to him, and behold, he was standing by his burnt offering, he, and all the princes of Moab. ⁷ He took up his parable, and said, From Aram has Balak brought me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the East. Come, curse Jacob for me, come, defy Israel. ⁸ How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? How shall I defy whom Yahweh has not defied? ⁹ For from the top of the rocks I see him, from the hills I see him; behold,

it is a people that dwells alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. ¹⁰ Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous! Let my last end be like his! ¹¹ Balak said to Balaam, What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them altogether. ¹² He answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which Yahweh puts in my mouth? ¹³ Balak said to him, Please come with me to another place, where you may see them. You shall see but the utmost part of them, and shall not see them all; and curse me them from there. ¹⁴ He took him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered up a bull and a ram on every altar. ¹⁵ He said to Balak, Stand here by your burnt offering, while I meet over there. ¹⁶ Yahweh met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and say this. ¹⁷ He came to him, and behold, he was standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. Balak said to him, What has Yahweh spoken? ¹⁸ He took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to Me, you son of Zippor. ¹⁹ God is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that

23:12 Clearly Balaam didn't want to say the words he did. The process of Divine inspiration means that men spoke God's word even against their will; they were moved, carried along, by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:15,16). The Bible is therefore not the words of men but those of God, and the fact some of those who gave the original words did so *against their own will* – and Balaam would be a classic example – is proof that it is indeed the word of God and not of men.

23:19 *Change His mind* – God does change His mind about some things due to His

He should change His mind. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? ²⁰ Behold, I have received a command to bless. He has blessed, and I can't reverse it. ²¹ He has not seen iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel. Yahweh his God is with him, the shout of a king is among them. ²² God brings them out of Egypt, he has as it were the strength of the wild ox. ²³ Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob; neither is there any divination possible against Israel. Now it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What has God done! ²⁴ Behold, the people rises up as a lioness, as a lion he lifts himself up. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain. ²⁵ Balak said to Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. ²⁶ But Balaam answered Balak, Didn't I tell you, saying, 'All that Yahweh speaks, that I must do?' ²⁷ Balak said to Balaam, Come now, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that

you may curse me them from there. ²⁸ Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that looks down on the desert. ²⁹ Balaam said to Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bulls and seven rams. ³⁰ Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on every altar.

CHAPTER 24 Apr. 7

Balaam Continues to Bless Israel and Speaks of their Messiah

When Balaam perceived that it pleased Yahweh to bless Israel, he didn't go as at the other times to meet with enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. ² Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came on him. ³ He took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor says, the man whose eye was closed says; ⁴ he says, who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes open: ⁵ How beautiful are your

great sensitivity to His people; but He will not change His basic love for them (Mal. 3:6). He will not arbitrarily decide now to curse His beloved people.

Has He spoken, and will He not make it good? – God had promised to give His people the promised land, as He has promised to give us the Kingdom, and there is no way He will renege on that promise.

23:21 *He has not seen iniquity in Jacob* – There was indeed much iniquity in Jacob – notice how Jacob's old name is used rather than the new name, Israel. They took with them the gods of Egypt, and the tabernacle of another god as well as that of Yahweh (Acts 7:43). But God did not 'see' that sin; this is an Old Testament presentiment of the 'imputed righteousness' of which Paul speaks in the New Testament. God doesn't count sin, doesn't 'see' it, in His people; for this really is what love is about, seeing someone in a positive light and not imputing their weakness to them.

23:26 *Didn't I tell you* – Again there is a resentment in Balaam, repeating God's word to others but not personally identifying with it, bemoaning the limitations of it.

24:5 *How beautiful are your tents, Jacob* – God is described in the prophets as being

tents, Jacob, and your tents, Israel! ⁶ As valleys they are spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as aloes which Yahweh has planted, as cedar trees beside the waters. ⁷ Water shall flow from his buckets, his seed shall be in many waters, his king shall be higher than Agag; his kingdom shall be exalted. ⁸ God brings him out of Egypt; he has as it were the strength of the wild ox. He shall eat up the nations his adversaries, shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them with his arrows. ⁹ He couched, he lay down as a lion, as a lioness; who shall rouse him up? Everyone who blesses you is blessed, everyone who curses you is cursed. ¹⁰ Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, I called you to curse my enemies, and, behold, you have altogether blessed them these three times. ¹¹ Therefore now flee you to your place! I thought to promote you to great honour; but, behold, Yahweh has kept you back from honour. ¹² Balaam said to Balak, Didn't I also tell your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, ¹³ 'If Balak would give me his house full of sil-

ver and gold, I can't go beyond the word of Yahweh, to do either good or bad of my own mind. I will say what Yahweh says?' ¹⁴ Now, behold, I go to my people. Come, I will inform you what this people shall do to your people in the latter days. ¹⁵ He took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor says, the man whose eye was closed says; ¹⁶ he says, who hears the words of God, knows the knowledge of the Most High, and who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes open: ¹⁷ I see him, but not now; I see him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob, a sceptre will rise out of Israel, and shall strike through the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of Sheth. ¹⁸ Edom shall be a possession. Seir, his enemies, also shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly. ¹⁹ Out of Jacob shall come one who shall have dominion, and shall destroy the remnant from the city. ²⁰ He looked at Amalek and took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall come to destruction. ²¹ He looked at the Kenite, and took up his parable and said, Your dwell-

in love with Israel at this time (Ez. 16:8), just as He is with us on our wilderness journey towards His Kingdom. He didn't 'see' their sin (see on 23:21).

24:10 *These three times* – Balaam ought to have perceived that each time he tried to curse Israel and ended up blessing them, it was like him trying those three times to ride his donkey down the lane with God standing in the way to block him. The same phrase “these three times” occurs three times in that record (22:28,32,33).

24:17 This star and sceptre would seem to refer to Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus. It seems He will yet win a resounding victory against Israel's Arab enemies, represented here by Moab, and be higher than Agag (:7), or Gog. Ez. 38:1-7 speaks of Christ's latter day conflict with Gog. It seems there will be a final conflict around the time of Christ's return, in which He will finally save Israel from all their surrounding enemies.

ing place is strong, your nest is set in the rock. ²² Nevertheless Kain shall be wasted, until Asshur carries you away captive. ²³ He took up his parable and said, Alas, who shall live when God does this? ²⁴ But ships shall come from the coast of Kittim; they shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber. He also shall come to destruction. ²⁵ Balaam rose up and went and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.

CHAPTER 25 Apr. 7

Israel Commit Fornication with Moabite Women

Israel stayed in Shittim; and the people began to play the prostitute with the daughters of Moab; ² for they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods. ³ Israel joined himself to Baal Peor,

and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel. ⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them up to Yahweh before the sun, that the fierce anger of Yahweh may turn away from Israel. ⁵ Moses said to the judges of Israel, Everyone kill his men who have joined themselves to Baal Peor. ⁶ Behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ⁷ When Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand; ⁸ and he went after the man of Israel into the pavilion and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through

24:25 We learn from 31:16 and Rev. 2:14 that at this time, Balaam advised Balak to entice Israel with Moabite prostitutes, so that the people would be cursed by their God for immorality. The events of chapter 25 were therefore on Balaam's advice. This desperate strategy reflects how headlong was Balaam's desire to receive the wealth promised him, and how he sacrificed the welfare of God's people upon that altar. In essence we can do the same today.

25:3 See on 24:25.

Baal Peor refers to the Baal who was worshipped at the town of Peor, near where they were now encamping (Dt. 3:29; 4:46). Each town and geographical area had its own gods, rather like today there is a geography to religion, different parts of the world or even areas within a country tend to have their local religions. The true God and His Truth is the same worldwide, which allows a unique international bond between those who know Him and are in His Son.

25:5 This command didn't need to be carried out, because Phinehas took the initiative in killing the chief offenders (:7,8) and this act so impressed God that the plague was ended (:11). Here we have an example of how God sets up one plan or purpose, but is prepared to amend or change it according to human initiative suggesting another one, as Moses did several times. We see here therefore how open God is to dialogue, to living relationship with His people.

25:8 The spear connecting Jew and Gentile in death could be seen as pointing forward to the cross of Christ.

her body. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. ⁹ Those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁰ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹ Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest has turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I didn't consume the children of Israel in My jealousy. ¹² Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace: ¹³ and it shall be to him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel'. ¹⁴ Now the name of the man of Israel that was slain, who was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a father's house among the Simeonites. ¹⁵ The name of the Midianite woman who was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur: he was head of the people of a fathers' house in Midian. ¹⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁷ Harass the Midianites, and strike them; ¹⁸ for they harassed you with their wives, with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi the daughter of the prince of Midian

their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague in the matter of Peor.

CHAPTER 26 Apr. 8

A Census Taken

It happened after the plague, that Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, ² Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers' families, all who are able to go forth to war in Israel. ³ Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho saying, ⁴ Take a census, from twenty years old and upward; as Yahweh commanded Moses and the children of Israel. These are those that came out of the land of Egypt: ⁵ Reuben, the firstborn of Israel; the sons of Reuben: of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites; ⁶ of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. ⁷ These are the families of the Reubenites; and those who were numbered of them were forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty. ⁸ The sons of Pallu: Eliab. ⁹ The sons of Eliab: Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. These are that

25:11 *Jealous with My jealousy* – God's feelings are to be ours. His colossal love for His people means that He is also therefore jealous over their devotions to any other god.

26:2 This numbering of the people just before they entered the promised land perhaps looks forward to the way that God will be aware of the exact number of those who will enter His Kingdom at the day of judgment when Christ returns. Ps. 87:6 appears to speak of a 'writing up of the people' in the last day.

26:9 *Strove against Moses... strove against Yahweh* – Moses manifested Yahweh and in this sense whatever was done to him was done to Yahweh. This doesn't mean that

Dathan and Abiram, who were renowned in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against Yahweh, ¹⁰ and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died; at which time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men, and they became a sign. ¹¹ Notwithstanding, the sons of Korah didn't die. ¹² The sons of Simeon after their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites; ¹³ of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites; of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. ¹⁴ These are the families of the Simeonites, twenty-two thousand two hundred. ¹⁵ The sons of Gad after their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; of Haggi, the family of the Haggites; of Shuni, the family of the Shunites; ¹⁶ of Ozni, the family of the Oznites;

of Eri, the family of the Erites; ¹⁷ of Arod, the family of the Arodites; of Areli, the family of the Arelites. ¹⁸ These are the families of the sons of Gad according to those who were numbered of them, forty thousand five hundred. ¹⁹ The sons of Judah: Er and Onan; and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ The sons of Judah after their families were: of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; of Perez, the family of the Perezites; of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites. ²¹ The sons of Perez were: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. ²² These are the families of Judah according to those who were numbered of them, seventy-six thousand five hundred. ²³ The sons of Issachar after their families: of Tola, the family of the Tolaite; of Puvah, the family of the Punites; ²⁴ of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. ²⁵ These are the families of Issachar accord-

Moses was Yahweh Himself in person. Likewise Jesus carried the Name of God (Jn. 5:43) but wasn't God in person. We who are baptized into the Name are in the same situation – whatever is done to us is done to God, and our attitudes to those in His Name are our attitudes to Him (Mt. 25:40,43).

26:11 The inspired titles of the Psalms sometimes mention that the Psalm was written by the sons of Korah. They therefore dedicated themselves to God's service, not following the bad example of their father. We in Christ are a new creation, and not inevitable victims of our upbringing or bad parental example.

26:14 All these figures may seem irrelevant, but analyzing them provides confirmation that the Bible we read is indeed God's inspired word, because there is so much incidental confirmation of the truth of the record provided. The sum total of Israel at the end of their wilderness wanderings was 1,820 less than it had been at the beginning, nearly 40 years previously. But the tribe of Simeon had decreased by 37,100 (cp. 1:23). The plague of chapter 25 had killed 24,000 people for committing fornication with the Moabites (25:9); but the ringleader of that had been Zimri, a Simeonite prince (25:14). It's likely therefore that he led his tribe into the orgy with the Moabites, which resulted in so many of them being killed.

ing to those who were numbered of them, sixty-four thousand three hundred. ²⁶ The sons of Zebulun after their families: of Sered, the family of the Seredites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. ²⁷ These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those who were numbered of them, sixty thousand five hundred. ²⁸ The sons of Joseph after their families: Manasseh and Ephraim. ²⁹ The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites; and Machir became the father of Gilead; of Gilead, the family of the Gileadites. ³⁰ These are the sons of Gilead: of Iezer, the family of the Iezerites; of Helek, the family of the Helekites; ³¹ and Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; and Shechem, the family of the Shechemites; ³² and Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; and Hepher, the family of the Hephherites. ³³ Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ³⁴ These are the families of Manasseh; and those who were numbered of them were fifty-two thousand seven hundred. ³⁵ These are the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthelahites; of Becher, the family of the Becherites; of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. ³⁶ These are the sons of Shuthelah:

of Eran, the family of the Eranites. ³⁷ These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those who were numbered of them, thirty-two thousand five hundred. These are the sons of Joseph after their families. ³⁸ The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaïtes; of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; ³⁹ of Shephupham, the family of the Shuphamites; of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. ⁴⁰ The sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: the family of the Ardites; of Naaman, the family of the Naamites. ⁴¹ These are the sons of Benjamin after their families; and those who were numbered of them were forty-five thousand six hundred. ⁴² These are the sons of Dan after their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan after their families. ⁴³ All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those who were numbered of them, were sixty-four thousand four hundred. ⁴⁴ The sons of Asher after their families: of Imnah, the family of the Imnites; of Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the family of the Berites. ⁴⁵ Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. ⁴⁶ The name of the daughter of Asher was Serah. ⁴⁷ These are the families of the sons of Asher according to

26:43 Dan had only one son and yet by this time had become the second largest tribe in Israel. Benjamin had ten sons (Gen. 46:21) but was one of the smallest tribes. Again we see how God doesn't work through human strength or advantage; the passage of time reveals over the generations that human blessing soon fades away.

those who were numbered of them, fifty-three thousand and four hundred. ⁴⁸ The sons of Naphtali after their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites; ⁴⁹ of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. ⁵⁰ These are the families of Naphtali according to their families; and those who were numbered of them were forty-five thousand four hundred. ⁵¹ These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty. ⁵² Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ⁵³ To these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. ⁵⁴ To the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less inheritance: to everyone according to those who were numbered of his family shall his inheritance be given. ⁵⁵ Notwithstanding, the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit it. ⁵⁶ According to the lot shall their inheritance be divided between the more and the fewer. ⁵⁷ These are those who were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites. ⁵⁸ These are the families of Levi: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites. Kohath became the father of

Amram. ⁵⁹ The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt: and she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister. ⁶⁰ To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ⁶¹ Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before Yahweh. ⁶² Those who were numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and upward; for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel. ⁶³ These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. ⁶⁴ But among these there was not a man of them who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵ For Yahweh had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. There was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

CHAPTER 27 Apr. 9 ***The Case of Zelophehad's Daughters***

Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hephher the son of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. ² They stood be-

fore Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation at the door of the Tent of Meeting, saying, ³ Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against Yahweh in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons. ⁴ Why should the name of our father be taken away from among his family, because he had no son? Give to us a possession among the brothers of our father. ⁵ Moses brought their cause before Yahweh. ⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, ⁷ The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. You shall surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers; and you shall cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. ⁸ You shall speak to the children of Israel saying, 'If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. ⁹ If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to

his brothers. ¹⁰ If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. ¹¹ If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his kinsman who is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be to the children of Israel a statute and ordinance, as Yahweh commanded Moses³.

Joshua Appointed to Replace Moses

¹² Yahweh said to Moses, Go up into this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. ¹³ When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered; ¹⁴ because you rebelled against My word in the wilderness of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin). ¹⁵ Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying, ¹⁶ Let Yahweh, the God of the

27:2 Considering the low status of women at that time, we see here a commendable spirit of initiative and spiritual ambition for these women to dare ask a male dominated society to change their rules to allow them to have an inheritance. We see too how God and Moses weren't at all anti-women, and responded positively. Note how the women were allowed to come directly to the decision makers, without needing to appoint a male representative for their case, as was common in surrounding cultures. The value of the human person is consistently seen throughout the Pentateuch. They asked about this matter *before* the land had been possessed, reflecting their strength of faith that God would fulfil His promise of giving His people the Kingdom; they imagined what it would be like there, and acted accordingly even before they got there, as if the land was already theirs in possession – just as we should.

27:11 One wonders why this statute had not been included within the Law of Moses. Perhaps God had reserved it in potential, waiting the initiative of these women?

27:13 Moses seeing the promised land but being unable to enter it himself points to how the Law of Moses gave a view of salvation, but couldn't bring people into it.

27:16 We see here Moses' selflessness, his concern was always for the wellbeing of

spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, ¹⁷ who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of Yahweh be not as sheep which have no shepherd. ¹⁸ Yahweh said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; ¹⁹ and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and commission him in their sight. ²⁰ You shall put of your honour on him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may obey. ²¹ He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Yahweh. At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel

with him, even all the congregation. ²² Moses did as Yahweh commanded him; and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; ²³ and he laid his hands on him, and commissioned him, as Yahweh spoke by Moses.

CHAPTER 28 Apr. 10

Commands about Sacrifices

Repeated

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Command the children of Israel, and tell them, ‘My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Me, you shall observe to offer to Me in their due season’. ³ You shall tell them, ‘This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer to Yahweh: male lambs a year old without blemish, two day by day, for a continual

God’s people rather than his own status. He didn’t ask for one of his own family members to take over the leadership; for he realized that spiritual leadership must be based upon spiritual qualification, not family connection.

27:17 *Be not as sheep which have no shepherd* – Quoted by Jesus about the crowds of Israelites in the first century (Mt. 9:36). He clearly saw those confused and misguided people, with all their wrong beliefs and attitudes, as still the congregation of God. We also learn from what Moses says and the Lord’s approval of it that God’s people need shepherds. There is an undoubted teaching regarding the need for leadership / shepherding throughout the Bible. When God’s people are leaderless, they go astray.

27:18 Because Joshua had the Spirit, Moses was told to lay his hand on him. Yet Dt. 34:9 says that Moses laid his hand on him so that Joshua might receive the Spirit. Here we see the upward spiral of spirituality at work – those who are of the Spirit are made more spiritual.

28:3 The commands about the continual burnt offering are repeated more frequently and in more detail in the Law of Moses than those about anything else or any other offering. It’s as if God perceived the likely tendency of His people to forget the regular sacrifices and focus instead on the occasional ones; and to disregard the commands about the grain offering, which was so small and yet so valuable to God. It is likewise continually stressed in the legislation that these continual sacrifices were “a pleasant aroma to Me” (:2). Spirituality is about daily discipline, not occasional acts of devotion; hourly prayer, daily Bible reading, constant spiritual mindedness, rather than occasional attendance at a church meeting. When God later asked Israel “Did you offer

burnt offering. ⁴ You shall offer the one lamb in the morning and you shall offer the other lamb at evening; ⁵ with the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil. ⁶ It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in Mount Sinai for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ⁷ Its drink offering shall be the fourth part of a hin for the one lamb. You shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to Yahweh in the holy place. ⁸ The other lamb you shall offer at evening. As the grain offering of the morning, and as the drink offering of it, you shall offer it, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. ⁹ On the Sabbath day two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and the drink offering of it: ¹⁰ this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering of it. ¹¹ In the beginnings of your months you shall offer a burnt offering to Yahweh: two young bulls, and one ram, seven male lambs a year old without

blemish; ¹² and three tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull; and two tenth parts of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram; ¹³ and a tenth part of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering to every lamb; for a burnt offering of a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ¹⁴ Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, and the third part of a hin for the ram, and the fourth part of a hin for a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. ¹⁵ One male goat for a sin offering to Yahweh; it shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering of it.

The Passover and Firstfruits

¹⁶ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, is Yahweh's Passover. ¹⁷ On the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. ¹⁸ In the first day shall be a holy gathering: you shall do no servile work; ¹⁹ but you shall offer an offering made by fire, a burnt of-

unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (Am. 5:25; Acts 7:42), the answer implied is that no, they did not. Hence this repetition here at the end of the wilderness journey. The whole purpose of their being given Canaan was so that they would have an environment in which to keep God's laws (Ps. 105:45). Likewise with us – if we're not interested in keeping God's principles in this life, there will be little point in our being given the Kingdom, which is likewise an arena in which we can live perfectly according to His principles.

28:9 Here for the only time in the Law it is pointed out that the Sabbath sacrifices must include a grain offering, although this principle had been given in 15:3. The theme of this chapter is that the small offerings mustn't be forgotten nor minimized in importance.

fering to Yahweh: two young bulls, and one ram, and seven male lambs a year old; they shall be to you without blemish; ²⁰ and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil: you shall offer three tenth parts for a bull, and two tenth parts for the ram. ²¹ You shall offer a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs; ²² and one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. ²³ You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering. ²⁴ In this way you shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of the offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. It shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering of it. ²⁵ On the seventh day you shall have a holy gathering: you shall do no servile work. ²⁶ Also in the day of the first fruits, when you offer a new grain offering to Yahweh in your feast of weeks, you shall have a holy gathering; you shall do no servile work; ²⁷ but you shall offer a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs a year old; ²⁸ and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for each bull, two tenth parts for the one ram, ²⁹ a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs; ³⁰ one male goat, to make atonement for you. ³¹ Besides

the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, you shall offer them (they shall be to you without blemish), and their drink offerings.

CHAPTER 29 Apr. 11

The Day of Atonement

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy gathering. You shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing of trumpets to you. ² You shall offer a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; ³ and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for the bull, two tenth parts for the ram, ⁴ and one tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs; ⁵ and one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you; ⁶ besides the burnt offering of the new moon, and the grain offering of it, and the continual burnt offering and the grain offering of it, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh. ⁷ On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy gathering; and you shall afflict your souls. You shall do no kind of work; ⁸ but you shall offer a burnt offering to Yahweh for a pleasant aroma: one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old (they

28:24 *Besides the continual burnt offering* – It is so often stressed, both in this chapter and elsewhere, that these continual offerings mustn't be forgotten about at the time of the greater festivals. See on :3.

28:31 *To you without blemish* – Every animal is blemished in some way, but they were to offer that which in their eyes (“to you”) was without blemish. Whilst we are to offer our best, it's only the best in our eyes, and is only accepted by grace.

shall be to you without blemish);⁹ and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for the bull, two tenth parts for the one ram,¹⁰ a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs;¹¹ one male goat for a sin offering; besides the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and their drink offerings.

The Feast of Tabernacles

¹² On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy gathering. You shall do no servile work, and you shall keep a feast to Yahweh seven days.¹³ You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old; they shall be without blemish;

¹⁴ and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for every bull of the thirteen bulls, two tenth parts for each ram of the two rams,¹⁵ and a tenth part for every lamb of the fourteen lambs;¹⁶ and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it.¹⁷ On the second day you shall offer twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish;¹⁸ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance;¹⁹ and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and their drink offerings.²⁰ On the third day eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen

29:11 *One male goat for a sin offering* – This additional sin offering on the day of Atonement isn't mentioned in the previous legislation about the day of Atonement in Lev. 16. Because Israel had failed to keep the sacrifices during the wilderness journey as they should have done (so Am. 5:25 implies), God now at the end of the wilderness journey added more sacrifices to be kept. Perhaps the Israelite was to see in this male goat a symbol of himself, worthy only of rejection – the goat being a symbol of the rejected in Mt. 25:33; and the “sin offering of atonement” as representative of the whole community's unforgiven sins. This is the great paradox – that those who consider themselves rejected will be accepted, and those who think of themselves as accepted in their own strength will be rejected. The Lord's right hand is our left hand, and vice versa, if we imagine ourselves standing before Him. Those who put themselves to *their* right hand, i.e. justify themselves, are putting themselves at His left hand; and vice versa (Mt. 25:34).

29:13 In total, the feast of Tabernacles required 70 oxen to be sacrificed. Far more animals were sacrificed in this feast than for any other. Yet this was the feast of joy – teaching that true happiness is related to sacrifice to God, rather than keeping for ourselves.

29:19 Each day of their rejoicing in God's grace toward them, Israel were to offer a sin offering as a reminder of the fact they were sinners, and all God's blessings toward them were given to a sinful people. We must never let slip our recognition of our sinfulness before God, and unworthiness in ourselves of His blessings.

male lambs a year old without blemish; ²¹ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance; ²² and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it. ²³ On the fourth day ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish; ²⁴ their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance; ²⁵ and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it. ²⁶ On the fifth day nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish; ²⁷ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance; ²⁸ and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it. ²⁹ On the sixth day eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish; ³⁰ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the

ordinance; ³¹ and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offerings of it. ³² On the seventh day seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish; ³³ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance; ³⁴ and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it. ³⁵ On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly: you shall do no servile work; ³⁶ but you shall offer a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; ³⁷ their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the ordinance; ³⁸ and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it. ³⁹ You shall offer these to Yahweh in your set feasts, besides your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings'. ⁴⁰ Moses told the children of Israel

29:39 *Besides your vows, and your freewill offerings* – God envisaged that at the time the whole community were engaged in extra special devotion to Him, the individual might still wish to make a private sacrifice. We can't ride into God's Kingdom on the back of others, e.g. our family members or our church. Our collective devotions shouldn't lead us to think that God doesn't seek our private freewill dedication to Him.

according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses.

CHAPTER 30 Apr. 11

The Vows of Women

Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded. ² When a man vows a vow to Yahweh, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. ³ Also when a woman vows a vow to Yahweh and binds herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth, ⁴ and her father hears her vow and her bond with which she has bound her soul, and her father holds his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond with which she has bound her soul shall stand. ⁵ But if her father disallow her in the day that he hears,

none of her vows or of her bonds with which she has bound her soul shall stand; and Yahweh will forgive her, because her father disallowed her. ⁶ If she has a husband while her vows are on her, or the rash utterance of her lips with which she has bound her soul, ⁷ and her husband hears it, and hold his peace at her in the day that he hears it; then her vows shall stand, and her bonds with which she has bound her soul shall stand. ⁸ But if her husband forbids her in the day that he hears it, then he shall make void her vow which is on her, and the rash utterance of her lips with which she has bound her soul; and Yahweh will forgive her. ⁹ But the vow of a widow, or of her who is divorced, everything with which she has bound her soul, shall stand against her. ¹⁰ If she vowed in her husband's house or bound her soul by a bond with an oath ¹¹ and her husband heard it,

30:3 Girls married young in Semitic cultures of the time, usually in their teens. God here foresaw the possibility of a young girl wanting to do something extra special for Him. In contemporary religions, active participation in religion was typically something for older males. But such is God's value of the human person that He eagerly anticipated young people, even children, making a special act of devotion to Him on their own initiative. Mary's teenage ambition to become the mother of Messiah is the supreme example to today's youngsters, growing up as they do in a world where self-ism ambition is the order of the day as never before.

30:7 The simple principle established here is that there are times when silence means consent. The Proverbs wisely advise us not to meddle in others' business and to hold our tongue in some cases. But there are other times when not to speak up can have damaging consequences upon others, especially those less mature than ourselves.

30:9 A divorced woman was counted as genuinely single; the sin of marriage breakup is in the factors leading to the breakup of the marriage, but afterwards the person is seen by God as single. Divorce under the Law of Moses was possible only for adultery, and adultery was punishable by death. Yet God foresaw that there would be women who had done this and yet remained alive by grace, or who had been falsely accused; and correctly imagined that such women would love to make a freewill dedication of themselves to Him.

and held his peace at her, and didn't disallow her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond with which she bound her soul shall stand. ¹² But if her husband made them null and void in the day that he heard them, then whatever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand. Her husband has made them void; and Yahweh will forgive her. ¹³ Every vow and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it or her husband may make it void. ¹⁴ But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day, then he establishes all her vows, or all her bonds which are on her. He has established them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them. ¹⁵ But if he shall make them null and void after that he has heard them, then he shall bear her iniquity. ¹⁶ These are the statutes, which Yahweh commanded Moses, between a man and his wife and between a father and his daughter, being in her youth, in her father's house.

31:2 *Avenge the children of Israel* – But in :3 we read of avenging Yahweh. The insults against God's people are against Him. Many of His children struggle today with a sense of justice not having been done to them, and a desire to see some level of justice or vengeance against their abusers. This day will come, if indeed the injustice has been done to us because of our devotion to God; because whatever is done to God's people is done to Him.

31:5 12,000 was a small army compared to what could have been raised – for there were over 600,000 fighting men numbered amongst Israel at this time. But throughout His military history, God has taken special pleasure in using small numbers to defeat far larger ones, and that principle continues in how He works today.

31:6 God chose Phinehas the priest to be the army commander, whereas Joshua was the more obvious human choice for that job at this time. But God wished to demonstrate that it is spiritual principle which must lead His people rather than human strength and appropriacy. It was Phinehas who had so well perceived the spiritual danger of the Moabites earlier (25:7).

CHAPTER 31 Apr. 12

War with Midian

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Avenge the children of Israel for the Midianites. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people. ³ Moses spoke to the people, saying, Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian, to execute Yahweh's vengeance on Midian. ⁴ Of every tribe one thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, you shall send to the war. ⁵ So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. ⁶ Moses sent them one thousand of every tribe to the war, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. ⁷ They warred against Midian, as Yahweh commanded Moses; and they killed every male. ⁸ They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain: Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian:

Balaam also the son of Beor they killed with the sword. ⁹ The children of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their livestock, and all their flocks, and all their goods, they took for a prey. ¹⁰ All their cities in the places in which they lived, and all their encampments, they burnt with fire. ¹¹ They took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of animal. ¹² They brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab which are by the Jordan at Jericho. ¹³ Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them outside of the camp. ¹⁴ Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds who came from the service of the war. ¹⁵ Moses said to them, Have you saved all the women alive? ¹⁶ Behold, these caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Yahweh in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Yahweh. ¹⁷ Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. ¹⁸ But all

the girls, who have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. ¹⁹ Encamp outside of the camp seven days: whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your captives. ²⁰ As to every garment, and all that is made of skin, and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood, you shall purify yourselves. ²¹ Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who went to the battle, This is the statute of the law which Yahweh has commanded Moses: ²² whatever gold, silver, brass, iron, tin and lead, ²³ everything that may withstand the fire you shall make to go through the fire, and it shall be clean; nevertheless it shall be purified with the water for impurity; and all that doesn't withstand the fire you shall make to go through the water. ²⁴ You shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean; and afterward you shall come into the camp.

Dividing the Spoils of War

²⁵ Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁶ Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of animal, you, and Eleazar the priest, and the heads of the fathers' households of the congregation; ²⁷ and divide the

31:15 Moses was distressed that the Israelite army had failed to perceive the spiritual reason for the battle – it was to stop the Midianites posing a temptation to Israel with their women as they had in chapter 25. Sometimes God's people can fight His battles and even be given victory, whilst failing to perceive the spiritual intent behind the war.

31:27 *And all the congregation* – This kind of policy of sharing the spoils of war with the congregation was repeated in Israelite history (1 Sam. 30:24,25; Ps. 68:12).

prey into two parts between the men skilled in war who went out to battle, and all the congregation. ²⁸ Levy a tribute to Yahweh of the men of war who went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys, and of the flocks. ²⁹ Take it of their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest, for Yahweh's wave offering. ³⁰ Of the children of Israel's half, you shall take one drawn out of every fifty, of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys, and of the flocks, of all the livestock, and give them to the Levites, who perform the duty of the tabernacle of Yahweh. ³¹ Moses and Eleazar the priest did as Yahweh commanded Moses. ³² Now the prey over and above the booty which the men of war took, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, ³³ seventy-two thousand head of cattle, ³⁴ sixty-one thousand donkeys ³⁵ and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of the women who had not known man by lying with him. ³⁶ The half, which was the portion of those who went out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep; ³⁷ and Yahweh's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five. ³⁸ The cattle were thirty-

six thousand, of which Yahweh's tribute was seventy-two. ³⁹ The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which Yahweh's tribute was sixty-one. ⁴⁰ The persons were sixteen thousand, of whom Yahweh's tribute was thirty-two persons. ⁴¹ Moses gave the tribute which was Yahweh's wave offering to Eleazar the priest, as Yahweh commanded Moses. ⁴² Of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided off from the men who warred ⁴³ (now the congregation's half was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep, ⁴⁴ and thirty-six thousand head of cattle, ⁴⁵ and thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, ⁴⁶ and sixteen thousand persons), ⁴⁷ even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one drawn out of every fifty, both of man and of animal, and gave them to the Levites, who performed the duty of the tabernacle of Yahweh; as Yahweh commanded Moses. ⁴⁸ The officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, came near to Moses; ⁴⁹ and they said to Moses, Your servants have taken the sum of the men of war who are under our command, and there lacks not one man of us. ⁵⁰ We have

It ensured that the minority called upon to do highly visible and humanly heroic work didn't do it for themselves nor to settle their own scores, but always with an eye to benefitting the community of God's people.

31:49 *Your servants* – It's usual for military men to consider themselves as an elite in their own right. But these leading military leaders considered themselves as nothing but servants to their spiritual leader. Humility in leadership is vital amongst God's people.

31:50 *To make atonement for our souls* – Even in times of spiritual victory, we are to never lose sight of our basic sinfulness and need for atonement with God.

brought Yahweh's offering, what every man has gotten, of jewels of gold, armlets, and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces, to make atonement for our souls before Yahweh. ⁵¹ Moses and Eleazar the priest took their gold, even all the worked jewels. ⁵² All the gold of the wave offering that they offered up to Yahweh, of the captains of thousands and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. ⁵³ (The men of war had taken booty, every man for himself.) ⁵⁴ Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds and brought it into the Tent of Meeting, for a memorial for the children of Israel before Yahweh.

CHAPTER 32 Ap. 13

Reuben and Gad Seek Immediate Inheritance

Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock. When

they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead that behold, the place was a place for livestock. ² The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the princes of the congregation, saying, ³ Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Sebam, and Nebo, and Beon, ⁴ the land which Yahweh struck before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock. ⁵ They said, If we have found favour in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Don't bring us over the Jordan. ⁶ Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brothers go to the war, and shall you sit here? ⁷ Why do you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which Yahweh has given them? ⁸ Your fathers did so when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. ⁹ For when they went

32:3 These place names occur in the later Old Testament, but always with reference to the fact that Gentiles lived there. So Reuben and Gad's short term desire for inheritance didn't last for long; subsequent generations lost those lands. Although they changed the names of these cities (:38), their original names evidently stayed with them because the Gentiles re-took them from Reuben and Gad.

32:5 *Don't bring us over the Jordan* – They said this to Moses, who so dearly wished to enter the land but wasn't able to. The paradox is obvious and intentional; Moses could easily have answered their request with reference to it, but he omits all personal reference, in his selfless way; and focuses instead on the impact their choice would have on God's people as a whole. For their salvation and not his own was uppermost in his mind.

32:7 Our attitudes to possessing the Kingdom affect others; if we don't want to go over ourselves, we will discourage others. The power of example is far greater than we realize. Jesus may have referred to this incident when He condemned the Pharisees for not entering the Kingdom of God themselves and not sending forth others on their way there either (Mt. 23:13 Gk.).

up to the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which Yahweh had given them.¹⁰ Yahweh's anger was kindled in that day, and He swore, saying,¹¹ 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me -¹² except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, because they have followed Yahweh completely'.¹³ Yahweh's anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander back and forth in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, who had done evil in the sight of Yahweh, was consumed.¹⁴ Behold, you have risen up in your fathers' place, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of Yahweh toward Israel.¹⁵ For if you turn away from after Him, He will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all this people.¹⁶ They came near to him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones;¹⁷ but we ourselves

will be ready armed to go before the children of Israel, until we have brought them to their place, and our little ones shall dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.¹⁸ We will not return to our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.¹⁹ For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan, and forward, because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side of the Jordan eastward.²⁰ Moses said to them, If you will do this thing, if you will arm yourselves to go before Yahweh to the war,²¹ and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before Yahweh, until He has driven out His enemies from before Him,²² and the land is subdued before Yahweh; then afterward you shall return, and be guiltless towards Yahweh, and towards Israel; and this land shall be to you for a possession before Yahweh.²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against Yahweh; and be sure your sin will find you out.²⁴ Build cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which has proceeded out of your mouth.²⁵ The children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke

32:15 At first sight this may appear unreasonable – that the whole community would be punished for the sake of the sin and short-termist thinking of two tribes. But the eternal wellbeing of others is in our hands in that our example can discourage others from entering the Kingdom, and God may not compensate for our causing them to stumble.

32:17 *Until we have brought them to their place* – They thought that their human strength would give Israel their inheritance, whereas God had promised that *He* and not they (*“we”*) would give the inheritance. Moses therefore corrects them by saying that *God* will drive out “His enemies from before Him” (:21). It was exactly because they failed to believe that *God* would do this that they preferred to stay the other side of Jordan and not enter Canaan; and they wished to share that attitude with others.

to Moses, saying, Your servants will do as my lord commands. ²⁶ Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock, shall be there in the cities of Gilead; ²⁷ but your servants will pass over, every man who is armed for war, before Yahweh to battle, as my lord says. ²⁸ So Moses commanded concerning them to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' households of the tribes of the children of Israel. ²⁹ Moses said to them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan, every man who is armed to battle, before Yahweh, and the land shall be subdued before you; then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession; ³⁰ but if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. ³¹ The children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered saying, As Yahweh has said to your servants, so will we do. ³² We will pass over armed before Yahweh into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us beyond the Jordan. ³³ Moses gave to them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of

the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land according to its cities and borders, even the cities of the surrounding land. ³⁴ The children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer, ³⁵ and Atrothshophan, and Jazer, and Jogbehah, ³⁶ and Beth Nimrah, and Beth Haran: fortified cities, and folds for sheep. ³⁷ The children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kiriathaim, ³⁸ and Nebo, and Baal Meon, (their names being changed), and Sibmah; and they gave other names to the cities which they built. ³⁹ The children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were therein. ⁴⁰ Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he lived therein. ⁴¹ Jair the son of Manasseh went and took his towns, and called them Havvoth Jair. ⁴² Nobah went and took Kenath, and its villages, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

CHAPTER 33 Apr. 14

The Itinerary of Israel's Journeys

These are the journeys of the children of Israel, when they went forth out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. ² Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of

32:38 *Their names being changed* – Nebo and Baal were the names of Canaanite gods, and Yahweh forbade His people to even mention their names (Ex. 23:13; Hos. 2:17). The principle for us is that we shouldn't surround ourselves with things which even suggest or stimulate the idea of being anything other than totally dedicated to the one true God, or which may trigger the idea of idolatry.

33:2 Moses kept this record of their journeys in the spirit of how God commanded His people to each one remember the way by which God had brought them out from Egypt

Yahweh, and these are their journeys according to their goings out. ³ They travelled from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians, ⁴ while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom Yahweh had struck among them. On their gods also Yahweh executed judgments. ⁵ The children of Israel travelled from Rameses, and encamped in Succoth. ⁶ They travelled from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. ⁷ They travelled from Etham, and turned back to Pihahiroth, which is before Baal Zephon: and they encamped before Migdol. ⁸ They travelled from before Hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness; and

they went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and encamped in Marah. ⁹ They travelled from Marah, and came to Elim. In Elim were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there. ¹⁰ They travelled from Elim, and encamped by the Red Sea. ¹¹ They travelled from the Red Sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. ¹² They travelled from the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. ¹³ They travelled from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush. ¹⁴ They travelled from Alush, and encamped in Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. ¹⁵ They travelled from Rephidim, and encamped in the wilderness of Sinai. ¹⁶ They travelled from the wilderness of Sinai, and encamped in Kibroth Hattaavah. ¹⁷ They travelled from Kibroth Hattaavah, and encamped in

to Canaan (Dt. 8:2). We need to keep at least a mental diary of how God has led us in our lives, to look back with feelings of gratitude and grace as we see how He has led us, how life for us is no mere succession of chance events, but has a definite direction and end point in entering the Kingdom.

Their goings out – The Hebrew word is used about the entire 'going out' of Israel from Egypt to the promised land. Our total journey from the world through the Red Sea of baptism to the Kingdom of God involves much wandering, backwards and forwards (32:13). But it's all under God's control and part of our total exodus from Egypt to the Kingdom. Although humanly the journey was a zig-zag and circular route, it is described in Ps. 107:7 as a "right" or 'straight' way – from God's perspective.

33:4 *On their gods also Yahweh executed judgments* – Each of the plagues targeted a specific Egyptian god, and it seems that on Passover night something dramatic happened to all the gods – maybe the idols to them fell over or were destroyed. Yet Israel still took the gods of Egypt with them through the Red Sea and worshipped them on the wilderness journey (Ez. 20:7; Acts 7:43). The pull of idolatry is against all reason, and yet there is such a strong tendency within us not to devote ourselves to only one God.

33:8 Their dramatic passage through the Red Sea is described in the same way as any other stage on their journey; our baptism into Christ is our Red Sea crossing (1 Cor. 10:1,2), but the other stages of our journey are no less led by God and part of our final deliverance into His Kingdom.

Hazereth. ¹⁸ They travelled from Hazereth, and encamped in Rithmah. ¹⁹ They travelled from Rithmah, and encamped in Rimmon Perez. ²⁰ They travelled from Rimmon Perez, and encamped in Libnah. ²¹ They travelled from Libnah, and encamped in Rissah. ²² They travelled from Rissah, and encamped in Kehelathah. ²³ They travelled from Kehelathah, and encamped in Mount Shepher. ²⁴ They travelled from Mount Shepher, and encamped in Haradah. ²⁵ They travelled from Haradah, and encamped in Makheloth. ²⁶ They travelled from Makheloth, and encamped in Tahath. ²⁷ They travelled from Tahath, and encamped in Terah. ²⁸ They travelled from Terah, and encamped in Mithkah. ²⁹ They travelled from Mithkah, and encamped in Hashmonah. ³⁰ They travelled from Hashmonah, and encamped in Moseroth. ³¹ They travelled from Moseroth, and encamped in Bene Jaakan. ³² They travelled from Bene Jaakan, and encamped in Hor Haggidgad. ³³ They travelled from Hor Haggidgad, and encamped in Jotbathah. ³⁴ They travelled from Jotbathah, and encamped in Abronah. ³⁵ They travelled from Abronah, and encamped in Ezion Geber. ³⁶ They travelled from Ezion Geber, and encamped in the wilderness of Zin (the same is Kadesh). ³⁷ They travelled from Kadesh, and encamped in Mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom. ³⁸ Aaron the priest went up into Mount Hor at the commandment of Yahweh and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel

had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first day of the month. ³⁹ Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died in Mount Hor. ⁴⁰ The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel. ⁴¹ They travelled from Mount Hor and encamped in Zalmonah. ⁴² They travelled from Zalmonah, and encamped in Punon. ⁴³ They travelled from Punon, and encamped in Obboth. ⁴⁴ They travelled from Obboth, and encamped in Iye Abarim, in the border of Moab. ⁴⁵ They travelled from Iyim, and encamped in Dibon Gad. ⁴⁶ They travelled from Dibon Gad, and encamped in Almon Diblathaim. ⁴⁷ They travelled from Almon Diblathaim, and encamped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. ⁴⁸ They travelled from the mountains of Abarim, and encamped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. ⁴⁹ They encamped by the Jordan, from Beth Jeshimoth even to Abel Shittim in the plains of Moab.

Another Appeal to Destroy Canaanite Idols

⁵⁰ Yahweh spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, ⁵¹ Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ⁵² then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their stone idols, destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places. ⁵³ You shall take possession of the land

and dwell therein; for I have given the land to you to possess it. ⁵⁴ You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to any man, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. ⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those you let remain of them will be as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will harass you in the land in which you dwell. ⁵⁶ It shall happen that as I thought to do to them, so will I do to you.

CHAPTER 34 Ap. 15

The Borders of the Land

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ² Command the children

of Israel, and tell them, ‘When you come into the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan according to its borders), ³ then your south side shall be from the wilderness of Zin along by the side of Edom, and your south border shall be from the end of the Salt Sea eastward; ⁴ and your border shall turn about southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, and pass along to Zin; and the goings out of it shall be southward of Kadesh Barnea; and it shall go forth to Hazar Addar, and pass along to Azmon; ⁵ and the border shall turn about from Azmon to the brook of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea. ⁶ For the western border, you shall have the great sea and its border: this shall be your west border. ⁷ This shall be your north border: from the great sea you

33:55 What can appear mere harmless associations with the world can in the end destroy us. Whilst we are to be in this world in the same sense as the Lord Jesus was, mixing and identifying with them to bring them too to God, the basic principle of separation from unbelievers must never be forgotten.

33:56 *As I thought to do to them, so will I do to you* – That is, drive them out of the land. And this is what happened to Israel. There is a theme in the Bible that the judgments of this world will come upon the unfaithful amongst the children of God; there’s a need to be radically different from this world or else we will share this world’s condemnation (1 Cor. 11:32; Rev. 18:4).

34:2 The land promised to Abraham was from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea, but here God redefines it as much smaller. He perhaps perceived that they simply didn’t have the spiritual vision to possess that vast area. There is so much made possible for us in prospect; maybe we will ultimately receive less than we could have had because of our limited vision in this life. Yet He encouraged the people to go exploring beyond the bounds which He here gave them, right up to the Euphrates, promising to give them whatever land they walked upon (Dt. 11:24). It seems none rose up to that challenge. God invites His people to assume that they would receive this land and make preparations as if they had – for at this time they had not yet crossed Jordan into it. We are likewise asked to believe that we have been moved into the sphere of the Kingdom of God’s Son, and have received an inheritance by reason of our being in Him (Col. 1:13; Eph. 1:11).

shall mark out for you Mount Hor;⁸ from Mount Hor you shall mark out to the entrance of Hamath; and the goings out of the border shall be at Zedad;⁹ and the border shall go forth to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar Enan; this shall be your north border.¹⁰ You shall mark out your east border from Hazar Enan to Shepham;¹¹ and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down, and shall reach to the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward;¹² and the border shall go down to the Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land according to its borders around it’.

The Division of the Land

¹³ Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which Yahweh has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe;¹⁴ for the tribe of the children of Reuben according to their fathers’ families and the tribe of the children of Gad according to their fathers’ families, have received, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received, their inheritance.¹⁵ The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise.¹⁶ Yahweh spoke to Moses saying,¹⁷ These are the names of the men who shall di-

vide the land to you for inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun.¹⁸ You shall take one prince of every tribe to divide the land for inheritance.¹⁹ These are the names of the men: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.²⁰ Of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud.²¹ Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon.²² Of the tribe of the children of Dan a prince, Bukki the son of Jogli.²³ Of the children of Joseph: of the tribe of the children of Manasseh a prince, Hanniel the son of Ephod.²⁴ Of the tribe of the children of Ephraim a prince, Kemuel the son of Shiptan.²⁵ Of the tribe of the children of Zebulun a prince, Elizaphan the son of Parnach.²⁶ Of the tribe of the children of Issachar a prince, Paltiel the son of Azzan.²⁷ Of the tribe of the children of Asher a prince, Ahihud the son of Shelomi.²⁸ Of the tribe of the children of Naphtali a prince, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.²⁹ These are they whom Yahweh commanded to divide the inheritance to the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

CHAPTER 35 Apr. 16

Cities for the Levites

Yahweh spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying,² Command the children of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their

34:14, 15 The triple emphasis here that those who chose immediate inheritance east of Jordan had already received their inheritance may be behind Christ’s triple emphasis that some “have their reward” in this life rather than waiting for the future, eternal reward (Mt. 6:2,5,16).

possession some cities to dwell in, and you shall give suburbs for the cities around them to the Levites. ³ The cities shall they have to dwell in and their suburbs shall be for their livestock, and for their substance, and for all their animals. ⁴ The suburbs of the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be from the wall of the city and outward two thousand cubits around it. ⁵ You shall measure outside of the city for the east side two thousand cubits, and for the south side two thousand cubits, and for the west side two thousand cubits, and for the north side two thousand cubits, the city being in the midst. This shall be to them for the suburbs of the cities. ⁶ The cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to: and besides them you shall give forty-two cities. ⁷ All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities together with their suburbs. ⁸ Concerning the cities which you shall give of the possession of the children of Israel, from the many

you shall take many; and from the few you shall take few. Everyone according to his inheritance which he inherits shall give of his cities to the Levites.

Cities of Refuge

⁹ Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, ¹⁰ Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, "When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ¹¹ then you shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person unknowingly may flee there. ¹² The cities shall be to you for refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment. ¹³ The cities which you shall give shall be for you six cities of refuge. ¹⁴ You shall give three cities beyond the Jordan and you shall give three cities in the land of Canaan. They shall be cities of refuge. ¹⁵ For the children of Israel and for the stranger and for the foreigner living among them, these six cities shall be for refuge; that everyone who kills any person un-

35:2 This meant that the Levites were divided amongst the 12 tribes of Israel, enabling them to teach God's ways to the whole nation (Lev. 10:11; Dt. 33:9,10). In this way, the curse upon Levi that his children would be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7) turned into a blessing for all – and God so loves to work in this way, using the consequences of sin to bring about His work, purpose and glory.

35:15 We are all in the position of the person who unintentionally killed another person and is therefore liable to death. We have all sinned, and yet as it were in the spirit of how Paul describes our sin in Romans 7 – committed against our better intentions. Heb. 6:18 speaks of us fleeing for refuge into Christ – suggesting we are the one who flees after committing manslaughter, and becoming "in Christ" by baptism is our entry into Him as our city of refuge. But we must abide in Him – for if we leave Him then we are liable to death (:26). And our final salvation from the effects of sin is guaranteed by the death of the High Priest, the Lord Jesus (:25).

intentionally may flee there. ¹⁶ But if he struck him with an instrument of iron, so that he died, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁷ If he struck him with a stone in the hand, by which a man may die, and he died, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ Or if he struck him with a weapon of wood in the hand, by which a man may die, and he died, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁹ The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death. When he meets him, he shall put him to death. ²⁰ If he thrust him from hatred, or hurled at him, lying in wait, so that he died, ²¹ or in enmity struck him with his hand, so that he died; he who struck him shall surely be put to death; he is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. ²² But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or hurled on him anything without lying in wait, ²³ or with any stone, by which a man may die, not seeing him, and

cast it on him, so that he died, and he was not his enemy, neither sought his harm; ²⁴ then the congregation shall judge between the striker and the avenger of blood according to these ordinances; ²⁵ and the congregation shall deliver the manslayer out of the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge, where he was fled. He shall dwell therein until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil. ²⁶ But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the border of his city of refuge where he flees, ²⁷ and the avenger of blood find him outside of the border of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kill the manslayer; he shall not be guilty of blood, ²⁸ because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; but after the death of the high priest the manslayer shall return into the land of his possession. ²⁹ These things shall be for a statute and ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

35:19 The idea of blood vendettas, whereby a family member of the murdered has a legal right to hunt and kill the murderer, is widespread in primitive societies. Yet the Law of Moses seems to make provision for it. Seeing that God is presented as the ultimate avenger (see on 31:2), this may seem strange. Instead of grace and forgiveness being inculcated, revenge seems allowed. Yet the desire to repay murder with murder is so great within primitive society that it seems God made a concession to this weakness, and allowed it, whilst seeking to control it from being applied in any wrongful or doubtful context. The fact God makes concessions to human weakness doesn't mean we should eagerly make use of them; the spirit of all God's revelation to us in His word is that we should forgive and leave vengeance to Him.

35:25 The death of the High Priest enabled the 'guilty' person to be totally freed because the principle that death was required to atone for death had been thus fulfilled (:33) – as if in his death, the High Priest was taking upon himself the guilt of the sin of murder, as a total representative of the sinner. In this we see foreshadowed the representative nature of Christ's death for us.

³⁰ Whoever kills any person, the murderer shall be slain at the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person that he die. ³¹ Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death. ³² You shall take no ransom for him who is fled to his city of refuge, that he may come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. ³³ So you shall not pollute the land in which you are: for blood, it pollutes the land; and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him who shed it. ³⁴ You shall not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I, Yahweh, dwell in the midst of the children of Israel’.

CHAPTER 36 Apr. 17

The Need to Marry within the Same Tribe

The heads of the fathers’ households of the family of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before

the princes, the heads of the fathers’ households of the children of Israel.

² They said, Yahweh commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the children of Israel; and my lord was commanded by Yahweh to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. ³ If they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of our fathers, and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe unto which they shall belong: so will it be taken away from the lot of our inheritance.

⁴ When the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they shall belong: so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. ⁵ Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of Yahweh, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks right. ⁶ This is the thing which Yahweh does command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them be married to whom they will; only into the family of the tribe

36:6 *Let them be married to whom they will* – This verse is alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:39, where we read that a Christian widow can marry whom she will but only to someone “in the Lord” – in the same way as the women here could marry whom they wished, but only in the tribe of their fathers, unless they would lose their inheritance permanently. It could be that Paul is teaching that marriage within the faith, to those also “in the Lord” by baptism into Him, is so important that doing otherwise may cause us to lose the promised inheritance of the Kingdom. Marriage within the faith is indeed an important principle and ignoring it often has terrible spiritual consequences. But note that she was free to marry whom *she* wanted – in a culture where arranged marriage was the norm, God valued the dignity and free choice of the woman.

of their father shall they be married.

⁷ So shall no inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for the children of Israel shall all keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. ⁸ Every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may possess every man the inheritance of his fathers. ⁹ So shall no inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; for the tribes of the children of Israel shall each keep his own inher-

itance. ¹⁰ The daughters of Zelophehad did as Yahweh commanded Moses; ¹¹ for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to their father's brothers' sons. ¹² They were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. ¹³ These are the commandments and the ordinances which Yahweh commanded by Moses to the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

DEUTERONOMY

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 18

God Tells Israel to Leave Horeb

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. ² It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. ³ In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that Yahweh had given him in commandment to them, ⁴ after he had struck Sihon the king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth, at Edrei. ⁵ Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to declare this law saying, ⁶ Yahweh our God spoke to us in Horeb saying, You have lived long enough in this mountain; ⁷ turn, and take your

journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the places near there, in the Arabah, in the hill country, in the lowland, in the South and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. ⁸ Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give to them and to their seed after them.

Leaders Appointed

⁹ I spoke to you at that time saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone; ¹⁰ Yahweh your God has multiplied you and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky for multitude. ¹¹ May Yahweh the God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as He has promised you! ¹² How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance

1:2 *It is eleven days' journey* – It took Israel 38 years to complete this journey, but it was only 11 days if they walked directly. Their exit from Egypt through the Red Sea represents our baptism into Christ (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and the wilderness journey is the prototype of our walk to God's Kingdom. We tend to walk around in circles as Israel did, rather than perceiving our end destination clearly and keeping our focus upon it.

1:3 *In the fortieth year* – Moses was now at the end of his life; Israel stood on the borders of the promised land, which he was disallowed from entering. He now gives his swansong, perhaps in the last month or even day of his life he gave Israel the address transcribed for us as 'Deuteronomy', literally 'the second [giving of the] law'. He repeats some of the laws he had previously given them, with some additional comments and clarifications, and shares with them his reflections upon their journey. In this book, therefore, we perceive a man at the point of spiritual maturity.

1:7 *The river Euphrates* – This was the boundary of the land promised to Abraham. But sadly Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to even go there, let alone settle and inherit the land. It may well be that we inherit the Kingdom, but not to the extent that we could do. We in this brief life are deciding the nature of how we will spend eternity.

and your burden and your strife?

¹³ Take wise men of understanding and well known according to your tribes and I will make them heads over you. ¹⁴ You answered me and said, The thing which you have spoken is good to do. ¹⁵ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens and officers, according to your tribes. ¹⁶ I commanded your judges at that time, saying, Hear cases between your brothers and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the foreigner who is living with him. ¹⁷ You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it, ¹⁸ I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.

Spies Sent to Explore the Land

¹⁹ We travelled from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw, by the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as Yahweh our God commanded us, and we came to Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰ I said to you, You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which Yahweh our God gives to us. ²¹ Behold, Yahweh your God has set the land before you; go up, take possession, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed. ²² You came near to me every one of you and said, Let us send men before us that they may search the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities to which we shall come. ²³ The thing pleased me well and I took twelve men of you, one man for every tribe. ²⁴ They turned and went up into the hill country and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out. ²⁵ They took of the fruit of the land

1:22 The sending out of the spies was a concession to human weakness; Num. 13:17-20 says that they were sent in order to find out whether the land of Canaan was a good land, and the feasibility of overcoming the people who lived there. But God had categorically given assurances on these points already; yet Israel preferred to believe the word of men than that of God. However, God made a concession to their weakness, and gave the command to send out the spies (Num. 13:2). But when Israel heard their faithless tales of woe, they decided they didn't want to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them. When we make use of concessions to human weakness, we often end up in situations of temptation which we find too strong for us. The best way is to simply go straight forward in faith in God's word of promise rather than relying on human strength.

1:25 This is a very positive perspective on what the spies said; they said that Canaan was a good land, but the inhabitants of the land were far too strong for Israel, effectively calling God a liar. Moses is very positive about Israel in Deuteronomy. It's a sign of spiritual maturity that we impute righteousness to others and seek to focus on the positive rather than for ever dwelling on the terrible failures of God's people.

in their hands and brought it down to us and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which Yahweh our God gives to us. ²⁶ Yet you wouldn't go up, but rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God, ²⁷ and you murmured in your tents and said, Because Yahweh hated us He has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. ²⁸ Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our heart melt, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to the sky, and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there'. ²⁹ Then I said to you, Don't dread, neither be afraid of them. ³⁰ Yahweh your God who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹ and in the wilderness, where you have seen how Yahweh your God carried you as a man carries his son in all the way that you went, until you came to this place. ³² Yet in this thing you didn't believe Yahweh your God, ³³ Who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day. ³⁴ Yahweh heard the voice of

your words and was angry and swore saying, ³⁵ Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land, which I swore to give to your fathers, ³⁶ except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it and to him I will give the land that he has trodden on, and to his children, because he has wholly followed Yahweh. ³⁷ Also Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes saying, You also shall not go in there. ³⁸ Joshua the son of Nun who stands before you, he shall go in there; encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. ³⁹ Moreover your little ones, whom you said should be a prey, and your children, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there and to them will I give it, and they shall possess it. ⁴⁰ But as for you, turn, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea. ⁴¹ Then you answered and said to me, We have sinned against Yahweh; we will go up and fight, according to all that Yahweh our God commanded us. Every man of you put on his weapons of war and presumed to go up into the hill country. ⁴² Yahweh said to me, Tell them, 'Don't go up, neither fight, for I am not among you, lest you be struck before your enemies'. ⁴³ So I spoke to

1:43 These Israelites who had crossed the Red Sea (cp. our baptism) and were now rejected from God's Kingdom, because they themselves had said they didn't want to inherit it, now wanted more than anything else to be there. This is a major Biblical theme – that the rejected will desperately ask to be allowed in to God's kingdom; the foolish virgins will knock on the closed door begging for it to be opened (Mt. 25:11; Lk. 13:25). Our ultimate destiny is to stand before the Lord wanting to enter His Kingdom with every fibre in our being. But this must be our attitude now, for then it will be too late to change anything.

you and you didn't listen, but you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and were presumptuous and went up into the hill country.⁴⁴ The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you, as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, even to Hormah.⁴⁵ You returned and wept before Yahweh; but Yahweh didn't listen to your voice, nor gave ear to you.⁴⁶ So you stayed in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you remained.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 19

Instructions to Avoid Edom, Moab and Ammon

Then we turned and took our journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea as Yahweh spoke to me, and we circled Mount Seir many days.² Yahweh spoke to me saying,³ You have circled this mountain long enough; turn to the north.⁴ Command the people saying, 'You are to pass through the border of your brothers the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, and they will be afraid of you. Take good heed to yourselves therefore,⁵ don't meddle with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as for the

sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau for a possession.⁶ You shall purchase food of them for money that you may eat, and you shall also buy water of them for money that you may drink'.⁷ For Yahweh your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand; He has known your walking through this great wilderness; these forty years Yahweh your God has been with you and you have lacked nothing.⁸ So we passed by from our brothers the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, from the way of the Arabah from Elath and from Ezion Geber. We turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab.⁹ Yahweh said to me, Don't bother Moab, neither contend with them in battle, for I will not give you of his land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession.¹⁰ (The Emim lived there before, a people great and many and tall as the Anakim;¹¹ these also are accounted Rephaim, as the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim.¹² The Horites also lived in Seir before, but the children of Esau succeeded them, and they destroyed them from before them and lived in their place, as Israel did to the land

2:7 *He has known your walking* – Because God 'knew' Israel's journey through the wilderness, therefore they "lacked nothing". The Hebrew language reflects certain realities about the nature of God's ways. The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide' (Gen. 16:13; 22:8,14; 1 Sam. 16:17;). What this means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things.

2:12 *The children of Esau succeeded them, and they destroyed them from before them and lived in their place* – This history had been arranged by God to encourage His people; if those in the unbelieving world could do this, then how much more could they with God behind them. God arranges our lives so that we sometimes encounter

of his possession, which Yahweh gave to them.)¹³ Now rise up and cross over the brook Zered. We went over the brook Zered.¹⁴ The days in which we came from Kadesh Barnea until we had come over the brook Zered were thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war were consumed from the midst of the camp, as Yahweh swore to them.¹⁵ Moreover the hand of Yahweh was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed.¹⁶ So it happened. When all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people,¹⁷ Yahweh spoke to me saying,¹⁸ You are today to pass over Ar, the border of Moab,¹⁹ and when you come near to the children of Ammon, don't bother them or contend with them, for I will not give you of the land of the children of Ammon for a possession, because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession.²⁰ That also is accounted a land of Rephaim. Rephaim lived there before, but the Ammonites call them

Zamzummim,²¹ a people great and many and tall, as the Anakim; but Yahweh destroyed them before them and they succeeded them and lived in their place,²² as He did for the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them and they succeeded them and lived in their place to this day;²³ and the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came out of Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place.

Sihon King of Heshbon Defeated

²⁴ Rise up, take your journey and pass over the valley of the Arnon. Behold, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite king of Heshbon and his land; begin to possess it and contend with him in battle.²⁵ This day will I begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole sky, who will hear the report of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.²⁶ I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth to

others who without faith in God have achieved great things in their lives – in order to inspire us that if they can do it, how much more can we. See on 2:21.

2:19 *Don't bother them or contend with them* – As also commanded about other areas in :5 and :9. The idea was that Israel weren't to take anything less than the real promised land; they weren't to seek to develop their own kingdom wherever seemed easier and more convenient to them. Likewise we are surrounded by temptation to have our own pseudo-Kingdom of God in this life; but we are to keep focused on the one and only true Kingdom of God which is yet to come.

2:21 If giants weren't a barrier to the children of Lot taking land for a possession, neither should they be for Israel; but they greatly feared them (Num. 13:28,33). If worldly people can achieve as they do, how much more can we with God on our side. See on 2:12.

2:24 *Contend with him* – The implication could be that Moses was disobedient to this and tried to avoid confrontation with him (:27). But we can't ultimately avoid the confrontations which God at times puts in our path (:32).

Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace saying, ²⁷ Let me pass through your land; I will go along by the highway; I will turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. ²⁸ You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on my feet, ²⁹ as the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar, did to me, until I shall pass over the Jordan into the land which Yahweh our God gives us. ³⁰ But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for Yahweh your God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as at this day. ³¹ Yahweh said to me, Behold, I have begun to deliver up Sihon and his land before you; begin to possess, that you may inherit his land. ³² Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz. ³³ Yahweh our God delivered him up before us and we struck him and his sons and all his people. ³⁴ We took all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones. We left none remaining. ³⁵ Only the

livestock we took for a prey to ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we had taken. ³⁶ From Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the valley, to Gilead, there was not a city too high for us; Yahweh our God delivered up all before us. ³⁷ Only to the land of the children of Ammon you didn't come near, all the side of the river Jabbok, and the cities of the hill country, and wherever Yahweh our God forbad us.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 20

Og King of Bashan Defeated

Then we turned and went up the way to Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. ² Yahweh said to me, Don't fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon. ³ So Yahweh our God delivered into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan and all his people, and we struck him until none remained. ⁴ We took all his cities at that time. There was not a city which

2:29 *The land which Yahweh our God gives us* – This phrase or idea occurs many times in Deuteronomy. Moses was urging the people to believe the most basic reality – that God would really give them the promised Kingdom. And we too are likewise continually encouraged by God's word. In this particular example, Moses quite openly tells a Gentile people about their destination, in the same way as we should be unashamed to speak of our hope of the Kingdom to unbelievers.

2:31 *Begin to possess* – Even on our wilderness journey, before we have possessed the Kingdom, we do have some foretastes of that Kingdom; in the same way as Israel began to possess the promised land in some limited sense whilst still in the desert.

3:2 *Into your hand* – God gives us potential victories, but we still have to fight the human battle.

we didn't take from them; sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. ⁵ All these were fortified cities with high walls, gates, and bars, besides the unwall'd towns very many. ⁶ We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones. ⁷ But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took for a prey to ourselves. ⁸ We took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon. ⁹ (The Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir.) ¹⁰ We took all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, to Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. ¹¹ (For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron. Is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was its length and four cubits its breadth, after the cubit of a man.)

Sharing the Land

¹² This land we took in possession at that time: from Aroer which is by the valley of the Arnon, and half the hill country of Gilead and its cities I gave to the Reubenites and to the Ga-

dites; ¹³ and the rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, all of Bashan. (The same is called the land of Rephaim.) ¹⁴ Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob to the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and called them, even Bashan, after his own name, Havvoth Jair, to this day. ¹⁵ I gave Gilead to Machir. ¹⁶ To the Reubenites and to the Gadites I gave from Gilead to the valley of the Arnon, the middle of the valley and its border, to the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon; ¹⁷ the Arabah also, and the Jordan and its border, from Chinnereth to the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah eastward. ¹⁸ I commanded you at that time, saying Yahweh your God has given you this land to possess it; you shall pass over armed before your brothers, the children of Israel, all the men of valor. ¹⁹ But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall live in your cities which I have given you, ²⁰ until Yahweh gives rest to your brothers as to you, and they also possess the land which Yahweh your God gives them beyond the Jordan; then you shall return every man to his possession which I have given you.

3:18 *God has given you this land to possess it* – Moses has just said that *he* gave Israel their land possessions (:12,13,15,16). So often we encounter this kind of thing; Moses loves to emphasize that God is working through him, that he is identified with God and merely His agent doing His work. Likewise the language of God can be applied to all His servants and supremely to His Son. This doesn't mean that they were God in person, neither was Jesus; but it also doesn't mean that we as individuals are meaningless because God is manifest through us.

²¹ I commanded Joshua at that time saying, Your eyes have seen all that Yahweh your God has done to these two kings; so shall Yahweh do to all the kingdoms where you go. ²² You shall not fear them, for Yahweh your God, He it is who fights for you.

Moses Forbidden to Cross the Jordan

²³ I begged Yahweh at that time saying, ²⁴ Lord Yahweh, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to Your works and according to Your mighty acts? ²⁵ Please let me go over and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that good mountain, and Lebanon. ²⁶ But Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes and didn't listen to me; and Yahweh said to me, Let

it suffice you; speak no more to Me of this matter. ²⁷ Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and see with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan. ²⁸ But commission Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go over before this people and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you shall see. ²⁹ So we stayed in the valley over against Beth Peor.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 21

Moses Commands the People to Obey God

Now Israel, listen to the statutes and to the ordinances which I teach you. Do them so that you may live and go in and possess the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers gives you. ² You must not add

3:21 We are given some foretastes of the Kingdom of God even in this life; just as their victories in the wilderness were foretastes of the greater victories they would have against the inhabitants of Canaan.

3:25 Moses knew God well enough to know that He is capable of changing His stated intentions; for Moses had persuaded God not to destroy Israel as He once planned in His wrath. God is open to dialogue, He isn't the impervious 'Allah' of Islam who must be merely submitted to; and this gives our prayer life real energy and zest, knowing that we're not simply firing requests at God in the hope we might get at least some response; we can dialogue with God, wrestling in prayer over specific, concrete situations and requests.

3:26 *For your sakes* – Moses says this several times. Although he spoke Deuteronomy in his spiritual maturity at the end of his life, it could be argued that like all of us, he died with some spiritual point of weakness; and in his case it would have been his failure to own up fully to his sin of striking the rock, still blaming it on others even at the end of his life. But Moses will be saved; without any complacency, we all the same shouldn't think that we won't be saved because we have weaknesses we failed to overcome, and likewise we shouldn't assume others won't be saved because they can't recognize what to us is an obvious failure in their behaviour or personality.

4:2 *So that you may keep the commandments* – The last message of Jesus, like that of Moses, emphasizes we are not to add to nor subtract from God's word (Rev. 22:19).

to the word which I command you, neither must you take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you. ³ Your eyes have seen what Yahweh did because of Baal Peor; for all the men who followed Baal Peor, Yahweh your God has destroyed them from the midst of you. ⁴ But you who were faithful to Yahweh your God are all alive this day. ⁵ Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as Yahweh my God commanded me, that you should do so in the midst of the land where you go in to possess it. ⁶ Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations who shall hear

all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people! ⁷ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to them as Yahweh our God is whenever we call on Him? ⁸ What great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? ⁹ Only take heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes saw and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; therefore make them known to your children and your children's children. ¹⁰ Remember the day that you stood before Yahweh your God in Horeb, when Yahweh said to me Assemble me the people and I will

The commandments we have been given are designed by God to be a system of living which brings us to Him as He wishes. Jesus was perfect before God not just because He kept the commandments fully, but because the life elicited by that obedience produced a totally God-like person. If we omit some commandments and add others, then this will not be the end result. They are intended to synthesize together to produce a truly spiritual character and way of life. If we ignore some of them and add others then we will actually find obedience to the commandments *in toto* far more difficult. See on 11:22.

4:9, 29, 39 *Your heart* – Time and again in Deuteronomy, Moses speaks of the state of the *heart*. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This was perhaps his greatest wish as he faced death; that God's people should develop a spiritual *mind* and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. He saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? There is so much in our modern world which is mind-corrupting. Perceiving the importance of spiritual mindedness is a sign of our spiritual maturity.

Therefore make them known to your children – The very process of teaching or explaining something to others makes us fully conscious of the material we are teaching; and so preaching or teaching our children God's principles enables us to be the more conscious of them and to ourselves remember them. The whole concept of evangelization is partly for our benefit.

4:10 The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole

make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the land and that they may teach their children. ¹¹ You came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of the sky, with darkness, cloud and thick darkness. ¹² Yahweh spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the voice of words, but you saw no form; you only heard a voice. ¹³ He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments, and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴ Yahweh commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances that you might do them in the land you go over to possess.

Idols Forbidden

¹⁵ Take therefore good heed to yourselves, for you saw no kind of form on the day that Yahweh spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire.

¹⁶ Do not corrupt yourselves and make yourself an engraved image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷ the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies

in the sky, ¹⁸ the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. ¹⁹ Do not lift up your eyes to the sky and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the army of the sky, be drawn away and worship them and serve them, which Yahweh your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole sky. ²⁰ But Yahweh has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to Him a people of inheritance, right up to this day. ²¹ Furthermore, Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes and swore that I should not go over the Jordan, and that I should not go in to that good land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance; ²² but I must die in this land. I must not go over the Jordan; but you shall go over and possess that good land. ²³ Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of Yahweh your God which He made with you, and make you an engraved image in the form of anything which Yahweh your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses' maturity. Both as the community of believers and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

4:16 *Engraved image* – God's people are to accept Him as He is in His word, rather than try to create God in a form which seems attractive to us. As we read His word, it is not for us to say 'I don't think God would be like *that*, He will be like *this*, which is how I imagine He ought to be'. And it is not for us to work around those words of His which are inconvenient to us by forced, out of context interpretation, dismissing their inspiration or using other tricks of the human intellect. By doing so we are effectively making a graven image, fashioning God as we want Him to be rather than accepting Him as He is.

4:24 *Yahweh your God is a consuming fire* – This is quoted about us in Heb. 12:29 with a slight change of pronoun; "*Your* (Israel's) God" becomes "*our* God". The God

Punishments for Idolatry

²⁵ When you father children and children's children and you have been long in the land and corrupt yourselves and make an engraved image in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God, to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land you go over the Jordan to possess; you shall not prolong your days on it, but shall utterly be destroyed. ²⁷ Yahweh will scatter you among the nations and you shall be left few in number among the nations where Yahweh shall lead you away. ²⁸ There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹ But from there you shall seek Yahweh your God and you will find Him, when you search after Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰ When you are oppressed and all these things have

come on you, in the latter days you shall return to Yahweh your God and listen to His voice; ³¹ for Yahweh your God is a merciful God; He will not fail you neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them. ³² For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and from the one end of the sky to the other, whether there has been anything like this great thing, or has been heard like it? ³³ Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as you have heard, and live? ³⁴ Or has God tried to take a nation for Himself from the midst of another nation by trials, by signs and by wonders, by war and by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, according to all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵ It was shown to you so that you might know that Yahweh is God and that there is none else besides Him.

of the Christian believers is the Old Testament Yahweh God of Israel; in this we see the significance of studying the accounts of how our God revealed Himself in the Old Testament.

4:27 *Left few in number among the nations* – Israel were indeed disobedient and were scattered throughout the provinces of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. “There you will serve gods...” (:28) – but the prophets (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) condemned them for this. There is a downward spiral in spirituality, whereby if people choose to go to false gods, the true God confirms them in their delusions. This is why followers of false religions are so totally convinced they are right, everything makes sense to them within the theological system they adopt – because God confirms them in the delusion they have chosen (2 Thess. 2:11).

4:30 *In the latter days you shall return* – This is one of many indications that just before Christ returns, at least some Jews will repent and turn to the Father and His Son in truth. We should therefore always given special attention to witnessing the Gospel to Jewish people, because their repentance will be one factor which brings about Christ's return.

³⁶ Out of heaven He made you hear his voice so that He might instruct you, and on earth He made you see His great fire and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. ³⁷ Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them and brought you out with His presence, with His great power, out of Egypt, ³⁸ to drive out nations from before you greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as at this day. ³⁹ Know therefore this day and lay it to your heart, that Yahweh He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is none else. ⁴⁰ You must keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you this day, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh your God gives you forever.

Cities of Refuge

⁴¹ Then Moses set apart three cities beyond the Jordan toward the east ⁴² that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbour unawares, and didn't hate him in time past, and that fleeing to one of these cities he might live: ⁴³ Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead

for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites. ⁴⁴ This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel; ⁴⁵ these are the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances, which Moses spoke to the children of Israel when they came forth out of Egypt, ⁴⁶ beyond the Jordan, in the valley over against Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel struck, when they came forth out of Egypt. ⁴⁷ They took his land in possession, and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, ⁴⁸ from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, to Mount Sion (the same is Hermon), ⁴⁹ and all the Arabah beyond the Jordan eastward, even to the sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 22

The Ten Commandments

Moses called to all Israel and said to them, Hear, Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day, that you may learn them and observe to do them. ² Yahweh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³ Yahweh didn't make this covenant with our fathers but with us, even us, who are

4:37, 38 *Brought you out... to bring you in* – Our separation from this world isn't merely negative. We are separated *from* the world so that we might be separated *unto* the things of God. These two ideas are found together in the Hebrew word for 'holiness'.

5:1 *Learn them and observe... them* – Learning / understanding God's principles is the way towards being obedient to them. None of His laws are mere senseless tests of our obedience or submission to Him; they have specific intention.

5:3 *Didn't make this covenant with our fathers* – We must read in an ellipsis here; clearly the idea is that what God had done at Sinai wasn't *only* between Him and the

all of us here alive this day. ⁴ Yahweh spoke with you face to face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, ⁵ (I stood between Yahweh and you at that time to show you the word of Yahweh, for you were afraid because of the fire, and didn't go up onto the mountain) saying, ⁶ I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ⁷ You must have no other gods before Me. ⁸ You must not make an engraved image for yourself, any likeness of what is in heaven above, or what is in the earth beneath, or what is in the water under the earth. ⁹ You must not bow down yourself to them nor serve them, for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the

fourth generation of those who hate Me, ¹⁰ and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments. ¹¹ You must not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. ¹² Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as Yahweh your God commanded you. ¹³ You shall labour six days and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God in which you must not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your livestock, nor the stranger who is within your gates; so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as

people there at that time, but also with all His subsequent people. In our Bible study we must be aware that we are reading translations of languages which often rely on understanding the idiom for their real meaning to be delivered to us the readers. In Hebrew especially, we often have to read in an ellipsis; and this verse is a parade example.

5:5 The way Moses in his spiritual maturity in Deuteronomy sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says here that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire, whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. Counting others as righteous rather than endlessly holding them to their failings is the way of grace; and is the mark of maturity.

5:9 *Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children* – Throughout Ez. 18 God clarifies that He doesn't punish children for the sin of their parents; He deals with people on an individual level. However, the effect of sin is often felt in the society of subsequent generations, and in the process of how that works out, God is there enabling and permitting it to happen; in the same way as we all suffer the consequence of Adam's sin and yet can still be God's acceptable children.

5:11 We take on the Name of the Lord by baptism into that Name, just as Israel carried God's Name as a people in Old Testament times. Our relationship with Him is not to be a vain thing to us, a mere social club we joined, a casual association – it is to be our life, at the very core of our being.

you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm, therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. ¹⁶ Honour your father and your mother as Yahweh your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you. ¹⁷ You must not murder. ¹⁸ Neither must you commit adultery. ¹⁹ Neither must you steal. ²⁰ Neither must you give false testimony against your neighbour. ²¹ Neither must you covet your neighbour's wife, neither shall you desire your neighbour's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's. ²² These words Yahweh spoke to all your assembly on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone

and gave them to me. ²³ When you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness as the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders, ²⁴ and you said, Behold, Yahweh our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God does speak with man and he lives. ²⁵ Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of Yahweh our God any more, then we shall die. ²⁶ For who is there of all humanity that has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have, and has lived? ²⁷ Go near and hear all that Yahweh our God shall say, and tell us all that Yahweh our God shall tell you, and we will hear it and do it. ²⁸ Yahweh heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me and Yahweh said to me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you;

5:21 The Law of Moses was the only legal code to criminalize internal attitudes; nobody knows who covets what in their hearts, and there was no legal apparatus to punish this particular transgression of law. But the Law of Moses was a direct covenant between God and every individual amongst His people, and to Him they were personally responsible and answerable.

5:22 When Moses commented about the commandments that God “added no more”, he foresaw his people's tendency to add the Halachas of their extra commandments... In this his time of spiritual maturity he could foresee the spiritual problems they would have in their hour by hour life, and Moses foresaw that they would not cope well with them. Sensitivity to others' likely failures and concern for them is another indicator of spiritual maturity.

5:27 We too have a tendency to shy away from a direct relationship with God through His word, and prefer a system of human mediators to bring God to us – as we see in the established churches. But God wants to have direct contact with us through the medium of His word.

they have well said all that they have spoken. ²⁹ Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!

³⁰ Go, tell them, Return to your tents.

³¹ But as for you, stand here by Me and I will tell you all the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, which you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess. ³² You must observe to do therefore as Yahweh your God has commanded you; you must not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³³ You must walk in all the way which Yahweh your God has commanded you, in order that you may live and that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 23

The Command to Love God

Now these are the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land which you go over to possess, ² in order that you might fear Yahweh your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, yes you, your son and your son's son, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³ Hear therefore, Israel, and observe to do it, so that it may be well with you and that you may increase mightily, as Yahweh the God of your fathers has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁴ Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one; ⁵ and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all

6:3 *The God of your fathers* – It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity.

That it may be well with you – Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (see also 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" God's words. "Hear, Israel" must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School text. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "Hear, Israel" (5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). At the end of his life, Moses saw the supreme significance of our attitude to God's word, and so he pleads with God's people: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And Jesus (in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal to us.

6:4 The fact there is only one God means that He is to have our total loyalty and love (:5). If there were two gods, each would have 50%. But the one God demands our total devotion.

6:5 Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For Jesus was the prophet like unto Moses. "Love" and the idea of

your soul and with all your might.
⁶ These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart;
⁷ and you must teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them for a sign on your hand and they shall be for memorials between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates. ¹⁰ When Yahweh your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers to give you, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, great and good cities which you didn't build, ¹¹ houses full of all good things which you didn't fill, and wells dug out which you didn't dig, vineyards and olive trees which you didn't plant, and you shall eat and be full - ¹² then beware lest you forget Yahweh, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹³ You must fear Yahweh your God and you shall serve Him and shall swear by His name. ¹⁴ You must not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you, ¹⁵ for Yahweh your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of Yahweh your God shall be kindled against you and He shall destroy you from off the face of the land. ¹⁶ You must not test Yahweh your God as you tested Him in Massah. ¹⁷ You

must diligently keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. ¹⁸ You must do that which is right and good in the sight of Yahweh, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, ¹⁹ to thrust out all your enemies from before you, as Yahweh has spoken. ²⁰ When your son asks you in time to come, What do the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh our God has commanded you mean? ²¹ then you shall tell your son, We were Pharaoh's bondservants in Egypt and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, ²² and Yahweh showed great and awesome signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh and on all his house, before our eyes. ²³ He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore to our fathers. ²⁴ Yahweh commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Yahweh our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as at this day. ²⁵ It shall be righteousness to us if we observe to do all these commandments before Yahweh our God, as He has commanded us.

CHAPTER 7 Apr. 23

The Nations to Be Driven Out

When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you

love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Exodus becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy. Moses perceived that love is indeed the bond or proof of spiritual maturity (Col. 3:14).

7:1 God and Moses had stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel

go to possess it and casts out many nations before you, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations greater and mightier than you, ² and when Yahweh your God delivers them up before you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. You must make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them, ³ neither shall you arrange marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give to his son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son. ⁴ For he will turn away your son from following me to serve other gods; so the anger of Yahweh would be kindled against you and He would destroy you quickly. ⁵ But you must deal with them like this: break down their altars and dash their pillars in pieces and cut down their Asherim poles and burn their engraved images with fire. ⁶ For you are a holy people to Yahweh your

God; Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ Yahweh didn't set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all peoples; ⁸ but because Yahweh loves you and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, therefore has Yahweh brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness with them who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them; He will not be slack to him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. ¹¹ You must therefore keep the command-

were obedient, but here Moses enthuses that those tribes would indeed be cast out – so positive was he about Israel's obedience (see too 6:18,19). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses is *constantly* thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. Roughly 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart; just as like Paul we should enthuse about others' salvation, not simply our own. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 show how His thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation.

7:7, 9, 13 Analyzing usage of the word "love" in the Pentateuch reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). Love is indeed the proof of spiritual maturity (Col. 3:14).

ment, the statutes and the ordinances which I command you this day, to do them.

Blessings for Obedience

¹² If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers. ¹³ He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you. ¹⁴ You will be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock. ¹⁵ Yahweh will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt which you know, will He put on you, but will lay them on all those who hate you. ¹⁶ You shall consume all the peoples whom Yahweh your God shall deliver up unto you; your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods,

for that will be a snare to you. ¹⁷ If you say in your heart, These nations are more than I, how can I dispossess them?, ¹⁸ you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what Yahweh your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹ the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand and the stretched out arm by which Yahweh your God brought you out; so shall Yahweh your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. ²⁰ Moreover Yahweh your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left and hide themselves perish from before you. ²¹ You shall not be scared of them, for Yahweh your God is in the midst of you, a great and awesome God. ²² Yahweh your God will cast out those nations before you by little and little; you may not consume them at once, lest the animals of the field increase on you. ²³ But Yahweh your God will deliver them up before you and will confuse them with a great confusion until they are destroyed. ²⁴ He will deliver their kings into your hand and you shall make their name per-

7:16 Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey, and yet at the same time Moses is so positive about them – setting a wonderful pattern for us in how to deal with others. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments. “Take heed” runs like a refrain throughout Moses’ speech. He warns them here not to “take pity” on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the earlier giving of the Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail, and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here.

ish from under the sky; no man shall be able to stand before you, until you have destroyed them. ²⁵ You must burn the engraved images of their gods with fire. You must not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourself, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to Yahweh your God. ²⁶ You must not bring an abomination into your house and become a devoted thing like it. You shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is a devoted thing.

CHAPTER 8 Apr. 24

Do Not Forget

You must observe to do all the commandments which I command you this day, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers. ² You shall remember all the way which Yahweh your God

has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ He humbled you and allowed you to suffer hunger, and fed you with manna, which you didn't know, neither did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahweh. ⁴ Your clothing didn't grow old on you, neither did your foot swell, these forty years. ⁵ You shall consider in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so Yahweh your God chastens you. ⁶ You must keep the commandments of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. ⁷ For Yahweh your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of springs and underground water gushing into valleys

8:3 *Man does not live by bread only* – The passages quoted by Jesus in the desert to strengthen Himself against His human desires (“the devil”) are all from the same part of Deuteronomy, regarding Israel’s experience in the wilderness. Jesus clearly saw a parallel between His experiences and theirs. The description of Him as being in the wilderness with beasts and Angels (Mk. 1:13) is another connection with Israel’s experience in the wilderness – they were plagued there by “wild beasts” (32:19-24). Jesus was led up of the spirit for forty days in the wilderness, as Israel were led forty years by a Spirit-Angel. The mind of Jesus was likewise proved by the temptations. Jesus overcame by quoting the Scriptures that were in His heart (Ps. 119:11). Jesus also was allowed to hunger, to reinforce His understanding of the fact that we are to live not by physical food but by the word of God. The reference to Israel being ‘chastened’ (:5) in the desert recall how God chastened His Son, Jesus (2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 89: 32). Thus Jesus showed us how to read and study the Word – He thought Himself into the position of Israel in the wilderness, and therefore took the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences to Himself in His wilderness trials.

8:4 God has likewise promised to provide us on our wilderness journey with basic clothing and food (Ps. 37:25). We should be content with this, and instead of giving our strength to earn money to tickle our taste buds and buy fine clothing, instead give our lives to serving God.

and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey; ⁹ a land in which you shall eat bread without scarcity. You shall not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig copper. ¹⁰ When you shall eat and be full, then you shall bless Yahweh your God for the good land which He has given you. ¹¹ Beware lest you forget Yahweh your God in not keeping His commandments, His ordinances and His statutes which I command you this day; ¹² lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and lived therein, ¹³ and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart be lifted up and you forget Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; ¹⁵ Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with fiery serpents, scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; Who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint; ¹⁶ Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers didn't know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to do you good

at your latter end; ¹⁷ and lest you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has given me this wealth. ¹⁸ But you must remember Yahweh your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as at this day. ¹⁹ If you forget Yahweh your God, and walk after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. ²⁰ As the nations that Yahweh makes to perish before you, so you too shall perish, because you wouldn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God.

CHAPTER 9 Apr. 24

Israel Not Given the Land for Their Righteousness

Hear, Israel: you are to pass over the Jordan this day to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and walled up to the sky, ² a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard say, Who can stand before the sons of Anak? ³ Know therefore this day that Yahweh your God is He who goes over before you as a devouring fire. He will destroy them and He will bring them down before you; so you

8:9 *You may dig copper* – But in Judges and 1 Samuel we read several times of how Israel hardly had any iron weapons and were dominated by the Philistines who did. So this was a potential for them – they *could* have had this blessing, but like us so often, they chose to be satisfied with the minimum and didn't realize it for themselves.

9:3 Moses uses the name “Yahweh” over 530 times in Deuteronomy, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. “Yahweh *your* God” or “Yahweh *our* God”. Now at the end of his life, he saw the wonder of personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as Yahweh has spoken to you. ⁴ Don't say in your heart, after Yahweh your God has thrust them out from before you, For my righteousness Yahweh has brought me in to possess this land; because Yahweh drives them out before you because of the wickedness of these nations. ⁵ Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart do you go in to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations Yahweh your God drives them out from before you, and that He may establish the word which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. ⁶ Know therefore that Yahweh your God doesn't give you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. ⁷ Remember, don't forget, how you provoked Yahweh your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you went forth out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place you have been rebellious against Yahweh.

The Golden Calf

⁸ Also in Horeb you provoked Yahweh to wrath and Yahweh was angry

with you to destroy you. ⁹ When I had gone up onto the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which Yahweh made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. ¹⁰ Yahweh delivered to me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which Yahweh spoke with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. ¹¹ At the end of forty days and forty nights Yahweh gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. ¹² Yahweh said to me Arise, get down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought out of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molten image. ¹³ Furthermore Yahweh spoke to me saying, I have seen this people and truly it is a stiff-necked people; ¹⁴ let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under the sky, and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they. ¹⁵ So I turned and came down from the mountain, and

9:14 Despite knowing their weakness and his own righteousness, Moses showed a marvellous softness and humility in the speeches which are recorded in Deuteronomy. Here he does not mention how fervently he had prayed for them, so fervently that God changed His expressed intention; Moses *does not mention how he offered his physical and eternal life for their salvation*. That fine act and desire by Moses went unknown to Israel until the book of Exodus came into circulation. And likewise, the depth of Christ's love for us was unrecognised by us at the time. Moses had such humility in not telling in Israel in so many words how fervently he had loved them; for this really is love. The spiritual culture and love of the Lord Jesus is even greater.

Let Me alone – This reflects the amazingly close relationship between God and Moses. It's as if God is saying: 'I know you might persuade Me to change My mind on this

the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. ¹⁶ I looked and truly, you had sinned against Yahweh your God; you had made yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly out of the way which Yahweh had commanded you. ¹⁷ I took hold of the two tablets and cast them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. ¹⁸ I fell down before Yahweh as at the first, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you sinned, in doing that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh to provoke him to anger. ¹⁹ For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which Yahweh was angry against you to destroy you. But Yahweh listened to me that time also. ²⁰ Yahweh was very angry with Aaron to destroy him, and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. ²¹ I

took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burnt it with fire and stamped it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust, and I cast its dust into the brook that descended out of the mountain. ²² (At Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked Yahweh to wrath. ²³ When Yahweh sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying Go up and possess the land which I have given you, then you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God, and you didn't believe Him, nor listen to His voice. ²⁴ You have been rebellious against Yahweh from the day that I knew you).

Moses Begs God Not to Destroy Israel

²⁵ So I fell down before Yahweh the forty days and forty nights because Yahweh had said He would destroy you. ²⁶ I prayed to Yahweh and said

one, but please, don't try, I might give in, when really they do need to be destroyed'. We too can have this level of intimacy with God.

Blot out their name – Moses prayed that *his* name would be 'blotted out' instead (Ex. 32:32). To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9. If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience, such was his identity with his ungrateful people; and yet this peak of devotion is but a dim shadow of the extent of Christ's love for us. In 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard* – in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them throughout Deuteronomy to go ahead and enter the land – to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. This is why Moses stresses now at the end of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went badly with him *for their sakes*" (Ps. 106:32).

Lord Yahweh, don't destroy Your people and Your inheritance that You have redeemed through Your greatness, that You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.²⁷ Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Don't look at the stubbornness of this people, nor at their wickedness, nor their sin,²⁸ lest the land You brought us out from say, 'Because Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land which He promised to them and because He hated them He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness'.²⁹ Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought out by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm.

CHAPTER 10 Apr. 25

New Stone Tablets

At that time Yahweh said to me, Cut two tablets of stone like the first and come up to Me onto the mountain and make an ark of wood.² I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke, and you shall put them within that ark.³ So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up onto the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand.⁴ He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which Yahweh

spoke to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly, and Yahweh gave them to me.⁵ I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets into the ark which I had made, and there they are as Yahweh commanded me.⁶ (The children of Israel travelled from Beeroth Bene Jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried, and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his place.⁷ From there they travelled to Gudgodah and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water.⁸ At that time Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, to stand before Yahweh to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day.⁹ Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers; Yahweh is his inheritance according as Yahweh your God spoke to him.)¹⁰ I stayed on the mountain, as at the first time, forty days and forty nights and Yahweh listened to me that time also; Yahweh would not destroy you.¹¹ Yahweh said to me Arise, take your journey before the people, and they shall go in and possess the land, which I swore to their fathers to give to them.

Warning to Respect God

¹² Now Israel, what does Yahweh your God require of you, but to fear

10:11 Moses led God's people to the land, the Kingdom, but couldn't himself take them in there – the Law with which he was associated revealed the Kingdom, but it needed Joshua / Jesus to actually bring them into it.

10:12 Alluded to in Mic. 6:8, where walking in God's ways is understood as walking in humility; and 'loving God' is expanded into loving to show justice and mercy. We can be tempted to think that we can 'love God' within our own hearts by accepting

Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul,¹³ to keep the commandments of Yahweh and His statutes, which I command you this day for your good?¹⁴ Behold, to Yahweh your God belongs heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is in it.¹⁵ It's just that Yahweh had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as it is at this day.¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.¹⁷ For Yahweh your God, He is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty and the awesome, who doesn't respect persons nor take reward.¹⁸ He executes justice for the fatherless and widow and loves the foreigner, in giving him food and clothing.¹⁹ Therefore love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.²⁰ You must fear Yahweh your God; you must serve Him and cling to Him and you shall swear by His name.²¹ He is your praise and He is your God, Who has done for you these great and awesome things

which your eyes have seen.²² Your fathers went down into Egypt with seventy persons, and now Yahweh your God has made you as the stars of the sky for multitude.

CHAPTER 11 Apr. 25

Command to Love God

Therefore you must love Yahweh your God and keep His instructions, His statutes, His ordinances and His commandments always.² Know this day - for I don't speak with your children who have not known, and who have not seen the chastisement of Yahweh your God - His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm;³ His signs and His works, which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land;⁴ and what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots; how He made the water of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued after you, and how Yahweh has destroyed them to this day;⁵ and what He did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place;⁶ and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened

His existence and reading the Bible. But it has to be more than that; to love God is to love others, to be merciful to the irritating and ungracious (:18). We cannot love God without loving our brethren (1 Jn. 3:17; 4:21). To love God in this way is in the end 'for our own good' (:13).

10:22 This was an initial, primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham; we too have some foretastes of the Kingdom life even now.

11:4 *Destroyed them to this day* – We are to understand each victory and achievement of God as somehow ongoing right down to our own day and our own lives and experience. This is what makes the Bible a *living* word for us. This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it.

its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households and their tents and every living thing that followed them in the midst of all Israel. ⁷ Your eyes have seen all the great work of Yahweh which He did. ⁸ Therefore you must keep all the commandment which I command you this day, that you may be strong and go in and possess the land where you go over to possess it, ⁹ and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give to them and to their seed, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ For the land where you go in to possess it isn't as the land of Egypt that you came out from, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs; ¹¹ but the land you go over to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water of the rain of the sky, ¹² a land which Yahweh your God cares for. The eyes of Yahweh your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

Blessings for Obedience

¹³ If you will listen diligently to my commandments which I command

you this day, to love Yahweh your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴ I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine and your oil. ¹⁵ I will give grass in your fields for your livestock and you shall eat and be full. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside, and serve other gods and worship them, ¹⁷ and the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you and He shut up the sky, so that there shall be no rain, and the land shall not yield its fruit and you perish quickly from off the good land which Yahweh gives you. ¹⁸ Therefore you must lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them for a sign on your hand and they shall be for memorials between your eyes. ¹⁹ You must teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. ²⁰ Write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your

11:10 *Go in... came out* – See on 4:37,38.

11:11 The people were often reminded that they were about to “go over [Jordan] to possess” the land, as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost.

11:16 There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 (“will”),14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8). See on 7:16. We can take comfort in God’s sensitivity to us in an age unlike any other and apparently with its own unprecedented temptations.

11:21 *As the days of the heavens upon the earth* – This is the essence of the New Testament idea of the “Kingdom of Heaven” [not, the Kingdom *in* Heaven] coming upon earth at Christ’s return.

children, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give them, as the days of the heavens upon the earth. ²² For if you will diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him, ²³ then will Yahweh drive out all these nations from before you and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves. ²⁴ Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours, from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river Euphrates, to the hinder sea shall be your border. ²⁵ No man will be able to stand before you. Yahweh your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you will tread on, as He has spoken to you. ²⁶ Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you will listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you this day, ²⁸ and the curse if you will not listen to the

commandments of Yahweh your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not previously known. ²⁹ When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you go to possess it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰ Aren't they beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh? ³¹ For you are to pass over the Jordan to go in to possess the land which Yahweh your God gives you, and you shall possess it, and dwell therein. ³² You shall observe all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day.

CHAPTER 12 Apr. 26

God's Choice of a Place to Worship

These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall observe to do in the land which Yahweh, the

11:22 The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (4:4; 10:20; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea – that a nation's God was not distant from them and just occasionally involved, but married to them placing them as equal partners with Him in the relationship. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen. *All this commandment* – Note the singular. Israel weren't to add to or reduce the commandments because they were as a body of commandment intended to enable a complete life before God. See on 4:2.

11:24 *The river, the Euphrates* – The entire territory promised to Abraham could've been given to them if they had bothered to go there; but they settled just for the fertile land along the Mediterranean coast. They, like us so often, lacked any sense of spiritual ambition.

God of your fathers, has given you to possess all the days that you live on the earth. ² You must surely destroy all the places in which the nations that you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree, ³ and you must break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You must cut down the engraved images of their gods and destroy their names out of that place. ⁴ You shall not do so to Yahweh your God. ⁵ But to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, to His dwelling place you shall seek, and there you shall come ⁶ and bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes,

the wave offering of your hand, your vows, your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. ⁷ There you shall eat before Yahweh your God and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to, you and your households, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you. ⁸ You shall not do all the things that we do here this day, every man whatever is right in his own eyes, ⁹ for you haven't yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which Yahweh your God gives you. ¹⁰ But when you go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, so that you dwell in safety, ¹¹ then to the place which Yahweh your God shall

12:3 *Burn with fire... cut down* – The Lord's description of the rejected being cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt. 7:19) is surely referring to these words (cp. 7:5), where the idols of the world were to be hewn down and thrown into the fire. The Lord understood that those who worship idols are like unto them (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). Because all idols [of whatever kind] will be destroyed in the last day, all who worship them will have to share their destruction. And yet we can be hewn down by God's word now (Hos. 6:5) rather than wait for God to do it to us by the condemnation process. We must cut off (s.w. hew down) our flesh *now* (Mt. 5:30; 18:8 cp. 7:19).

12:5 Worldly religion is made as convenient as possible for the worshipper to come and participate in; the shrines of the Canaanite gods were everywhere in the land, whereas Yahweh insisted that there was one specific place to where His people should come to worship Him. This was perhaps partly to inspire national unity within the family of God. The pagan shrines were each different; they had no uniformity between them, as archaeologists have demonstrated. But the one true God has principles of worship and service which don't vary geographically and are consistently the same because truth is truth and in that sense doesn't vary from place to place nor context to context.

12:10 *He gives you rest* – Several times Moses describes Israel's inheritance of the land as entering "rest", mindful of how God had sworn that they would not enter into that rest, and yet he had pleaded with God to change His mind about that (Ps. 95:11; Heb. 3:11), even though Israel at the time didn't realize the intensity of pleading and self-sacrifice for them which was going on up in the mountain. Just as we don't appreciate the extent of the Lord's mediation for us, that we might enter the final "rest" (Heb. 4:9).

choose, to cause His name to dwell there, you must bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the wave offering of your hand and all your chosen vows which you vow to Yahweh. ¹² Rejoice before Yahweh your God, you and your sons, your daughters, your male servants, your female servants and the Levite who is within your gates, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you. ¹³ Be careful not to offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see, ¹⁴ but in the place which Yahweh shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you. ¹⁵ Notwithstanding, you may kill and eat flesh within all your gates after all the desire of your soul, according to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the hart. ¹⁶ Only you must not eat the blood. Pour it out on the earth as water. ¹⁷ You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, nor any of

your vows which you vow, nor your freewill offerings, nor the wave offering of your hand; ¹⁸ but you must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, you and your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God in all that you put your hand on. ¹⁹ Take heed to yourself that you don't forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

Blood not to be Eaten

²⁰ When Yahweh your God enlarges your border, as He has promised you, and you say I want to eat meat, because your soul desires to eat meat, you may eat meat, after all the desire of your soul. ²¹ If the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to put His name there is too far from you, then you shall kill of your herd and of your flock which Yahweh has given you, as I have commanded you; you may eat within your gates, after all the desire of your soul. ²² As the gazelle and the hart is eaten, so you shall eat of it; the unclean and

12:13 We can't worship God any way we like, thinking that the fact we accept His existence and even worship Him means that we are somehow free to do it as we think.

12:16 The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

12:18 *In all that you put your hand on* – Whatever they put their hand on to give to God they were to give with joy; for God *loves* cheerful giving, and hates reluctant or manipulated 'giving' (2 Cor. 9:7).

12:20 Vegetarianism is a matter of personal choice, but it certainly isn't commanded by God – indeed, quite the opposite (1 Tim. 4:3).

the clean may eat of it alike. ²³ Only be sure that you don't eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you shall not eat the life with the flesh. ²⁴ You must not eat it; pour it out on the earth as water. ²⁵ You must not eat it, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh. ²⁶ Only your holy things which you have and your vows, you shall take and go to the place which Yahweh shall choose, ²⁷ and you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of Yahweh your God. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured out on the altar of Yahweh your God, and you shall eat the flesh. ²⁸ Observe and hear all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do that which is good and right in the eyes of Yahweh your God. ²⁹ When Yahweh your God cuts off the nations from before you, where you go in to dispossess them, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods saying, How do

these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise. ³¹ You must not do so to Yahweh your God, for every abomination to Yahweh, which He hates, have they done to their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they burn in the fire to their gods. ³² Whatever I command you, you must observe to do. You must not add to it, nor take away from it.

CHAPTER 13 Apr. 27

Warning against Idolatry

If there should arise in the midst of you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass of which he spoke to you saying, Let us go after other gods (which you have not previously known) and let us serve them, ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams, for Yahweh your God proves you, to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You must walk after Yahweh your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you must serve Him and cleave to Him. ⁵ That prophet or that dreamer of dreams must be put to death, because he has spoken

13:3 The reasoning here is helpful with respect to the claims made by some to perform supernatural feats. Even if it seems they might have done so, that isn't a good enough reason to believe them; our loyalty to the one true God must not be swayed by apparently impressive deeds or predictions by those who don't believe in Him.

13:5 Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the colossal difference there is between us and this world as a result of our Red Sea baptism into Christ (13:5; 15:15; 16:12; 1 Cor. 10:1,2); as our Lord in His time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which He was redeeming us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4).

rebellion against Yahweh your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to draw you aside out of the way which Yahweh your God commanded you to walk in. So you must put away the evil from the midst of you. ⁶ If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom or your friend, who is as your own soul, entices you secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known, you nor your fathers, ⁷ of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near to you or far off from you, from the one end of the land to the other end of the land, ⁸ you must not consent to him nor listen to him. Neither shall you eye pity him, neither shall you spare, neither shall you conceal him, ⁹ but you must surely kill him. Your hand shall be first on him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. ¹⁰ You must stone him to death with stones because he has sought to draw you away from Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹¹ All

Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall not do any more such wickedness as this is in the midst of you. ¹² If you hear concerning one of your cities which Yahweh your God gives you to dwell there saying, ¹³ Certain bad men have gone out from the midst of you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known, ¹⁴ then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. Behold, if it is true and certain that such abomination is done in the midst of you, ¹⁵ you must surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly and all that is therein and its livestock, with the edge of the sword. ¹⁶ You shall gather all its spoil into the midst of its street and shall burn with fire the city and all its spoil, everything, to Yahweh your God, and it shall be a heap forever. It shall not be built again. ¹⁷ Nothing of the devoted thing must cling to your hand, that Yahweh may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you, as He has sworn to your fathers, ¹⁸ when you listen

13:6 So often family loyalties deflect a person from their loyalty to the one true God. The same has always been the case. Our spiritual family should ultimately be more meaningful to us than our natural family; that at least is the ideal, although all families have their dysfunctions, including our spiritual family.

13:14 *You shall inquire and make search and ask diligently* – Allegations of misbehaviour or wrong teaching within the family of God must be taken seriously and not pushed under the carpet. But they aren't to be acted upon without a very careful investigation, during which the love which believes and hopes all things is paramount. This passage cannot be used as a reason to divide from those who have a slightly different Biblical interpretation of something than we do, whilst believing in and worshipping the same Lord. The situation envisaged is if someone were seeking to draw Yahweh's people away to a totally different god (:13).

to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh your God.

CHAPTER 14 Apr. 27

Clean and Unclean Food

You are the children of Yahweh your God. You must not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. ² For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth. ³ You must not eat any abominable thing. ⁴ These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵ the hart and the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the chamois. ⁶ Every animal that has a split hoof and chews the cud among the animals, you may eat. ⁷ Nevertheless these you must not eat of those that chew the cud or of those which have a split hoof: the camel, the hare and the rabbit. Because they chew the cud but don't have a split hoof, they are unclean to you. ⁸ The pig, because it has a split hoof but doesn't chew the cud, is unclean to

you; of their flesh you shall not eat and their carcasses you shall not touch. ⁹ These you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales may you eat. ¹⁰ Whatever doesn't have fins and scales you must not eat; it is unclean to you. ¹¹ Of all clean birds you may eat. ¹² But these are the ones you must not eat: the eagle, the vulture and the osprey, ¹³ the red kite, the falcon and the kite after its kind, ¹⁴ every raven after its kind, ¹⁵ the ostrich, the owl, the seagull and the hawk after its kind, ¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl and the horned owl, ¹⁷ the pelican, the vulture and the cormorant, ¹⁸ the stork and the heron after its kind and the hoopoe and the bat. ¹⁹ All winged creeping things are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten. ²⁰ Of all clean birds you may eat. ²¹ You must not eat of anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the foreigner living among you who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to Yahweh your God. You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Tithes

²² You must surely tithe all the increase of your seed which comes

14:1 Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God.

14:4 See notes on Lev. 11 for commentary on the clean and unclean food regulations.

14:21 *You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk* – This was likely a pagan ritual which Israel weren't to follow. It may also be that God's sensitivity to the feelings of animals is coming out here; and He wishes us to live lives regulated by sensitivity to all of creation. See on 20:19.

forth from the field year by year.²³ You shall eat before Yahweh your God, in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell there, the tithe of your grain, of your new wine and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock, that you may learn to respect Yahweh your God always.²⁴ If the way is too long for you, so that when Yahweh your God shall bless you, you are not able to carry it because the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to set His name there is too far from you,²⁵ then you must turn it into money and take the money in your hand and go to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose,²⁶ and you may spend the money on whatever your soul desires, cattle or sheep, wine or strong drink, or whatever your soul asks of you, and you may eat there before

Yahweh your God, and rejoice, you and your household.²⁷ The Levite who is within your gates you must not forsake, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.²⁸ At the end of every three years you must bring forth all the tithe of your increase in the same year and store it within your gates,²⁹ and the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the foreigner living among you and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

CHAPTER 15 Apr. 28

The Year for Cancelling Debts

At the end of every seven years you must make a release.² This is the method of the release: every

14:26 *Rejoice, you and your household* – There was to be joy in giving to God rather than any sense of resentment; and the families (“your household”) were to have this explained to them so that even the children learnt to rejoice in giving rather than being selfish. Again we see God’s emphasis on the need for giving to be done cheerfully; He simply *loves* cheerful giving (2 Cor. 9:7).

14:27 There were three separate tithes commanded under the Law of Moses. Yet the tithing churches have simply said: ‘There’s something about tithing in the Old Testament. So, hey, give us 10% of your money!’. The first was the Levitical tithe of 10% on 100% of the produce for the first six years and was destined for the Levites and priests (see too 12:19). The second tithe was the Festival tithe of 10% on the 90% remaining produce after the Levitical tithe. This tithe had to be eaten in the presence of the Lord and was collected on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years only. The third tithe was the tithe of the poor to be collected on the 3rd and 6th years only (14:22-29; 26:12-15; Am. 4:4-5). No tithe was collected on the 7th year or Sabbatical year. The farmers were to let the land rest in that year. The tithe consisted of fruit, grain, wine and later animals that are treated as produce from the land. It never consisted of money. Tithes were conducted annually and were based upon one’s produce increase for the year. This just isn’t talking about putting paper money or cheques on an offering plate each week as demanded by the tithing churches.

15:2 *He must not demand it of his neighbour and his brother because Yahweh’s re-*

creditor shall release that which he has lent to his neighbour. He must not demand it of his neighbour and his brother because Yahweh's release has been proclaimed.³ Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother you must release.⁴ However there shall be no poor among you, for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it⁵ if only you diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command you this day.⁶ For Yahweh your God will bless you, as He promised you, and you will lend to many nations but you shall not borrow; and you will rule over many nations but they shall not rule over you.⁷ If a poor man, one of your brothers, is with you within any of your gates in your land which

Yahweh your God gives you, you must not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,⁸ but you must surely open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, that which he lacks.⁹ Beware that there is not a wicked thought in your heart saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing and he cries to Yahweh against you, it is sin to you.¹⁰ You must surely give to him, and your heart must not be grieved when you give to him, because for this Yahweh your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you put your hand to.¹¹ For the poor will never cease out of the land, therefore I command you, saying, You must surely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and to your poor, in your land.

lease has been proclaimed – The final release was in the death of Christ releasing us from all our sins, which are likened to debts in the New Testament. We are therefore not to “demand” recompense for sin from others because of the great release proclaimed. Jesus foresaw the difficulty of doing this, and urges us to pray constantly that we forgive or release our debtors (Mt. 6:12). The year of release was proclaimed on the day of atonement, in the same way as the cross has initiated a time of release from sin. The idea of ‘proclaiming’ this release or forgiveness is behind the language Luke uses to record the great commission, to proclaim this wonderful news to absolutely everybody – that their debt is cancelled.

15:4 Moses knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (:4, 11). Having reminded them that if they were obedient, “there shall be no poor among you; for Yahweh will surely bless you”, Moses goes on to comment that “the poor will never cease out of the land” – and he gives the legislation cognisant of this (:4,11). Moses realized by the time of Deuteronomy that they wouldn’t make it to the blessings which were potentially possible. And yet he speaks so positively of how they would inherit the Kingdom. God recognizes that His people won’t totally make it spiritually nor receive all the blessings they could, and yet this doesn’t mean they won’t be saved. This is a comfort for us in our spiritual incompleteness; and it also means that we shouldn’t expect the community of God’s people to be perfect. Even God doesn’t expect that, and the very structure of His own law foresaw that.

Freeing Slaves

¹² If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you must let him go free from you. ¹³ When you let him go free from you, you must not let him go empty. ¹⁴ You must furnish him generously out of your flock, out of your threshing floor and out of your winepress; as Yahweh your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. ¹⁵ You must remember that you were a bondservant in the land of Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you, therefore I command you this today. ¹⁶ If he tells you I will not go out from you because he loves you and your house, because he is well with you, ¹⁷ then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise. ¹⁸ It must not seem hard to you, when you let him go free from you, for he was worth double the hire of a hireling; he has served you six years; and Yahweh your God will bless you in all that you do.

Firstborn Animals Belong to God

¹⁹ All the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock you must sanctify to Yahweh your God; you must do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. ²⁰ You must eat it before Yahweh your God year by year in the place which Yahweh shall choose, you and your household. ²¹ If it has any blemish, is lame or blind or has any defect whatever, you must not sacrifice it to Yahweh your God. ²² You must eat it within your gates. The unclean and the clean shall eat it alike, as the gazelle and as the hart. ²³ Only you must not eat its blood. You must pour it out on the ground as water.

CHAPTER 16 Apr. 29***The Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread***

Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to Yahweh your God, for in the month of Abib Yahweh your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night. ² You must sacrifice the Passover to Yahweh your God from the flock and the herd, in

15:15 One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to “remember” all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey, and especially the wonder of how He had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Moses really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same – to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us.

16:2 This seems to imply that now, in the ‘second law’ Moses was giving in Deuteronomy, the Passover sacrifice didn’t necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7). See on 20:14. So eager is God for our fellowship that He is prepared to make concessions to our human situations; and we should have that spirit in dealing with others.

the place which Yahweh shall choose to cause His name to dwell there. ³ You must eat no leavened bread with it. You must eat unleavened bread with it seven days, the bread of affliction, for you came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. ⁴ No yeast shall be seen with you in all your borders seven days, neither shall any of the flesh, which you sacrifice the first day at evening, remain all night until the morning. ⁵ You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, ⁶ but at the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell in, there you must sacrifice the Passover at evening, at the going down of the sun, at the time that you came forth out of Egypt. ⁷ You must roast and eat it in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose; and you shall turn in the morning and go to your tents. ⁸ For six days you must eat unleavened bread. On the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to Yahweh your God; you shall do no work.

The Feast of Weeks

⁹ You must count for yourselves seven weeks: from the time you be-

gin to put the sickle to the standing grain you shall begin to number seven weeks. ¹⁰ You must keep the feast of weeks to Yahweh your God with a tribute of a freewill offering, which you shall give according as Yahweh your God blesses you. ¹¹ You shall rejoice before Yahweh your God, you, your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates and the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, who are among you, in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there. ¹² You must remember that you were a bondservant in Egypt, and you shall observe and do these statutes.

The Feast of Tents

¹³ You must keep the feast of tents seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and from your winepress, ¹⁴ and you shall rejoice in your feast, you, your son and your daughter, your male servant, your female servant and the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. ¹⁵ You must keep a feast to Yahweh your God seven days in the place which Yahweh shall choose. Because Yahweh your God will bless you in all your increase and in all the work

16:7 *You shall turn in the morning and go to your tents* – At the first Passover, which they were re-living, they left Egypt at night and in the morning went into the promised land. They were to imagine their homes as in a sense the promised land; there the principles of the Kingdom were to be upheld so that the home became a small imitation of the Kingdom. That principle applies to us too.

16:15 Moses was so positive about them, as we should be about others too. “God will bless you”, even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience

of your hands, you shall be altogether joyful. ¹⁶ Three times in a year must all your males appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, in the feast of weeks and in the feast of tents. They must not appear before Yahweh empty: ¹⁷ every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you.

Judges

¹⁸ You shall make judges and officers in all your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹ You must not twist justice, you must not respect persons, neither must you take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. ²⁰ You must follow that which is altogether just, that you may live, and inherit the land which Yahweh your God gives you.

Warning against Idolatry

²¹ You must not plant for yourselves an Asherah of any kind of tree be-

side the altar of Yahweh your God, which you shall make for yourselves. ²² Neither shall you set yourself up a pillar, which Yahweh your God hates.

CHAPTER 17 Apr. 30

You must not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish or anything imperfect, for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God. ² If there is found in the midst of you, within any of your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, a man or woman who does that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God in transgressing His covenant, ³ and has gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the army of the sky, which I have not commanded, ⁴ and it is told you and you have heard of it, then you must inquire diligently. Behold, if it is true and certain that such abomination is done in Israel, ⁵ then you must bring forth that man or that woman who has done this evil thing to your gates, even the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death

(28:1,4,12). Moses was this confident of them, as Paul was confident of the obedience of the Corinthians despite it seeming humanly unlikely (2 Cor. 10:6). It's far easier to have a negative attitude about people than a positive one; but God's grace and imputing of righteousness to us personally should help us be positive about others.

16:17 *The blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you* – Notice the past tense. Moses often speaks of the “blessing” which God would give them for obedience; but he here speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it. The blessings of the Kingdom were already obtained for us on the cross. It's for us to as it were claim them.

16:21 Moses in Deuteronomy adds a whole series of apparently ‘minor’ commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God – because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world.

with stones. ⁶ At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he who is to die be put to death. At the mouth of one witness he must not be put to death. ⁷ The hand of the witnesses must be first on him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you.

Judging

⁸ If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates, then go up to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, ⁹ and come to the priests the Levites and to the judge who shall be in those days and ask. They shall show you the sentence of judgment. ¹⁰ You must do according to the sentence which they shall show you from that place which Yahweh shall choose, and you must observe to do according to all that they shall teach you; ¹¹ according to the law which they shall teach

you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, that you shall do. You must not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand or to the left. ¹² The man who does presumptuously in not listening to the priest who stands to minister there before Yahweh your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you must put away the evil from Israel. ¹³ All the people shall hear and fear and do no more presumptuously.

Rules for a King

¹⁴ When you have come to the land which Yahweh your God gives you and shall possess it, and dwell therein and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me, ¹⁵ you must surely set him king over yourselves whom Yahweh your God shall choose; one from among your brothers you shall set king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ Only he must not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to

17:6 Insisting on more than one witness before accepting the truth of an allegation meant that gossip and slander were limited; and Jesus applies this principle to dealing with disputes within His church (Mt. 18:16). Those who served other gods had to die on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This idea is twice alluded to in the New Testament in the context of making the decision to cease fellowship with someone (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). The implication is that death under the Old Covenant pointed forward to first century church discipline under the New Covenant. But we must note that the reason for this was serving other gods and wilful departing from covenant relationship with the Lord – not minor reasons.

17:14 Moses often reminds them that he knows they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. 30:1; 31:29). Here he shows that he knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king. He had such sensitivity to their weakness and likely failures, and in some areas he makes concessions to them.

17:16 Moses commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt perma-

Egypt, so that he may multiply horses, because Yahweh has said to you, You shall not go back that way again.

¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, so that his heart will not turn away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

¹⁸ When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must write for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹ It shall be with him and he must read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them. ²⁰ Thus his heart will not be raised up above his brothers, and he will not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the

left, so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.

CHAPTER 18 May 1

Offerings for Priests and Levites

The priests the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they will eat the offerings of Yahweh made by fire as their inheritance. ² They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; Yahweh is their inheritance, as He has spoken to them.

³ This shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether ox or sheep. They shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two cheeks and the stomach.

⁴ The first fruits of your grain, your

nently. There are many other example of this kind of thing (14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus whom he typified (18:18). Note that the king was warned not to get horses for himself from Egypt because the very act of sending Israelites back into Egypt might tempt them to return there; we are to be sensitive to the spiritual effect our actions may have upon others.

17:16-20 This has strong relevance to Solomon. He did multiply silver, gold, horses and wives; his heart *was* turned away (:16,17= 2 Chron. 9:20). Yet this passage says that if he studied the Law all his life, this would *not* happen, and also his heart would not be “lifted up above his brethren” (:20). Solomon's whipping of the people and sense of spiritual and material superiority (2 Chron. 10:11; Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9) shows how his heart *was* lifted up. Yet Solomon knew the Law, despite his explicit disobedience to the commands concerning wives, horses etc. But his knowledge of the word didn't bring forth the true humility which it was intended to. Solomon *assumed* he wasn't proud; he *assumed* God's word was having its intended effect upon him, when it wasn't. Such spiritual assumption is a temptation for every child of God. God's intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the commandments of the Law was “to the end that his heart will not *be raised up* above his brothers” – i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would've convicted the King of his own failure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to *be raised up* (18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ.

new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep you shall give him. ⁵ For Yahweh your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons forever. ⁶ If a Levite comes from any of your gates out of all Israel, where he lives as a foreigner, and comes with all the desire of his soul to the place which Yahweh shall choose, ⁷ then he shall minister in the name of Yahweh his God as all his brothers the Levites do, who stand there before Yahweh. ⁸ They shall have similar portions to eat, besides that which comes from his father's inheritance.

Warnings against Sorcery

⁹ When you have come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations. ¹⁰ There must not be found with you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices sorcery or an enchanter, a sorcerer, ¹¹ a charmer, a consulter with a familiar spirit, a wizard or a nec-

romancer. ¹² For whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh, and because of these abominations Yahweh your God drives them out from before you. ¹³ You should be without blame before Yahweh your God. ¹⁴ For these nations that you shall dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery and to diviners; but as for you, Yahweh your God has not allowed you to do so.

The Prophet to Come

¹⁵ Yahweh your God will raise up to you a prophet like me, from the midst of you, of your brothers. You are to listen to him. ¹⁶ This is according to all that you desired of Yahweh your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, so that I do not die. ¹⁷ Yahweh said to me, They have well said that which they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise them up a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him. ¹⁹ Whoever will not

18:6 God encourages us to make special devotions to Him. Thus the Levites could choose to leave their areas in the provinces and go and serve at the sanctuary. We must ask what special devotion we could make in response to His grace.

18:18 Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Acts 3:22). Moses was the shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom. It was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan (10:11). As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ.

listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. ²¹ If you say in your heart, How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken? ²² When a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the thing doesn't follow or happen, that is the thing which Yahweh has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him.

CHAPTER 19 May 2

Cities of Refuge

When Yahweh your God shall cut off the nations whose land

Yahweh your God gives you, and you succeed them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, ² you must set apart three cities for you in the midst of your land, which Yahweh your God gives you to possess. ³ You shall prepare the way, and divide the borders of your land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, into three parts, that any manslayer may flee there. ⁴ This is the case of the manslayer that shall flee there and live. Whoever kills his neighbour unawares and didn't hate him in time past, ⁵ as when a man goes into the forest with his neighbour to chop wood, and his hand fetches a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and hits his neighbour so that he dies; he shall flee to one of these cities

18:22 This is why the prophecies of Christ and of the last days all had some limited fulfilment in the lifetimes of the prophets who gave the prophecies.

19:2 The person who committed something worthy of death but didn't as it were wilfully do it represents each of us. The language of the city of refuge therefore becomes applicable to Christ, our refuge from the results of our sin (Heb. 6:18).

19:3 The command to prepare a way along which to flee to the cities of refuge is expressed with the very same Hebrew words used about God through the Angels preparing a way for Israel to flee along, out of Egypt to the promised land (Ex. 23:20). This was obviously done purely at God's initiative. But now, Israel were asked to do the same – to prepare a way for others' salvation. When we reflect upon our own way of escape from this world, it's clear enough that it was by grace. Our response to that grace must be like Israel's – to prepare a way for others to flee, when they like us find themselves in a situation that is spiritually against them, although not of their conscious choice. In fact, if Israel were indifferent to preparing the way for others' salvation, then innocent blood would be shed and they would be responsible for it (:10). Indifference to providing others with a way of escape from their sin and death means we are actually guilty of their lack of salvation. And yet we tend to think that committed sin is all we have to worry about / avoid. The lesson here, however, bites far more caustically and insistently into our comfort zone. If we are indifferent to marking out the way of escape for others, their blood will be upon our heads. Our chief excuses for not witnessing enthusiastically basically amount to laziness, indifference, not getting our act together because we don't see we have to... when actually, there is an intense urgency about our task.

and live, ⁶ lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer while his heart is hot and overtake him because the way is long, and strike him mortally, whereas he was not worthy of death because he didn't hate him in time past. ⁷ Therefore I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves. ⁸ If Yahweh your God enlarges your border as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give to your fathers, ⁹ if you keep all this commandment to do what I command you this day, to love Yahweh your God and walk always in His ways, then you shall add three cities more for yourselves besides these three, ¹⁰ so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and so guilt for blood be upon you. ¹¹ But if any man hates his neighbour, and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him mortally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, ¹² then the elders of his city must send and bring him from there, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood that he may die. ¹³ Your eye shall not pity him, but you must put away the innocent blood from Israel, that it

may go well with you. ¹⁴ You must not remove your neighbour's landmark, which those of old time have set, in your inheritance which you shall inherit, in the land that Yahweh your God gives you to possess it.

Witnesses

¹⁵ One witness must not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin that he commits. At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall a matter be established. ¹⁶ If an unrighteous witness rises up against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, ¹⁷ then both the men in the controversy shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who shall be in those days. ¹⁸ The judges shall make diligent inquisition, and if the witness is a false witness and has testified falsely against his brother, ¹⁹ then you must do to him as he had thought to do to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from the midst of you. ²⁰ Those who remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil in the midst of you. ²¹ Your eyes must not pity; life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

19:6 *The avenger of blood* – But Israel were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so in some cases (see too Num. 35:12). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative. Rather than continually make use of God's many concessions to human weakness, we should seek to live on a higher level.

19:9 Israel would be provided with more cities of refuge if they were obedient; the way of escape from sin would become easier, as it does for us the more we are obedient to God's principles.

CHAPTER 20 May 3***Rules for War***

When you go forth to battle against your enemies and see horses, chariots and a people more than you, you must not be afraid of them, for Yahweh your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. ² When you draw near to the battle, the priest shall approach and speak to the people ³ and tell them, Hear, Israel, you draw near this day to battle against your enemies; don't let your heart faint; don't be afraid or tremble, neither be scared of them, ⁴ for Yahweh your God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. ⁵ The officers must speak to the people saying, Any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. ⁶ Any man who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten its fruit, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat its fruit. ⁷ Any man who has pledged to be married to a wife and has not taken her, let him

go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her. ⁸ The officers shall speak further to the people and say, Any man who is fearful and fainthearted, let him go and return to his house, lest his brother's heart melt as his heart. ⁹ When the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, they shall appoint captains of armies at the head of the people. ¹⁰ When you draw near to a city to fight against it, proclaim peace to it. ¹¹ If it makes you an answer of peace and opens to you, then all the people who are found therein shall become tributary to you and shall serve you. ¹² If it will make no peace with you but wishes to make war against you, then you shall besiege it. ¹³ When Yahweh your God delivers it into your hand, you must strike every male of it with the edge of the sword, ¹⁴ but the women and the little ones, the livestock and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take for a prey to yourself, and you shall eat the spoil of your enemies, which Yahweh your God has given you. ¹⁵ Thus you must do to all the cities which are very far off

20:1-4 He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened; such was Moses' sensitivity to his people.

20:14 The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves – even though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (see too 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (17:17) and divorce (24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). See on 16:2. The fact God makes concessions to us doesn't mean we can eagerly use them in some spirit of minimalistic service; we should seek to serve God on the highest level we can. The fact there are these different levels – rather than a de-

from you, which are not of the cities of nearby nations. ¹⁶ But of the cities of these peoples that Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, you must save alive nothing that breathes; ¹⁷ you must utterly destroy them: the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Yahweh your God has commanded you, ¹⁸ so that they do not teach you to do after all their abominations, which they have done to their gods; so would you sin against Yahweh your God. ¹⁹ When you besiege a city a long time in making war against it to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them, for you may eat of them, and you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you? ²⁰ Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you shall destroy; cut them down. And you shall build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you until it falls.

CHAPTER 21 May 4 *Regulations Concerning Unsolved Murder*

If anyone is found slain in the land which Yahweh your God gives you to possess, lying in the field and it isn't known who has struck him, ² then your elders and your judges must come forth and measure to the cities which are around him who is

slain. ³ The elders of the city which is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer of the herd, which hasn't been worked with and which has not drawn the yoke, ⁴ and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer to a valley with running water, which is neither ploughed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. ⁵ The priests the sons of Levi must come near, for them Yahweh your God has chosen to minister to Him and to bless in the name of Yahweh, and according to their word shall every controversy be decided. ⁶ All the elders of that city who are nearest to the slain man must wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, ⁷ and they shall say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. ⁸ Forgive, Yahweh, your people Israel whom You have redeemed, and don't allow innocent blood to be among Your people Israel. The guilt of blood shall be forgiven them. ⁹ So you shall put away the innocent blood from the midst of you, when you do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh.

Marrying a Captive

¹⁰ When you go forth to battle against your enemies and Yahweh your God delivers them into your hands and you carry them away captive ¹¹ and see among the captives a

mand for unthinking submission to a law for the sake of it – encourages us to express our *love* for God.

20:19 Here again we see God's desire that we should be sensitive to the natural creation. See on 14:21.

21:11 See on 20:14. The legislation in :11-14 is unique amongst the surrounding na-

beautiful woman, and you have a desire to her and would take her to you as a wife, ¹² then you shall bring her home to your house. She must shave her head and pare her nails ¹³ and put off the clothing of her captivity and remain in your house and bewail her father and her mother a full month. After that you shall go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. ¹⁴ If you have no delight in her, then you must let her go where she will, but you must not sell her at all for money. Since you have humbled her, you must not deal with her as a slave.

The Right of a Firstborn

¹⁵ If a man has two wives, the one beloved and the other hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firstborn son be hers who was hated, ¹⁶ then in the day that he causes his sons to inherit that which he has, he must not make the son of the beloved the firstborn before the son of the hated, who is the firstborn. ¹⁷ He shall acknowledge the firstborn, the

son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

A Rebellious Son

¹⁸ If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father nor the voice of his mother and, though they chasten him, will not listen to them, ¹⁹ then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out to the elders of his city and to the gate of his town. ²⁰ They shall tell the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. ²¹ All the men of his city must stone him to death with stones. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you, and all Israel shall hear and fear. ²² If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and is put to death and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his body must not remain all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him the same day (for cursed of God is he who is hanged on a tree), so

tions, where women were seen as objects of booty and were treated with far less sensitivity than this and usually raped in this situation. Likewise the law of :18-21 teaches equal reverence for *both* parents and not just the father.

21:17 This means that in a situation where there were two sons, the younger son's share was one third. In the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son is given *half*—such was the Father's love for him. This element of unreality in the parable is to signpost the amazing level of love the Father has for us; even when He knows that we will waste what He gives, still He gives, and gives generously.

21:23 *Cursed of God is he who is hanged on a tree* — These words have been misunderstood as meaning that the Lord Jesus as a living being was under one of the Law's curses of condemnation. This cannot be. Crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish method. The Deuteronomy passage was not written with reference to crucifixion, but rather to the custom of displaying the already dead body of a sinner on a pole as a witness and warning. Sin brought the curse; and so every sinful person who died for their

that you don't defile your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance.

CHAPTER 22 May 5

Various Laws

You must not see your brother's ox or his sheep go astray and hide yourself from them; you must surely bring them again to your brother. ² If your brother isn't near to you, or if you don't know him, then you shall bring it home to your house and it shall be with you until your brother seeks after it, and you shall restore it to him. ³ So you must do with his donkey and with his garment and with every lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found; you must not keep it to yourself. ⁴ You must not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him

to lift them up again. ⁵ A woman must not wear men's clothing neither should a man put on women's clothing, for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God.

⁶ If a bird's nest happens to be before you in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the hen sitting on the young or on the eggs, you must not take the hen with the young. ⁷ You must surely let the hen go, but the young you may take to yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days. ⁸ When you build a new house you must make a battlement for your roof, so that you don't bring blood on your house if anyone falls from there. ⁹ You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole fruit be forfeited, the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard. ¹⁰ You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey

sin was bearing the curse of God. They were to be buried quickly, as a sign of God taking no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Jesus died the death of a sinner; He bore our sins, and therefore our curse (Gal. 3:13,14). Every condemned sinner whose body had been displayed had been a type of the sinless Son of God. He was exhibited there for a few hours, totally united with sinful man. And then, because God had no pleasure in this condemnation of sin, the body was taken and buried.

22:1 One theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: here, coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of his people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations, so superbly typifies that of Jesus.

together. ¹¹ You shall not wear mixed stuff, wool and linen together. ¹² You shall make yourselves fringes on the four borders of your garment with which you cover yourself.

Marriage Laws

¹³ If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and hates her ¹⁴ and accuses her of shameful things and brings up an evil name on her and says, I took this woman and when I came near to her I didn't find in her the tokens of virginity, ¹⁵ then shall the father of the young woman and her mother take and bring forth the tokens of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city in the gate. ¹⁶ The young woman's father shall tell the elders, I gave my daughter to this man to wife and he hates her, ¹⁷ and behold, he has accused her of shameful things saying, 'I didn't find in your daughter the tokens of virginity', and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. They shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. ¹⁸ The elders of that city must take the man and chastise him ¹⁹ and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought up an evil name on a virgin of Israel, and she shall be his wife; he may not divorce her all his days. ²⁰ But if this thing is true, that the tokens of virginity were not found in the young woman, ²¹ then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house and the men of her city must stone her to death with stones, because she has done folly

in Israel, to play the prostitute in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you. ²² If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they must both of them die, the man who lay with the woman and the woman. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. ²³ If there is a young woman who is a virgin pledged to be married to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you must stone them to death with stones; the woman, because she didn't cry, being in the city, and the man, because he has humbled his neighbour's wife. So you shall put away the evil from among you. ²⁵ But if the man finds the woman who is pledged to be married in the field, and the man forces her and lies with her, then the man only who lay with her must die, ²⁶ but to the woman you shall do nothing; there is in the woman no sin worthy of death. For as when a man rises against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter; ²⁷ for when he found her in the field, the betrothed woman cried and there was none to save her. ²⁸ If a man finds a woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and lays hold on her and lies with her and they are found, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her must give to the woman's father fifty shekels of silver and she shall be his wife, because he has humbled her; he may not put her away all his days. ³⁰ A man must not take his father's wife, and shall not uncover his father's skirt.

CHAPTER 23 May 6***People Excluded from the Assembly***

He who is wounded in the testicles, or has his privy member cut off, must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh. ² An illegitimate person must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation shall none of his enter into the assembly of Yahweh. ³ An Ammonite or a Moabite must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of Yahweh forever. This is ⁴ because they didn't meet you with bread and water in the way, when you came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵ Nevertheless Yahweh your God wouldn't listen to Balaam, but Yahweh your God turned the curse into a blessing to you, because Yahweh your God loved you. ⁶ You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever. ⁷ You must not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You must not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as a foreigner in his land. ⁸ The children of the third generation who are born to them may enter into the assembly of Yahweh.

Keeping the Camp Clean

⁹ When you go forth to camp against your enemies, you must keep yourselves from every evil thing. ¹⁰ If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of that which happens to him by night, he must go outside the camp. He shall not come within the camp, ¹¹ but when evening comes on he must bathe in water, and when the sun is down he shall come within the camp. ¹² You must have a place also outside the camp where you shall go to relieve yourself, ¹³ and you must have a trowel among your weapons, and when you relieve yourself you must dig with it and turn back and cover that which comes from you; ¹⁴ for Yahweh your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy so that He may not see an unclean thing in you and turn away from you.

Various Laws

¹⁵ You must not deliver to his master a servant who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶ He shall dwell with you, in the midst of you in the place which he shall choose within one of your gates, where it pleases him best.

23:1 Males who could not procreate were barred from the congregation, possibly in prototype of how spiritual procreation was to be a vital characteristic of the future Israel. To bring forth spiritual children in the course of our life before God is expected of us. Israel were seen by the Lord as the tree by the roadside (Mt. 21:19), whose fruit should have been for all that passed by (23:24). But because there was not even the glimmer of this kind of giving of fruit, they were condemned by the Lord.

23:15 This was to remind them how they were escaped slaves. God wanted them to continually remember the way He had saved them (see too :7), and His law was designed to repeatedly prod their conscience about this in daily life. He wants us to live today in constant awareness of our salvation.

You must not oppress him. ¹⁷ There must be no prostitute of the daughters of Israel. Neither should there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel. ¹⁸ You must not bring the hire of a prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of Yahweh your God for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to Yahweh your God. ¹⁹ You must not lend on interest to your brother, interest of money, of food or of anything that is lent. ²⁰ To a foreigner you may lend on interest, but to your brother you shall not lend on interest, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all that you put your hand to in the land where you go in to possess it. ²¹ When you make a vow to Yahweh your God you must not be slack to pay it, for Yahweh your God will surely require it of you and it would be sin upon you. ²² But if you forbear to vow, that will be no sin upon you. ²³ That which has gone out of your lips you must observe and do, according as you have vowed to Yahweh your God, as a freewill offering which you have promised with your mouth. ²⁴ When you come into your

neighbour's vineyard you may eat your fill of grapes at your own pleasure, but you must not put any in your vessel. ²⁵ When you come into your neighbour's standing grain you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not move a sickle to your neighbour's standing grain.

CHAPTER 24 May 7

Law for Divorce

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some unseemly thing in her, he shall write her a bill of divorce and give it into her hand and send her out of his house. ² When she has departed out of his house she may go and be another man's wife. ³ If the latter husband hates her and writes her a bill of divorce and gives it to her and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband who took her to be his wife dies, ⁴ her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she is defiled, for that is abomination before Yahweh. You shall not cause the land to sin,

23:18 Prostitution was forbidden under the Law (:17), but this is another tacit recognition made by Moses that such failure would still occur. We see here how Moses forbade something and then went on to give legislation recognizing that it would still occur.

23:20 Christ in His parable told the rejected man that he should at least have given His money to others on usury (Mt. 25:27). He may have meant that the man should at least have done *something* even if he broke the letter of the law; or He may have meant that if the man had at least shared the Gospel with the Gentiles and got some fruit for Christ, all his other lack of achievement would've been overlooked.

24:1 In the case of adultery a man could have his wife killed; apply the trial of jealousy of Num. 5; forgive her; or divorce her, as allowed for here. We have choices as to how we respond to human failure against us, and the very existence of the choices is in order to exercise our spirituality.

24:4 The prophets describe God divorcing Israel for her infidelity and yet still asking her to return to Him. He chose this metaphor to reflect the level of His desperate love

which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance.

Various Laws

⁵ When a man takes a new wife he shall not go into the army, neither must he be assigned any business. He shall be free at home for one year and shall please his wife whom he has taken. ⁶ No man may take the mill or the upper millstone as pledge, for he takes a life in pledge. ⁷ If a man is found stealing any of his brothers of the children of Israel, and he deals with him as a slave or sells him, then that thief must die. So you shall put away the evil from among you. ⁸ Take heed that in the plague of leprosy you observe diligently to do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you. As I commanded them, so you shall observe to do. ⁹ Remember what Yahweh your God did to Miriam by the way as you came forth out of Egypt. ¹⁰ When you lend your neighbour any kind of loan, you must not go into his house to get his pledge. ¹¹ You shall stand outside and the man to whom you

lent shall bring the pledge outside to you. ¹² If he is a poor man you must not sleep with his pledge; ¹³ you must surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goes down so that he may sleep in his garment and bless you, and it shall be righteousness to you before Yahweh your God. ¹⁴ You must not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is of your brothers or of the foreigners who are in your land within your gates. ¹⁵ Each day you must give him his hire. The sun must not go down on it for he is poor and sets his heart on it, lest he cry against you to Yahweh and it be sin to you. ¹⁶ The fathers must not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin. ¹⁷ You must not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, nor take a widow's clothing in pledge, ¹⁸ but you must remember that you were a bondservant in Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you from there, therefore I command you to do this.

for His people – that He would do what His own law declared to be abomination to Him. That same kind of love is what He has for us today.

24:10 Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this, and is a sign of his maturity. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of His brethren represented Him (Mt. 25:40). Moses for all his wealthy background and high status amongst Israel could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Ex. 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. He typified in this the sensitivity of God's son to our spiritual poverty. In some things we all have some advantage over others; some 'wealth' which they

Kindness to the Needy

¹⁹ When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat your olive tree do not go over the boughs again. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow. ²¹ When you harvest your vineyard do not glean it afterwards yourselves. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow. ²² You shall remember that you were a bondservant in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.

CHAPTER 25 May 8***More Laws***

If there is a controversy between men, and they come to judgment

and the judges judge them, then they must justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. ² If the wicked man is worthy to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence according to his wickedness, by number. ³ Forty stripes he may give him. He must not exceed this number. If he should beat him with many more than forty stripes, then your brother may seem vile to you. ⁴ You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain. ⁵ If brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead should not be married outside to a stranger. Her husband's brother should go in to her and take her to him as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ The firstborn whom she bears shall succeed in the name of his brother who is dead, so that his name is not blotted out of Israel. ⁷ If the man

don't have; for even the wealthiest person has some area of spiritual poverty in their lives. We are not to shame them, but to be sensitive to how they might feel if that poverty is exposed before us.

25:3 There's a tendency in us to be harsh in punishing others for their sin. This is psychologically explainable by our conscience for our own sins, and subconsciously realizing we deserve punishment; we then eagerly transfer this guilt and need for punishment onto others. Instead we are to confess our sins and believe that the final judgment for our sin was in Christ upon the cross; and if we believe this to the point of really feeling it, we will never punish anyone more than required, indeed we will be gracious to them as God has been to us.

25:4 Moses' sensitivity is shown by the kind of laws he added in Deuteronomy; e.g. "You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain". This is quoted by Paul as being actually part of the Law (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), showing that Moses was so attune with the mind of God that these practical extensions which his sensitivity led him to command Israel were indeed the inspired commandments of God. In the same way as we should not appear unreasonable to men (:3), so we should not to animals. There are other examples of sensitivity to the natural creation in Deuteronomy in 14:21; 20:19 [see notes there].

25:5 This tacitly allowed polygamy. Here we have an example where one principle [the one man: one woman ideal of Eden] is in conflict with another [to build up the

doesn't want to take his brother's wife, then she shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, My husband's brother refuses to raise up to his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me. ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he stands and says, I don't want to take her; ⁹ then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot, spit in his face, and say, So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house. ¹⁰ His name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his shoe untied'. ¹¹ When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draws near to deliver her husband out of the hand of him who strikes him, and puts forth her hand and takes him by the private parts, ¹² then you shall cut off her hand, your eye shall have no pity. ¹³ You must not have in your bag different weights, a great and a small. ¹⁴ You must not have in your house different measures, a great and a small. ¹⁵ You shall have a perfect and just weight. You shall have a

perfect and just measure, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you. ¹⁶ For all who do such things, all who do unrighteously, are an abomination to Yahweh your God. ¹⁷ Remember what Amalek did to you by the way as you came forth out of Egypt, ¹⁸ how he met you by the way and struck the hindmost of you, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary, and he didn't fear God. ¹⁹ Therefore when Yahweh your God has given you rest from all your enemies all around in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, you must blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky. Do not forget.

CHAPTER 26 May 9

Giving the Firstfruits to God

When you come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and possess it and dwell in it, ² take of the first of all the fruit of the ground which you bring in from your land that Yahweh your God gives you, and put it in a basket and go to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to [family name of your childless brother]. God could have arranged ethics in a simpler manner; but He has allowed and in this case encouraged the development of such conflicts in order that we think and reason things through, and make whatever decision we do consciously and from our own desire rather than merely in mindless submission to a commandment.

25:11 The principle from this is that each person has a weakness, an exposed point in their lives or character, which we are aware of. We are not to use that to unfair advantage – because if we were touched in that way, we likewise could not endure. And God saves His weak people and has historically been angry with those who do such things (:18).

25:14 *In your house* – To avoid temptation it's best to not even possess things which we may be tempted to misuse.

cause His name to dwell there. ³ You shall come to the priest who will be in those days and tell him, I declare this day to Yahweh your God that I have come to the land which Yahweh swore to our fathers to give us.

⁴ The priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of Yahweh your God. ⁵ You shall answer and say before Yahweh your God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father and he went down into Egypt and lived there, few in number, and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

⁶ The Egyptians behaved badly with us, afflicted us and laid on us hard bondage, ⁷ and we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression, ⁸ and Yahweh brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm and with great terror, with signs and wonders; ⁹ and He has brought us into this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ Now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground which You, Yahweh, have given me. You shall set it down before Yahweh your God, and worship before Yahweh your God. ¹¹ You shall rejoice in all the good which Yahweh your God has given to you and to your house; you and the Levite and the foreigner who is in the midst of you.

Tithes

¹² When you have made an end of tithing all your increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the foreigner, to the fatherless and to the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled. ¹³ You shall say before Yahweh your God, I have put away the holy things out of my house and have given them to the Levite and to the foreigner, to the fatherless and to the widow, according to all Your commandment which You have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

¹⁴ I have not eaten of it in mourning, neither have I put away any of it while unclean, nor given any of it for the dead. I have listened to the voice of Yahweh my God. I have done according to all that You have commanded me. ¹⁵ Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the ground which You have given us, as You swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Keep the Commands

¹⁶ This day Yahweh your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore keep and do them with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷ You have undertaken to Yahweh this day to be your God and that you will walk in

26:5 *A Syrian ready to perish* – Israel were to recognize that their Arab brethren were in fact their cousins, and Jacob their ancestor was at one time no more than a starving, desperate, homeless, wandering Arab. That they had been given a fruitful land was therefore a great grace to them.

His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances and listen to His voice. ¹⁸ And Yahweh has undertaken to you this day that you shall be a people for His own possession, as He has promised you, in order that you should keep all His commandments, ¹⁹ so as to make you high above all nations that He has made, in praise, in name and in honour, and that you might be a holy people to Yahweh your God, as He has spoken.

CHAPTER 27 May 10

The Altar on Mount Ebal

Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. ² On the day

when you pass over the Jordan to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must set up great stones and plaster them with plaster ³ and write on them all the words of this law, when you have passed over, that you may go in to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers has promised you. ⁴ When you have passed over the Jordan, I command you this day that you shall set up these stones, in Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. ⁵ There you shall build an altar to Yahweh your God, an altar of stones. You shall lift up no iron on them. ⁶ You shall build the altar of Yahweh your God of uncut stones and you shall offer burnt of-

26:18 God declared Israel “a people for His own possession... *in order that* you should keep all His commandments”. But God had put it the other way around when He told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be “a people for His own possession” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is now referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled – Israel became His “own possession” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient. We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts righteousness to us is a wonderful motivation to live it out as far as we can.

27:4 The word “commandments” occurs 43 times in Deuteronomy, and only 19 times in the other three records of the Law; “remember” occurs 16 times compared to 8 times in the other three. And yet Moses commanded Israel specifically to engrave the law on tables of plaster, not stone, knowing that they would soon be washed away; thus he wished to teach Israel [or try to] the temporary nature of the Law (27:4-8). Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing *love* of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. See on 7:7.

27:5, 6 God wants us to serve Him in simplicity without trying to make our altars externally beautiful as if to impress a human eye.

ferings thereon to Yahweh your God. ⁷ You shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God. ⁸ You must write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly. ⁹ Moses and the priests and Levites spoke to all Israel, saying, Keep silence and listen, Israel: this day you have become the people of Yahweh your God. ¹⁰ You must therefore obey the voice of Yahweh your God and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day.

Curses from Mount Ebal

¹¹ Moses commanded the people the same day saying, ¹² These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people when you have passed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. ¹³ These shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. ¹⁴ The Levites shall answer and tell all the men of Israel with a loud voice, ¹⁵ 'Cursed is the man who makes an engraved or molten image, an abomination to Yahweh, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and secretly sets it up'. All the people shall answer and say 'Amen'. ¹⁶ 'Cursed is he who dishonours his father or his mother'. All the

people shall say 'Amen'. ¹⁷ 'Cursed is he who removes his neighbour's landmark'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ¹⁸ 'Cursed is he who makes the blind wander out of the way'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ¹⁹ 'Cursed is he who deprives the foreigner, fatherless and widow of justice'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²⁰ 'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²¹ 'Cursed is he who lies with any kind of animal'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²² 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²³ 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²⁴ 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbour in secret'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²⁵ 'Cursed is he who takes a bribe to kill an innocent person'. All the people shall say 'Amen'. ²⁶ 'Cursed is he who doesn't confirm the words of this law to do them'. All the people shall say 'Amen'.

CHAPTER 28 May 11

Blessings for Obedience

If you will listen diligently to the voice of Yahweh your God, to ob-

27:6, 7 Eating upon a heap of unhewn stones was understood as a sign of having made a covenant on mutually agreed terms and being at peace with each other (Gen. 31:46,47). Our eating before God at the breaking of bread meeting is something similar.

27:15 *Secretly sets it up* – The list of sins which follow in :15-25 are all matters of the heart or things which are not seen by others. The people were confirming their acceptance of the fact that God sees and knows all things, and there really would be a judgment for them.

serve all His commandments which I command you this day, Yahweh your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth. ² All these blessings shall come on you and be with you, if you will listen to the voice of Yahweh your God. ³ You shall be blessed in the city and you shall be blessed in the field. ⁴ You shall be blessed in the fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the fruit of your animals, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock. ⁵ Your basket and your kneading trough shall be blessed. ⁶ You shall be blessed when you come in and you shall be blessed when you go out. ⁷ Yahweh will cause your enemies who rise up against you to be struck before you. They will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. ⁸ Yahweh will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to; He will bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you. ⁹ Yahweh will establish you for a holy people to Himself as He has sworn to you, if you will keep the commandments of Yahweh

your God and walk in His ways. ¹⁰ All the peoples of the land will see that you are called by the name of Yahweh and they will be afraid of you. ¹¹ Yahweh will make you prosperous in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² Yahweh will open to you His good treasure in the sky, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations and you shall not borrow. ¹³ Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only be above and you shall not be beneath, if you will listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you this day, to observe and to do, ¹⁴ and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Curses for Disobedience

¹⁵ But if you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all His commandments

28:10 *You are called by the name of Yahweh* – Whatever carried the name of a person was seen as his property. If a city was conquered, it bore the name of the conqueror (2 Sam. 12:28); the names of owners were on their property (Ps. 49:12). So to bear God's Name is to recognize His complete ownership and even conquest of us. And yet there's a significant twist to all this in Is. 43:1: "I have called you by *your* name, because you are mine". It seems like a slip – we expect God to say that He has called us by *His* Name, because we are His. But no – He wishes us to bear both His Name and our own name, He doesn't wish to subsume us beneath His ownership and manifestation to the point that we are not significant as persons.

28:12 *You shall lend to many nations* – Money lending worldwide has been a feature of Jewish existence over the centuries, and yet this is here predicted as happening only if they were obedient. They have been disobedient, and yet it's as if God loves to advertise His grace to the world by still blessing the disobedient.

and His statutes which I command you this day, all these curses shall come on you and consume you. ¹⁶ You shall be cursed in the city and you shall be cursed in the field. ¹⁷ Your basket and your kneading trough shall be cursed. ¹⁸ The fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock shall be cursed. ¹⁹ You shall be cursed when you come in and you shall be cursed when you go out. ²⁰ Yahweh will send on you cursing, confusion and rebuke in all that you put your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the evil of your doings by which you have forsaken Him. ²¹ Yahweh will make the pestilence cleave to you until He has consumed you from off the land into which you now go in to possess it. ²² Yahweh will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation and with fiery heat; with the sword, with blight and with mildew, and they shall pursue you until you perish. ²³ Your sky that is over your head shall be brass and the earth that is under you shall be iron. ²⁴ Yahweh will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from the sky shall it come down on you until you are destroyed. ²⁵ Yahweh will cause you to be struck before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them but shall flee seven

ways before them, and you shall be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶ Your dead body shall be food to all birds of the sky and to the animals of the earth, and there shall be none to frighten them away. ²⁷ Yahweh will strike you with the boil of Egypt and with the tumours, the scurvy and the itch, from which you cannot be healed. ²⁸ Yahweh will strike you with madness, blindness and astonishment of heart. ²⁹ You shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. You shall be only oppressed and robbed always and there shall be none to save you. ³⁰ You will betroth a wife and another man shall lie with her. You will build a house and not dwell therein. You will plant a vineyard and not use its fruit. ³¹ Your ox will be slain before your eyes and you shall not eat of it. Your donkey will be violently taken away from before your face and shall not be restored to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies and you will have none to save you. ³² Your sons and your daughters will be given to another people and your eyes will look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no power in your hand. ³³ The fruit of your ground and all your labours shall a nation which you don't know eat up, and you will be only oppressed and

28:24 *The rain of your land powder and dust* – This has not yet been fulfilled; maybe because God in His grace has not punished His people according to all their sins. Or it could be that it has yet to be fulfilled in the final tribulation to come upon Israel. Nuclear fallout would fulfil these words – and likewise those of Is. 29:6, describing the invasion of latter day Babylon / Assyria, which have yet to be accurately fulfilled.

crushed always,³⁴ so that you will be mad because of the sight your eyes shall see.³⁵ Yahweh will strike you in the knees and in the legs with a sore boil of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.³⁶ Yahweh will bring you and your king whom you will set over you to a nation that you have not known, you nor your fathers, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone.³⁷ You will become an astonishment, a proverb and a byword among all the peoples where Yahweh shall lead you away.³⁸ You will carry much seed out into the field and gather little in, for the locust shall consume it.³⁹ You will plant vineyards and dress them but you shall neither drink of the wine nor harvest them, for the worm shall eat them.⁴⁰ You will have olive trees throughout all your borders but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off.⁴¹ You will father sons and daughters but they shall not be yours, for they will

go into captivity.⁴² All your trees and the fruit of your ground shall the locust possess.⁴³ The foreigner who is in the midst of you shall mount up above you higher and higher and you shall come down lower and lower.⁴⁴ He will lend to you and you shall not lend to him; he will be the head and you shall be the tail.⁴⁵ All these curses will come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you,⁴⁶ and they shall be to you and your seed a sign and a wonder forever.⁴⁷ Because you didn't serve Yahweh your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart because of the abundance of all things,⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies whom Yahweh shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you.⁴⁹ Yahweh will

28:36 *There you shall serve other gods* – Israel and Judah are strongly rebuked by the prophets for their choice to do this, and are begged to cease doing so. But their free-will choice to sin was in fact a result of being cursed by God; they were led into sin, as it were, by God confirming them in the downward spiral they had chosen to be part of. In this case, if they didn't want to be cursed, then they simply had to stop living out the curse in their lives.

28:47 Israel would be rejected and cursed if they didn't serve God "with gladness". Service to God must be done with joy; if we lose the rejoicing of our hope, we lose the hope itself (Heb. 3:6). Joy is therefore a vital characteristic of God's true people.

28:47, 48 Moses offered Israel the choice of bondservitude to either Yahweh or their enemies. The whole of Romans 6 plays on this idea. We are slaves to sin, and through entering Christ by baptism, we become slaves of righteousness. Total freedom to do what we personally want is not possible. We are slaves, we can't serve two masters. So why not serve Christ rather than the Biblical devil? Jesus spoke of His servants having a light yoke (Mt. 11:30). The Bible minded among His hearers would have thought back to the threatened punishment of an iron yoke for the disobedient (:48). 'It's a

bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flies; a nation whose language you will not understand; ⁵⁰ a nation of fierce face who will not respect the person of the old nor show favour to the young. ⁵¹ It will eat the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed. It will not leave you grain, new wine or oil, the increase of your livestock or the young of your flock, until it has caused you to perish. ⁵² It will besiege you in all your gates until your high and fortified walls come down in which you trusted, throughout all your land. It will besiege you in all your gates throughout all your land which Yahweh your God has given you. ⁵³ You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters, whom Yahweh your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. ⁵⁴ The man who is tender among you and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother and toward the wife

of his heart and toward the remnant of his children whom he has remaining, ⁵⁵ so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your gates. ⁵⁶ The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye will be evil toward the husband of her heart and toward her son and her daughter, ⁵⁷ and toward her young one who comes out from between her feet and her children whom she shall bear; for she will eat them secretly, for want of all things in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your gates.

Further Warnings

⁵⁸ If you will not observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and fearful name, YAHWEH

yoke either way', they would have concluded. But the Lord's yoke *even in this life* is light, and has promise of the life which is to come! The logic of taking it, with the restrictions it inevitably implies (for it is a yoke), is simply overpowering.

28:50-57 Moses not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration. Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than that outlined in Lev. 26. Notice that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. Moses in his spiritual maturity urged Israel to be the more fully aware of the nature and reality of Divine punishment for human sin; his increased focus upon grace and salvation didn't mean that he increasingly ignored the harder side of God – but rather the opposite was the case.

28:58 For all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus 26 it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst here, :58 says that obedience results in fearing the awesome Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his*

YOUR GOD, ⁵⁹ then Yahweh will make your plagues terrible and the plagues of your seed, great plagues and of long continuance, and severe sicknesses and of long continuance. ⁶⁰ He will bring on you again all the diseases of Egypt which you feared, and they shall cling to you. ⁶¹ Also Yahweh will bring on you every sickness and every plague which is not written in the book of this law, until you are destroyed. ⁶² You will be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of the sky for multitude, because you didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God. ⁶³ As Yahweh rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so Yahweh will rejoice over you to cause you to perish and to destroy you. You will be plucked from off the land where you go in to possess it. ⁶⁴ Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from the one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, and there you shall serve other gods which you have not known – you nor your fathers – gods of wood and stone. ⁶⁵ Among

these nations you shall find no ease and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot. Yahweh will give you there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and pining of soul, ⁶⁶ and your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear night and day and shall have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you will say, I wish it were evening! and at evening you will say, I wish it were morning! for the fear of your heart which you shall fear and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see. ⁶⁸ Yahweh will bring you into Egypt again with ships by the way of which I said to you, You shall see it no more again, and there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies for bondservants and for bondmaids, and no man will buy you.

CHAPTER 29 May 12

The Covenant

These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides

God and His Name. This is blessing enough. Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end, perceiving that the wonder of relationship with God far eclipses any material blessing we may receive from Him in this life. To respect or fear the Name doesn't mean to remember that God's Name is 'Yahweh'. It refers to his character (Ex. 34:4-6). The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4) – this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh involved practical obedience to "all the words of this law". Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conforming of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it – thus Moses comments that "I will proclaim the name of Yahweh; you, ascribe greatness to our God" (32:3).

28:68 God's promise that Israel would never again see Egypt was therefore conditional, and thus capable of being broken; although those conditions aren't mentioned when He makes the promise in 17:16; Ex. 14:13.

the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. ² Moses called all Israel and said to them, You have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land; ³ the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and those great wonders. ⁴ But Yahweh has not given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day. ⁵ I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not grown old on you and your shoes have not grown old on your feet. ⁶ You have not eaten bread neither have you drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am Yahweh your God. ⁷ When we came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle and we struck them, ⁸ and we took their land and gave it for an inheritance to

the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of the Manassites. ⁹ Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them, so that you may prosper in all that you do. ¹⁰ You stand this day, all of you, before Yahweh your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones, your wives and the foreigner who is in the midst of your camps, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water. ¹² You wish to enter into covenant with Yahweh your God and into His oath, which Yahweh your God makes with you this day, ¹³ that He may establish you this day to Himself for a people and that He may be to you a God, as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ¹⁴ Not only with you do I make this covenant and this oath, ¹⁵ but with

29:10 Moses on that last day of his life addressed the whole assembly of Israel; and yet he so often speaks in the singular (“thee” rather than “ye” in the KJV), as if to emphasize that the laws and covenant he was giving them was to them *personally*. This is made clear in: 10,12: “You (plural) stand this day, all of you, before Yahweh... that you (singular) may enter into covenant with Yahweh”. That covenant was made anew by God to each generation and individual. We cannot hide within a family or a church. We are individually responsible to God and will personally be saved. In the same spirit, Moses points out that Yahweh is the only God that can be personally *known*; all the idols could not be known personally (:26). No fewer than 137 times in Scripture we read the phrase “my God”. This was used in a public, unashamed way by many of God’s children (it was a particular favourite of Nehemiah, David and Paul).

29:10–13 This is a very long sentence; from now until the end of his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses uses (in the Hebrew text) very long sentences, at times with unclear syntax – as if he was getting increasingly intense and excited as he speaks of the utter realities to which we stand personally related by our covenant with God.

29:12 For Israel in covenant with God, absolutely nothing – not sex, menstruation, the content of clothing fabric, diet – could fall outside the scope of their covenant relationship. And so in principle it is with us under the new covenant. Such a relationship also precludes the worship of *any* other God. The covenant we have entered has constant and binding claims upon our loyalty; and it also speaks of God’s constant and passionate commitment to us.

him who stands here with us this day before Yahweh our God and also with him who is not here with us this day. ¹⁶ For you know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed, ¹⁷ and you have seen their abominations and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them. ¹⁸ This covenant is made lest there should be among you man or woman, family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from Yahweh our God, to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood, ¹⁹ who, when he hears the words of this curse blesses himself in his heart saying I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart, to destroy the moist with the dry. ²⁰ Yahweh will not pardon him, but then the anger of Yahweh and His jealousy will smoke against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie on him, and Yahweh will blot out his name from under the sky. ²¹ Yahweh will separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that is written in this book of the law.

Result of Breaking the Covenant

²² The generation to come, your children who shall rise up after you and the foreigner who will come from

a distant land, shall see the plagues of the land and the sicknesses with which Yahweh has made it sick. ²³ The whole land is sulphur, salt and burning, that it is not sown nor giving produce and no grass grows therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zebaiim, which Yahweh overthrew in His anger and in his wrath. ²⁴ They and all the nations shall say, Why has Yahweh done thus to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean? ²⁵ Then men shall say, Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, ²⁶ and went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods that they didn't know and that He had not given to them. ²⁷ Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against this land, to bring on it all the curse that is written in this book; ²⁸ and Yahweh rooted them out of their land in anger in wrath and in great indignation and cast them into another land, as at this day. ²⁹ The secret things belong to Yahweh our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

CHAPTER 30 May 13

Blessings after Repentance

When all these things have come on you, the blessing and the

29:18 Applied in Heb. 12:15 to those within the church who discourage others from total commitment to God. Those who don't totally commit to Him will poison others by their attitude and cause them to fall away from God's grace; and we must be keenly aware of this, because there are such people around – so says Heb. 12:15.

curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you, ² and return to Yahweh your God and obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul; ³ then Yahweh your God will turn your captivity and have compassion on you. He will return and gather you from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you. ⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of the heavens, from there will Yahweh your God gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵ Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it, and He will do you good and multiply you above your fathers. ⁶ Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. ⁷ Yahweh your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you and persecuted you. ⁸ You shall return and obey the voice of Yahweh and do all His commandments which

I command you this day. ⁹ Yahweh your God will make you plenteous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, for good. Yahweh will again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰ if you will obey the voice of Yahweh your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if you turn to Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

The Choice of Life or Death

¹¹ For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it back down to us and make us hear it, that we may do it? ¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go down into the deeps for us and bring it up to us and make us hear it, that we may do it? ¹⁴ But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. ¹⁵ Behold, I have set before you this day

30:3 God's attempt to regather Judah from captivity *before* they had repented therefore indicates His grace, operating at times beyond the conditions which He has stated in His own word.

30:11-14 Moses assures them that full obedience to his Law is possible (even if finally nobody achieved it). It wasn't as if they had to climb up to Heaven or go down beneath the sea, they had to simply from the heart obey it as a way of life and thinking. In Rom. 10:6-9 Paul quotes this passage, having observed that in practice nobody has actually succeeded in fully keeping the Law. He says that the going up to Heaven was done by Christ at His ascension, and going beneath the sea and returning by Christ at His resurrection; and so what remains is not to keep the Mosaic law but to believe in the word of Christ; and the "life" promised here (:15) will be *eternal* life for those in Christ.

life and good, and death and evil. ¹⁶ I command you this day to love Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes and His ordinances, that you may live and multiply, and that Yahweh your God may bless you in the land where you go in to possess it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you will not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day, that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land, where you pass over the Jordan to go in to possess it. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed. ²⁰ Love Yahweh your God, to obey His voice and to cling to Him; for He is your life and the length of your days, that you

may dwell in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give them.

CHAPTER 31 May 14

The Appointment of Joshua

Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. ² I am one hundred and twenty years old this day. I can no more go out and come in, and Yahweh has said to me, ‘You shall not go over this Jordan’. ³ Yahweh your God, He will go over before you. He will destroy these nations from before you and you shall dispossess them. Joshua shall go over before you, as Yahweh has spoken. ⁴ Yahweh will do to them as He did to Sihon and to Og, the kings of the Amorites and to their land, whom He destroyed. ⁵ Yahweh will deliver them up before you and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have command-

30:15 Moses pleaded with them to see that “this day... this day... this day” he set before them life and death, forgiveness or salvation (:15-19). He saw the urgent importance of deciding now, in this moment, for the Lord. The Lord Jesus had His mind on this when He told the thief with the same emphasis that “this day” He could pronounce that he would be saved, not condemned (Lk. 23:46). He felt like Moses, but greater than Moses, in that He not only set before men the choice, but could grant them the salvation they sought.

30:17 The heart that *turns away* from God by free choice then becomes *drawn away* by other forces.

30:19 Finely aware of the seriousness of our relationship with God, Moses intensely pleads with Israel to “choose life”, not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of this passage. For he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life.

31:2 That Moses lived to 120 with full faculties was as unusual then as it would be today; because lifespans at that time were around 70 years, and those older than seventy usually had weakened faculties as happens today too (Ps. 90:10). Moses says there in Ps. 90:10 that “*our* years” are 70 – even though he himself had much longer life, and would’ve been writing Psalm 90 at well over 80 years old. We see here the empathy which comes from love, and his sense of identity with God’s people. All this is a pat-

ed you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid nor be scared of them, for Yahweh your God, He it is who goes with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you. ⁷ Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which Yahweh has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. ⁸ It is Yahweh who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you neither forsake you. Don't be afraid neither be dismayed.

Command to Read the Law Every Seven Years

⁹ Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi, who bore the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, and to all the elders of Israel. ¹⁰ Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in

the feast of tents, ¹¹ when all Israel has come to appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² Assemble the people, men, women and the little ones and your foreigner who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear Yahweh your God and observe to do all the words of this law; ¹³ and that their children, who have not known, may hear and learn to fear Yahweh your God as long as you live in the land where you go over the Jordan to possess it.

God Predicts the People's Failure

¹⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, your life will end shortly. Call Joshua and present yourselves in the Tent of Meeting, so that I may commission him. Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁵ Yahweh appeared in

tern for us in our relationships and feelings toward others, but it also typifies Christ's ultimate sensitivity, empathy and identity with the limitations of our humanity.

31:6 *He will not fail you nor forsake you* – Specifically applied to each of us in Heb. 13:5, in the context of appealing for us not to be covetous, worrying, as it were, how we are to cope on our journey into the Kingdom.

31:9 It takes about four hours to read through the book of Deuteronomy out loud. The many references in Deuteronomy to “this day” (see on 30:15) suggest Moses spoke it all on the last day of his life. It was a very busy day – he spoke Deuteronomy, wrote a copy of it (or of the entire Law; notice how Dt. 24 was *written* by Moses, Mk. 10:5), sings a Song to that silent multitude (surely with a lump in his throat, especially at points like 32:15), and then he turns and climbs the mountain to see the land and meet his death. The fact it all happened on his birthday just adds to the pathos of it all (:2). The huge amount of work which he did on that last day of his life looks forward to Christ's huge achievement in the day of His death. No wonder Yahweh describes that day of Moses' death with an intensive plural: “Your days (an intensive plural, i.e. the one great time / day) are made ready that you must die” (:14). May our last day be as intensely productive as his.

31:14 The day of our death is made ready ahead of time by God.

the Tent in a pillar of cloud. The pillar of cloud stood over the door of the Tent. ¹⁶ Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, you shall lay down to sleep with your fathers, and this people shall rise up and play the prostitute after the strange gods of the land where they go to be among them, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷ Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and I will hide My face from them and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall come on them, so that they will say in that day, 'Haven't these evils come on us because our God is not among us?' ¹⁸ I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. ¹⁹ Now therefore write this song for yourselves and teach it to the children of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. ²⁰ For when I have brought them into the land which I swore to their fathers, flowing with milk and honey, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise Me and break My covenant. ²¹ When many evils and troubles have come on them, this song shall testify before them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten

out of the mouths of their seed; for I know their imagination which they plan this day, before I have brought them into the land which I swore. ²² So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the children of Israel. ²³ He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you. ²⁴ When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book, ²⁵ he commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of Yahweh saying, ²⁶ Take this book of the law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. ²⁷ For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck; even while I am alive with you this day you have been rebellious against Yahweh, and how much more after my death? ²⁸ Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them. ²⁹ For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will happen to you in the latter days, because you will do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.

31:19, 21 God recognized the power of music by arranging things in this way; He knew they would sing this to themselves and the words would influence them. We must ensure that the music we listen to and hum to ourselves is leading us to repentance and to God, rather than the other way; because music and lyrics are powerful.

The Song of Moses

³⁰ Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were finished.

CHAPTER 32 May 15

Give ear, you heavens, and I will speak. Let the earth hear the words of my mouth. ² My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall condense as the dew, as the small rain on the tender grass, as the showers on the herb. ³ For I will proclaim the name of Yahweh. Ascribe greatness to our God ⁴ the Rock; His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He. ⁵ They have dealt corruptly with Him; they are not His children any more because of their blemish. They are a perverse and crooked generation. ⁶ Do you thus repay Yahweh, foolish people and unwise? Isn't He

your father who has bought you? He has created you and established you. ⁷ Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will show you, your elders and they will tell you. ⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. ⁹ For Yahweh's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. ¹⁰ He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He embraced him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. ¹¹ As an eagle that stirs up her nest and flutters over her young, He spread abroad his wings. He took them, He carried them on His feathers. ¹² Yahweh alone led him, there was no foreign god with Him. ¹³ He made him ride in victory on the high

32:3 As Christ declared God's Name just before His death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX). Moses saw at the end of his life that there was no third way: it was either complete dedication and salvation, or rebellion and condemnation. See on 28:58.

32:5 *A perverse and crooked generation* – This description of Israel is quoted about the world in Phil. 2:15. If God's people worship this world's idols, then they are counted by God as the world.

32:10 *As the apple of His eye* – One of the most sensitive spots on the body. Anyone who even comes near God's people stimulates a natural response from God, so sensitive is He to our pain in this life.

32:11 *Carried them on His feathers* – The allusion is to how the eagle teaches its young to fly. The eagle appears from earth to be carrying the young on her wings, but actually she is throwing them into the air and teaching them to fly within the draft from her own wings. This is a beautiful picture of how God works through His Spirit to teach us independent flight, rather than simply carrying us. As the truly good parent, He seeks to give us independence and teach this to us in the course of our wilderness journey.

32:12 Although there was no pagan god with Yahweh at the time of the exodus, there was with Israel – for they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, just

places of the earth and fed him with the increase of the field. He caused him to suck honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock, ¹⁴ butter of the herd and milk of the flock with fat of lambs, rams of the breed of Bashan and goats, with the finest of the wheat. Of the blood of the grape you drank wine. ¹⁵ But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked. You have grown fat. You have grown fat. You have become covered with flesh. Then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. ¹⁶ They moved Him to jealousy with strange gods, they provoked Him to anger with abominations. ¹⁷ They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods that they didn't know, to new gods that came up recently, which your fathers didn't fear. ¹⁸ Of the Rock who became your father you are unmindful, and have forgotten God who gave you birth. ¹⁹ Yahweh saw and abhorred, because of the provocation of His sons and His

daughters. ²⁰ He said, I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very perverse generation, children in whom is no loyalty. ²¹ They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God. They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities. I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. ²² For a fire is kindled in My anger, which burns to the lowest Sheol. It devours the earth with its increase, and sets the foundations of the mountains on fire. ²³ I will heap evils on them. I will spend my arrows on them. ²⁴ They shall be wasted with hunger and devoured with burning heat and bitter destruction. I will send the teeth of animals on them and the poison of crawling things of the dust. ²⁵ Outside, the sword shall bereave and inside, terror shall be on both young man and virgin, the nursing infant with the grey-haired man. ²⁶ I said I would

as we are tempted to take the world with us through the waters of baptism rather than seeing it as cut off from us (Ez. 20:7,8).

32:13 Tragically, Israel went back to those very “high places” to worship the local idols, as the prophets so often lament.

32:15 *Jeshurun grew fat and kicked* – Moses in Deuteronomy so many times warns that Israel would become unfaithful to God once they became prosperous. This is a major theme with him. Any request for material prosperity must be made knowing that really this is not for the best spiritually. And God must struggle with those requests as a parent does with a request for something which they want to give, because they love their child, but know that it will almost certainly be misused. It's no surprise therefore that the majority of God's people have been poor – it is the poor who respond to the Gospel (Mt. 11:5), and the wealthy are a minority amongst us (1 Cor. 1:26).

32:17 *Demons, not God, to gods that they didn't know* – Demons are associated with idols, and they are not the gods which they are believed to be (:21; 1 Cor. 10:20). The language of demon possession we meet in the Gospel records is therefore the language of the day to describe healing of illnesses attributed to demons; but demons have no real existence because there is only one God.

scatter them afar, I would make their memory to cease from among men,²⁷ but I feared the provocation of the enemy, lest their adversaries should judge wrongly, lest they should say, ‘Our hand is exalted, Yahweh has not done all this’.²⁸ For they are a nation without wisdom; there is no understanding in them.²⁹ Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!³⁰ How one could have chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight, had not their Rock sold them and Yahweh delivered them up!³¹ For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.³² For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.³³ Their wine is the poison of serpents, the deadly venom of asps.³⁴ Isn’t this laid up in store with Me, sealed up among My treasures? ³⁵ Vengeance is Mine and punishment, at the time when their foot slides; for the day of their calamity is at hand. The things that are to come on them shall make haste.³⁶ For Yahweh will judge His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their power is gone, that there is none remaining, shut up or left at large.³⁷ He will say, Where are their gods, the rock in

which they took refuge,³⁸ which ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you! Let them be your protection.³⁹ See now that I, even I, am He. There is no god with Me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. There is no one who can deliver out of My hand.⁴⁰ For I lift up My hand to heaven and say, as surely as I live forever,⁴¹ if I whet My glittering sword and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My adversaries and will punish those who hate Me.⁴² I will make My arrows drunk with blood. My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the head of the leaders of the enemy.⁴³ Rejoice, you nations, with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants. He will take vengeance on His adversaries and will make expiation for His land, for His people.⁴⁴ Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun.⁴⁵ When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel ⁴⁶ he said to them, Set your heart to all the words which I testify to you this day, which you must command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.⁴⁷ For it is no vain thing for you, because it is your life

32:36 Israel assembled before Moses really do represent us, for this is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us coming before judgment. But our verse goes on to say that at this very time of judgment, He will have compassion upon His people. Which is a comforting thought to take with us to the judgment seat of Christ.

32:47 Because Moses knew all this, he was pleading with Israel to “choose life”. I wonder if he wasn’t screaming this to them, almost breaking down in the climax of logic and passion which resulted in that appeal. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without

and through this you shall prolong your days in the land, where you go over the Jordan to possess it.

Moses to Die

⁴⁸ Yahweh spoke to Moses that same day saying, ⁴⁹ Go up into this mountain of Abarim, to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab that is opposite Jericho, and see the land of Canaan which I give to the children of Israel for a possession. ⁵⁰ Die on the mountain and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, ⁵¹ because you trespassed against Me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because you didn't sanctify Me in the midst of the children of Israel. ⁵² For you shall see the land before you, but you shall not go there into the land which I give the children of Israel.

CHAPTER 33 May 16

The Blessing of Moses

This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed

the children of Israel before his death. ² He said, Yahweh came from Sinai and rose from Seir to them. He shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with ten thousands of holy ones. At His right hand was a fiery law for them. ³ Yes, He loved the people. All His saints are in Your hand. They sat down at Your feet; each receives Your words. ⁴ Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob. ⁵ He was king in Jeshurun when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together. ⁶ Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few. ⁷ This is for Judah. He said Hear, Yahweh, the voice of Judah. Bring him in to his people; with his hands he contended for himself. You shall be a help against his adversaries. ⁸ Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove at the waters of Meribah; ⁹ who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they

notes. It was no reading of a carefully prepared paper. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgement for sin, his knowledge of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation – singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved. As he came to the end of his speech, he seems to have sensed they didn't grasp the reality of it all: "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life"; and thus his speech rises to a crescendo of intensity of pleading with them, typifying the pattern of the Lord Jesus in His time of dying.

33:9 These words are alluded to by Jesus in explaining why He felt closer to those who listened to His word than to His natural family (Mk. 3:21,31-35; Mt. 12:46-50). He read these same words that we do. To feel this closely to those who are, like us,

have observed Your word and keep Your covenant. ¹⁰ They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar. ¹¹ Yahweh, bless his substance. Accept the work of his hands. Strike through the hips of those who rise up against him, of those who hate him, so that they will not rise again. ¹² Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of Yahweh shall dwell in safety by Him. He covers him all the day long. He dwells between His shoulders. ¹³ Of Joseph he said, His land is blessed by Yahweh for the precious things of the heavens, for the dew, for the deep that couches beneath, ¹⁴ for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, for the precious things of the growth of the moons, ¹⁵ for the chief things of the ancient mountains, for the precious things of the everlasting hills, ¹⁶ for the precious things of the earth and its fullness, the good will of Him who was manifested in the bush. Let this come on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers. ¹⁷ The firstborn of his herd, majesty is his. His horns are the horns of the wild ox; with them he shall push all the peoples to the ends of the land. They are the ten thousands of Ephraim; they are the

thousands of Manasseh. ¹⁸ Of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. ¹⁹ They shall call the peoples to the mountain. There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall draw out the abundance of the seas, the hidden treasures of the sand. ²⁰ Of Gad he said, He who enlarges Gad is blessed. He dwells as a lioness and tears the arm, yes the crown of the head. ²¹ He provided the first part for himself, for there was the lawgiver's portion reserved. He came with the heads of the people. He executed the righteousness of Yahweh, His ordinances with Israel. ²² Of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's cub that leaps out of Bashan. ²³ Of Naphtali he said, Naphtali, satisfied with favour, full of the blessing of Yahweh, possess the west and the south. ²⁴ Of Asher he said, May Asher be blessed with children. Let him be acceptable to his brothers; let him dip his foot in oil. ²⁵ Your bars shall be iron and brass. As your days, so your strength will be. ²⁶ There is none like God, Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens for your help, in His excellence on the skies. ²⁷ The eternal God is your dwelling place. Underneath are the everlasting arms. He thrusts out the enemy from before you and said 'Destroy!' ²⁸ Israel shall

God's spiritual children, can seem an impossible challenge at times; especially in family-based societies where life is one endless social club.

33:20 *He who enlarges Gad* – If Israel had been obedient, their borders could have been enlarged (12:2). It seems God would have done this especially for Gad, even for the sake of one faithful man. Yet there's no evidence it ever happened; another potential set up which was left unfulfilled because of the chronic lack of vision and satisfied-with-what-I-have attitude of God's people.

dwelt in safety alone, the fountain of Jacob in a land of grain and new wine. Yes, His heavens drop down dew. ²⁹ You are happy, Israel. Who is like you, a people saved by Yahweh, the shield of your help, the sword of your excellence! Your enemies shall submit themselves to you; you shall tread on their high places.

CHAPTER 34 May 16

The Death of Moses

Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, opposite from Jericho. Yahweh showed him all the land of Gilead to Dan, ² and all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah to the hinder sea, ³ and the South and the Plain of the valley of Jericho the city of

palm trees to Zoar. ⁴ Yahweh said to him, This is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying ‘I will give it to your seed’. I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there. ⁵ So Moses the servant of Yahweh died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Yahweh. ⁶ He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth Peor, but no man knows of his tomb to this day. ⁷ Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his youth abated. ⁸ The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. ⁹ Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands

33:29 *You shall tread on their high places* – Moses’ very last words are a reference to the idolatrous “high places”, which the prophets lament were a spiritual snare to Israel. Moses’ final wish and knowledge was that ultimately, Israel would quit with idolatry and be Yahweh’s alone. Seeing that he had predicted their spiritual failures, Moses perhaps had his eye on the day when finally God’s people shall conquer all their temptations, even if only a minority of those with whom God works actually get there in the end, all the same, a minority will, and they will be God’s true Israel.

34:6 *He buried him in the valley* – Is. 63:14 says that the Spirit [the Angel] caused Moses to rest as a man leads his animal to water in a valley. The way the Angel buried Moses is very touching. “According to the word of Yahweh” (:5) can bear the translation “By the kiss of Yahweh”, as if the Angel with whom Moses was used to speaking face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, kissed him and as it were reversed the kiss of life, took his breath / spirit away, and laid him down to rest there on the mountain, then carried the body down to the valley and buried him there, to rest until the resurrection. The softness, respect and gentleness of God with His beloved in their time of dying comes over very strongly here.

34:7 Moses was one of those old people who still had a ‘young’ attitude to life; not for him the cynicism which comes with old age; hence Deuteronomy is at times optimistic about people with what could be seen as an almost naive youthful optimism. One wonders whether he was therefore right to accept Jethro’s advice that he needed to arrange helpers lest he wear out (Ex. 18:18), seeing that God had kept him so physically strong, and continued to do so.

on him, and the children of Israel listened to him and did as Yahweh commanded Moses.¹⁰ There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face,¹¹ in all the signs and the wonders which Yahweh sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land¹² and in all the mighty hand and in all the great terror, which Moses worked in the sight of all Israel.

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 1 May 17

God Commissions Joshua

After the death of Moses the servant of Yahweh, Yahweh spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, ² Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you, and all this people, to the land which I give to them, even to the children of Israel. ³ I have given you every place that the sole of your foot will tread on, as I told Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even to the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land

of the Hittites, and to the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. ⁵ No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous to observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. Don't turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you

1:5 *I will not fail you nor forsake you* – We may boldly say that we will *not* be fearful, as Joshua was, because God has addressed to *us* the very words which He did to Joshua: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5,6). In this especially, Joshua is our example. When Heb. 13:13 speaks of *us* going forth outside the camp, perhaps there is a reference to Joshua who dwelt with Moses outside the camp (Ex. 33:11) – thus making Joshua symbolic of us all.

1:6 Joshua is repeatedly made parallel with Israel; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land, just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, so that they might “prosper” (:7 cp. Dt. 29:9).

1:7 *Courageous* – The language of military courage is applied here to the real battle – within the human mind, to obey God's laws. An element of bravery is required to do what God wants, to go against the grain of our natures and against the flow of our environment.

That you may prosper – God's servant Joshua [the same Hebrew name as the Greek name ‘Jesus’] was intended to “prosper”; but in the end it was the Lord Jesus through His death who was the servant who would ‘prosper’ [Is. 52:13, same Hebrew word]. And so, in His foreknowledge, God spoke of “another day” when His begotten Son would fulfil what Joshua could potentially have achieved, and so much more (Heb. 4:8). The lesson for us is that so much has been potentially prepared for us to achieve. Our salvation may not necessarily depend upon achieving all those things, but all the same, so much potentially is possible which we refuse to reach up to, because we are petty minimalists, like Israel, satisfied with their little farm in the valley, rather than seeking to possess the fullness of the Kingdom prepared for them. In Ps. 1:1-3, David

may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein. Thus you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. ⁹ Haven't I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed: for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go.

Preparations for Entering Canaan

¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹ Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, saying, 'Pre-

pare food; for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which Yahweh your God gives you to possess'. ¹² Joshua spoke to the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh saying, ¹³ Remember the word which Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you saying, 'Yahweh your God will give you rest, and will give you this land. ¹⁴ Your wives, your little ones and your livestock shall live in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan; but all your mighty men of valour shall pass over before your brothers, armed, and shall help them ¹⁵ until Yahweh has given your brothers rest, as He

makes several allusions to Joshua. He speaks of how the man who meditates in God's word day and night will prosper in his ways; and he uses the very same Hebrew words as found in Josh. 1:8 in recounting God's charge to Joshua. But David's point is that the man who does these things will not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly" – he won't give in to peer pressure. The fact that Joshua was wrongly influenced by his peers in later life would indicate that he didn't fully keep the charge given to him.

1:13 After the pattern of the Reubenites, we have been given the promised "rest" of the Kingdom here and now (1:13 cp. Heb. 4:3); but we will, like them, only take possession of that inheritance after we have ensured that our brethren have received their possession (:15). So we have a paradox: the Reubenites were given their "rest", but they would only get their "rest" once their brethren had. Those Reubenites really were symbols of us, for this passage is surely behind the reasoning of Heb. 4, where *we* are told that *we* have entered into rest, but yet we must labour if we want to enter into it.

1:13-15 Joshua didn't give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); but he said he had (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential spoken of here – that *he* would lead the people to "rest". The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but both Joshua and Israel failed. Dt. 1:38 states clearly that Joshua would cause Israel to inherit or possess the land. Yet by the end of Joshua's life, Israel were not inheriting the land in totality. He didn't live up to his potential. God's prophecy here was conditional, although no condition is actually stated at the time. God's opening commission to Joshua was that the people were to possess the whole land promised to Abraham, right up to the Euphrates (1:4). But in the end Joshua drew the borders of the land far smaller than these; he didn't even seek to subdue the territory up to the Euphrates, even though God had promised him potential success and even commanded him to do so. Joshua was to divide up the whole land promised to Abraham amongst the tribes of Israel (1:6). He seems to have lacked that vision, and fallen into the mire of minimal-

has given you, and they have also possessed the land which Yahweh your God gives them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and settle it, which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise'.¹⁶ They answered Joshua saying, All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.¹⁷ Just as we listened to Moses in all things, so will we listen to you. Only

may Yahweh your God be with you as He was with Moses.¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your commandment, and doesn't listen to your words in all that you command him, he shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.

CHAPTER 2 May 18

The Spies Come to Rahab

Joshua the son of Nun secretly sent two men out of Shittim as spies,

ism, just content with a utilitarian, small scale conquest, rather than seeing the bigger picture of the potential Kingdom which God wanted to give His people. We can so easily be the same.

1:18 The repeated encouragement to be strong and of a good courage and not be fearful (:6,7,8,18; Dt. 31:23) could imply that Joshua was timid and in great need of encouragement.

2:1 *Secretly* – The sending out of the 12 spies about 40 years earlier was essentially a lack of faith – in the fact that God's Angel had gone ahead of them anyway to spy out the land, and Yahweh Himself had told Israel how good the land was. Perhaps the secrecy involved a sense that this was in fact not really a very spiritual decision and Joshua was somehow furtive about it.

Came into the house of a prostitute – Israel had never known urban life nor perhaps even seen walled cities like Jericho. The spies entered the city at evening time (:2), and the gate was shut (:5). Strangers always attract attention in such places – let alone when the city was in the direct line of attack of the Hebrews. The language / accent of the two spies would've given them away. Having entered the city at dusk, the gates were shut, and they'd have perceived that they were being watched and had been noticed as suspicious strangers. And so they used some desperate initiative, and dived into a whorehouse near the gate. This was the sort of place strangers would go to, as it would be today. We imagine them entering the house, and meeting the madame of the house. "What do you want?" was as dumb a question as the doctor asking the patient "How are you feeling today?". Rahab was a smart woman, accustomed to strangers, and knew what was going on. Within the first couple of sentences, she'd have figured who they were. And it seems they spoke for a short time, maybe an hour or so, realized they were busted, understood they were in a death trap within that walled city, and threw themselves on her mercy. And there, providence kicked in. James 2:25 calls those men "messengers", with a message Rahab believed. They hardly had an hour to tell her the message, before men were knocking on the door enquiring what Rahab knew about the spies. In that brief time, she believed a very sketchy and incomplete Gospel of the Kingdom. And her works reflected that faith, in telling the men [whom local culture would've barred from entering the house of a single woman] that the spies had come and gone. They and their message were 'welcomed in peace' by Rahab

saying, Go, view the land, including Jericho. They went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and slept there. ² The king of Jericho was told, Behold, men of the children of Israel came in here tonight to spy out the land! ³ The king of Jericho sent to Rahab saying, Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered into your house; for they have come to spy out all the land. ⁴ The woman took the two men and concealed them. Then she said, Yes, the men came to me, but I don't know where they came from. ⁵ It happened about the time of the shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I don't know. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them. ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof, and hid them under the stalks of flax, which

she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ The men pursued them the way to the Jordan to the fords. As soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. ⁸ Before they had lain down, she came up to them on the roof; ⁹ and she said to the men, I know that Yahweh has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt; and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond Jordan, to Sihon and to Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ As soon as we had heard it, our hearts melted, neither did there remain any more spirit in any man because of you; for Yahweh your God, He is God in heaven above,

(Heb. 11:31), she 'received' their message and justified herself by works by protecting them (James 2:25).

2:9, 10 When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "The fear of you is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "melting" in fear – quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "melt" because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible – that *she* would be the exception, that with *her* a covenant would be made. When she says that "we *have* heard" about the Exodus (:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people *shall* hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have" – 'yes, we *have* heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we *are* afraid'. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

2:10 Where did she, a whore in Jericho, get that knowledge from? How had she come to know about Yahweh? Presumably from her clients, who would've been travellers who had heard these things and passed them on to her. All this is wonderful encouragement for all sinners – that God has a way of working through sin to His glory, and He doesn't give up so easily with human weakness.

and on earth beneath. ¹² Now therefore, please swear to me by Yahweh, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a true token. ¹³ Please save alive my father, my mother, my brothers and my sisters and all that they have, and will deliver our lives from death. ¹⁴ The men said to her, Our life for yours, if you don't talk about this business of ours; and it shall be, when Yahweh gives us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you. ¹⁵ Then she let them down by

a cord through the window; for her house was on the side of the wall, and she lived on the wall. ¹⁶ She said to them, Go to the mountain, lest the pursuers find you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward, you may go on your way. ¹⁷ The men said to her, We will be guiltless of this your oath which you have made us to swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which you used to let us down. You shall gather to yourself into the

2:12 *Deal kindly* – Heb. 11:31 comments that it was by faith that Rahab did not perish; Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amorite and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them – only death (Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her – she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship (“deal kindly”, cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way. Remember that she was also aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho – and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and *not* make a covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18).

2:18 Rahab was told to bind the scarlet cord in her window “when we come into the land”. But Rahab bound it there immediately when they left – as if she recognized that her land was already in Israel's hands (:21). Considering the whole town was wondering how the spies had escaped, and she was under suspicion, to leave the escape rope dangling there, indeed to take it up and then place it there again immediately (so 2:21 implies), was really stupid. She didn't need to do that at that stage. But the joy of the Gospel should make us fools for Christ's sake. But does it, in our postmodern age? When was the last time the joy of the good news we know, lead you to do something humanly foolish? It could be gathered from Heb. 11:31 that Rahab preached to others the message she had received from the spies – for Rahab did not perish with those “that believed not” – *apeitheo* suggesting disbelief, a wilful refusal to believe. What message did Jericho not believe? There was no particular message for them from the words of Moses or Joshua. The message was presumably an appeal from Rahab, to repent and accept the God of Israel as she had done – to cast themselves upon His mercy. And in any case, as a prostitute estranged from her family, either due to her profession or because estrangement from them had led her to it, she must have gone to her estranged family and preached to them, bringing them within her despised house. If people with a far less complete understanding of the Gospel could risk their lives for it... what does our understanding and faith

house your father, your mother, your brothers and all your father's household. ¹⁹ It shall be that whoever goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood will be on his head, and we will be guiltless. Whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand is on him. ²⁰ But if you talk about this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless of your oath which you have made us to swear. ²¹ She said, According to your words, so be it. She sent them away, and they departed. She tied the scarlet line in the window. ²² They left and came to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers had returned. The pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but didn't find them. ²³ Then the two men returned, descended from the mountain, passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun. They told him all that had happened to them. ²⁴ They said to Joshua, Truly Yahweh has delivered into our hands all the land. Furthermore, all the inhabitants of the land melt away before us!

CHAPTER 3 May 19

Israel Miraculously Cross the Jordan

Joshua rose up early in the morning; and they moved from Shittim, and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel. They lodged there before they passed over. ² It happened after three days that the officers went through the midst of the camp; ³ and they commanded the people saying, When you see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall move from your place, and follow it. ⁴ Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Don't come near to it, that you may know the path to follow; for you have not passed this way before. ⁵ Joshua said to the people, Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you. ⁶ Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and walk in front of the people. They took up the ark of the covenant, and walked ahead of the people. ⁷ Yahweh said to Joshua,

convict *us* to do for the sake of witnessing to it? Our knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom is far more detailed than that of Rahab, who picked up snatches of it from her clients, and had at most an hour's pressured conversation with the spies before she had to show whether or not she believed it. If it motivated her to do all she did – what about us?

3:1 There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. I 'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Today I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. ⁸ You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant saying, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan’. ⁹ Joshua said to the children of Israel, Come here, and hear the words of Yahweh your God. ¹⁰ Joshua said, Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Perizzite, and the Gergashite, and the Amorite, and the Jebusite from before you. ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passes over before you into the Jordan. ¹² Now therefore take twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, for every tribe a man. ¹³ It shall come to pass, when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off. The waters that come down from above shall stand in a heap. ¹⁴ It happened, when the people moved from their tents to pass over the Jordan, that the priests who bore the ark of the covenant walked in front of the people. ¹⁵ When those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark had

dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the time of harvest) ¹⁶ that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great way off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those that went down toward the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people passed over right against Jericho. ¹⁷ The priests who bore the ark of the covenant of Yahweh stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan. Then, all the people of Israel passed over the Jordan on dry ground.

CHAPTER 4 May 19 *Twelve Stones Placed for a Memorial*

When all the nation had completely passed over the Jordan, Yahweh spoke to Joshua saying, ² Take twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, ³ and command them saying, ‘Take from out of the middle of the Jordan, out of the place where the priests’ feet stood firm, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the resting place where you will rest tonight’. ⁴ Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man. ⁵ Joshua said to them, Pass over before the ark of Yahweh your God into the middle of

4:1-3 This is a summary of what happened; the rest of the chapter explains how that situation came about. This is a common feature of Biblical writing; we note that the Greek, linear, strictly chronological approach of European languages isn’t at all the same as Hebrew thought or writing, which presents themes and explanations at the cost of apparently ‘jumping around’ in chronology.

the Jordan, and each of you pick up a stone and put it on your shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel. ⁶ This will be a sign among you, that when your children ask in time to come saying, ‘What do you mean by these stones?’ ⁷ then you shall tell them, ‘Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off’. These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever. ⁸ The children of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan as Yahweh spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. ⁹ Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood. They are there to this day. ¹⁰ For the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that Yahweh commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and passed over. ¹¹ It happened, when all the people

had completely passed over, that the ark of Yahweh passed over with the priests, while the people watched. ¹² The children of Reuben, the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. ¹³ About forty thousand men prepared and armed for war passed over before Yahweh to battle, to the plains of Jericho. ¹⁴ On that day, Yahweh magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life. ¹⁵ Yahweh spoke to Joshua saying, ¹⁶ Command the priests who bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of the Jordan. ¹⁷ Joshua therefore commanded the priests saying, Come up out of the Jordan! ¹⁸ When the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh had come up out of the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before. ¹⁹ The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, on the east border of Jericho. ²⁰ Joshua set up those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan in Gilgal. ²¹ He spoke to the children of Israel

4:14 *Yahweh magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel* – As they entered Canaan, witnessing the waters of humanity held back (hence the reference to the waters stopping at a place called Adam, 3:16), they must have looked at Joshua with huge gratitude and reverence. When our wilderness journey ends and we enter the promised land of God’s Kingdom, all our eyes and hearts will likewise be focused upon Jesus, and we will spend eternity magnifying Him. But we should begin that Christ-centred existence now.

saying, When your children ask their fathers in time to come saying, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ²² then you shall let your children know, saying, ‘Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. ²³ For Yahweh your God dried up the waters of the Jordan from before you, until you had passed over, as Yahweh your God did to the Red Sea which He dried up from before us, until we had passed over; ²⁴ that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of Yahweh, that it is mighty; that you may fear Yahweh your God forever’.

CHAPTER 5 May 20
The Israelite Males Are Circumcised

It happened that when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan westward, and all the

kings of the Canaanites, who were by the sea, heard how that Yahweh had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we had passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more because of the children of Israel. ² At that time Yahweh said to Joshua, Make flint knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. ³ Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. ⁴ This is the reason Joshua circumcised: all the people who were males who came out of Egypt, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness in the way after they came out of Egypt. ⁵ For all the people who came out were circumcised; but all the people who were born in the wilderness by the way as

4:23 Subsequent generations were to understand that this is what God had done *for you*; the Biblical record thus becomes alive for us who are God’s people; it becomes a living word, with us as it were standing there on the banks of Jordan or the Red Sea, participating in the wonder of salvation which occurred then. If we grasp this, then any apparent lack of dramatic action by God in our lives today becomes easier to bear; for He has done so many great things *for us* in what He did for His people historically.

5:2 Everything about the battle plan was somehow humanly foolish – to yet again attempt to teach Israel, old and new, that victory comes from following God’s way, and His way is humanly foolish. The warriors were circumcised before the battle (:2). We know from the Biblical record of Shechem how this would’ve physically weakened the men – for this was only a week or so before the battle. The manna wasn’t phased out – it stopped abruptly just before the battle of Jericho (:12). The people would likely have been short of food, and would’ve been dealing with the problems associated with a new diet – after 40 years! Walking around the city seven times, starting at dawn, would’ve made the people tired. There was no advantage of shock or surprise by doing this. Planning the final assault for late afternoon was hardly smart either – humanly speaking! But all this was – and is – to teach God’s people that victory *His* way involves shedding our human strength, just as Gideon was likewise taught so dramatically.

5:5, 6 The extent of spiritual despair, despondency and apostasy amongst the condemned generation in the wilderness cannot be overstated. By neglecting the circumcision of their they showed their rejection of the Abrahamic covenant with them.

they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. ⁶ For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, even the men of war who came out of Egypt, were consumed; because they didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh. Yahweh swore to them that He wouldn't let them see the land which Yahweh swore to their fathers that He would give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁷ Their children whom He raised up in their place were circumcised by Joshua; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them on the way. ⁸ It happened, when they were done circumcising all the nation, that they stayed in their places in the camp until they were healed. ⁹ Yahweh said to Joshua, Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Therefore the name of that place was called Gilgal to this day. ¹⁰ The chil-

dren of Israel encamped in Gilgal. They kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ They ate unleavened cakes and parched grain of the produce of the land on the next day after the Passover, in that day. ¹² The manna ceased on the next day, after they had eaten of the produce of the land. The children of Israel didn't have manna any more; but they ate the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Joshua Meets an Angel

¹³ It happened that when Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us, or for our adversaries? ¹⁴ He said, No; but I have come now as commander of Yahweh's army. Joshua fell on his

5:10 The Lord told them in Jn. 6 that the true manna was His flesh, which He was to give for the life of the world. Some have supposed from Josh. 5:10-12 cp. Ex. 16:35 that the manna fell for the first time on the eve of the Passover, thus adding even more poignancy to the Lord's equation of the manna with His death.

5:13 As Israel were called to follow the Angel after their Red Sea baptism, so we too follow where the Angel leads. The conquest of Jericho is a classic example of following the Angel. The Angel who was the commander of *Yahweh's* army appearing to Joshua, the commander of God's human army on earth, and standing "opposite him". Joshua was being shown that he had an opposite number in Heaven, a representative there before the throne of God – just as each of us does.

5:14 Note how the Angel answers Joshua's question – 'Are you for me, or against me?'. God has no interest in taking sides in human arguments, demonizing the one side and glorifying the other. The response was simply that the Angel stood for God and was His representative. Religious people so easily fall into this trap of demonizing their enemies, on the basis that "God is with me, and therefore, not with you my opponent, in fact, He hates you because I hate you". The true God and His Angelic servants are far above this kind of primitive dichotomy.

5:13, 14 This can be read as presenting Joshua in a negative light, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him

face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, What does my lord say to his servant? ¹⁵ The prince of Yahweh's army said to Joshua, Take your shoes off of your feet; for the place on which you stand is holy. Joshua did so.

CHAPTER 6 May 20

The Battle Plan for Capturing Jericho

Now Jericho was closely shut up because of the children of

Israel. No one went out, and no one came in. ² Yahweh said to Joshua, Behold, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the mighty men of valour. ³ All your men of war shall march around the city, going around the city once. You shall do this six days. ⁴ Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ It shall

or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

5:14 See on 14:8. In prospect the Angels drove out every tribe that was in the land; the people of Israel had to just go in and possess the work which the Angels had done. So when they failed to drive out certain tribes, this was an example of human failing to be "workers together with God". Thus in prospect, the Angels led them to the promised "rest" – Dt. 25:19; Josh. 1:13; Is. 63:1; although in practice they did not enter that rest because of their faithlessness (Heb. 3:11-4:11), despite the Angel promising He would give them that rest (Ex. 33:4). Man is not alone, we have huge numbers of Angels working to create amazing potentials for us; but we have the choice as to whether we march with them to achieve them.

5:14, 15 The Angel that met Joshua described Himself as "the captain of Yahweh's army", or "host" – the army of Angels that would go before Joshua and Israel to fight their battles. Therefore "Yahweh of armies" or "hosts" is a title often referring to the Angels.

5:15 The command to remove his sandal from holy ground is evidently reminiscent of the command to Moses in a similar situation. Shouldn't Joshua have perceived this, seeing his life was so clearly framed after that of Moses?

6:2 Following the Angel is the theme that lies behind God's statement that because He had already given Jericho to Israel, therefore they should arise and take it. So many victories have been prepared for us in prospect – against addictions, engrained weak-

be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout. The wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him. ⁶ Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Yahweh. ⁷ They said to the people, Go, march around the city, and let the armed men pass on before Yahweh's ark.

Jericho Is Taken

⁸ It was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh advanced and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed them. ⁹ The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the ark went after them. The trumpets sounded as they went. ¹⁰ Joshua commanded the people saying, You shall not shout, nor let your voice be heard, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth,

nesses of character, habits, impossible situations. Israel had to follow the ark, where the Angelic presence of God was (:2 cp. :8). The people were to go up into Jericho 'straight before them' (:5,20), just as the Cherubim-Angels have "straight feet" (Ez. 1:7,9,12). They were to follow in the Angel's steps.

6:5 Shout – The command to "shout" was a reflection of the belief Israel were to have in the fact that God *had already* given them the city – for the Hebrew for "shout" usually refers to a shout of victory. The word is translated "triumph" in Ps. 60:8; 108:9. The same idea of shouting in victory over a city which has been given to God's people recurs in Jer. 50:15 – "Shout against her round about [cp. compassing the walls of Jericho]... her foundations *are* [present tense] fallen, her walls [cp. Jericho's] *are* thrown down" (AV). And this speaks of our latter day victory against Babylon – thus making this whole account of earnest relevance to us who live in the last days, and who will see Babylon fall by faith. Notice how literal Babylon fell by the water of the river being dried up, and the walls being opened – just the same sequence of events that occurred at Jericho.

6:10 "Until the day I tell you, 'Shout!'" implies that the people didn't know the battle plan – each day they would've walked around the city in silence, and nothing happened. The command to "Shout!" didn't come – for six days. The whole exercise was surely to develop their faith. Again, this was the most crazy of battle plans, in human terms. Heb. 11:30 associates the circling of the walls with faith: "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been circled seven days". 2 Cor. 10:3-4 is an allusion to the way that Jericho was taken with such a humanly weak battle plan. The point of the allusion is for us to see ourselves as those nervous Israelites desperately clinging on to their faith in God's victory rather than human strength. And we each have our Jerichos – habits, life-dominating patterns of thinking, that seem so impossible to shift. The deliverance at the Red Sea had been intended to teach Israel these very lessons. The account of the fall of Jericho is recorded in similar language, in order to teach the same lesson. Rahab's house had to be identified by a scarlet cord – like the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' homes

until the day I tell you ‘Shout!’ Then you shall shout. ¹¹ So he caused the ark of Yahweh to go around the city, going about it once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp. ¹² Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of Yahweh. ¹³ The seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of Yahweh went on continually and blew the trumpets: and the armed men went before them. The rear guard came after the ark of Yahweh. The trumpets sounded as they went. ¹⁴ The second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. They did this six days. ¹⁵ It happened on the seventh day that they rose early at the dawning of the day, and marched around the city in the same way

seven times. Only on this day they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ It happened at the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people, Shout, for Yahweh has given you the city! ¹⁷ The city shall be devoted, even it and all that is in it, to Yahweh. Only Rahab the prostitute shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. ¹⁸ But as for you, only keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest when you have devoted it, you take of the devoted thing. That would make the camp of Israel accursed, and trouble it. ¹⁹ But all the silver and gold, and the vessels of brass and iron, are holy to Yahweh. They shall come into Yahweh’s treasury. ²⁰ So the people shouted,

in Egypt. The silence demanded of the people was surely to recall Ex. 14:14, there the people standing before the Red Sea were assured: “The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent”. Compare the command to keep silent whilst *Yahweh* fought, with the common practice of yelling war cries as an ancient army approached their enemy. All human convention, wisdom and strength, was placed in purposeful opposition to what seemed quite counter-instinctive – to be utterly silent whilst *God* did the fighting.

6:11 One wonders whether the comment that “So he caused the ark of Yahweh to go around the city” could imply that the entire fighting force of Israel didn’t bother doing as commanded on the first circuit of the city – possibly they just sent the ark around it. Likewise the people were to shout when the trumpets sounded (:10). But in reality, like a Sunday School play gone wrong, the people shouted, the trumpets sounded, and then the people again shouted (:20). There’s a distinct theme in the record that actually, God’s people didn’t do according to His ideal plan, and yet still He gave them the victory. According to Heb. 11:30, “by faith the walls of Jericho fell down”. Whose faith? What faith? Was Joshua-Jesus’ faith counted to the people? Or was their very weak, hope-for-the-best faith all the same accepted as faith by God’s grace?

6:18 The riches of Jericho are described with a Hebrew word which means both a curse, and something devoted (to God). This teaches a powerful lesson: such riches of this world as come into our possession will curse us, unless they are devoted to the Father. Mammon is an “abomination” (Lk. 16:13,15) – a word associated in the Old Testament with idol worship. We are to not only be free of such idolatry, but despise materialism.

and the priests blew the trumpets. It happened that when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him; and they took the city. ²¹ They utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, both young and old, and ox, sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. ²² Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, Go into the prostitute's house, and bring out from there the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her. ²³ The young men who were spies went in, and brought out Rahab with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. They also brought out all her relatives, and they set them outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ They burnt the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only they put the silver, the gold and the vessels of brass and of iron into the treasury of Yahweh's house. ²⁵ But Rahab the prostitute, her father's household, and all that she had, Joshua saved alive. She lived in the midst of Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers, whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. ²⁶ Joshua commanded them with an oath at that time, saying, Cursed before Yahweh is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho. With the

loss of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up its gates. ²⁷ So Yahweh was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land.

CHAPTER 7 May 21

The Sin of Achan

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the devoted things; for Achan, the son of Carmi the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. Therefore Yahweh's anger burned against the children of Israel. ² Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them saying, Go up and spy out the land. The men went up and spied out Ai. ³ They returned to Joshua and said to him, Don't let all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and strike Ai. Don't make all the people to toil there, for there are only a few of them. ⁴ So about three thousand men of the people went up there, and they fled before the men of Ai. ⁵ The men of Ai struck about thirty-six of them, and they chased them from before the gate even to Shebarim, and struck them at the descent. The hearts of the people melted and became like water. ⁶ Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before

6:24 1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment – and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation. Thus according to the allusion, Rahab and her family represent all the faithful.

7:3-5 Shouldn't Joshua have led them into battle in person (1:5)? He did the second time they attacked Ai (8:15).

the ark of Yahweh until the evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. ⁷ Joshua said, Alas, Lord Yahweh, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to cause us to perish? I wish that we had been content and lived beyond the Jordan! ⁸ Oh Lord, what shall I say, after that Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. What will You do for Your great name? ¹⁰ Yahweh said to Joshua, Get up! Why are you fallen on your face like that? ¹¹ Israel has sinned. Yes, they have even transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. Yes, they have even taken of the devoted things, and have also stolen and also deceived. They have even put it among their own stuff. ¹² Therefore the children of Israel can't stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will not be

with you any more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ¹³ Get up! Sanctify the people and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because Yahweh the God of Israel says, There is a devoted thing in the midst of you, Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted thing from among you. ¹⁴ 'In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. It shall be that the tribe which Yahweh selects shall come near by families. The family which Yahweh selects shall come near by households. The household which Yahweh selects shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ It shall be, that he who is taken with the devoted thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of Yahweh, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel'. ¹⁶ So Joshua rose up early in the morning and brought Israel near by their tribes. The tribe of Judah was selected. ¹⁷ He brought near the family of Judah; and he selected the family of the Zerahites.

7:7, 8 Joshua here lost faith in the promise of 1:5-7,9.

7:10, 11, 13 Joshua is being reminded not to just see himself as part of a community, but to remember his personal relationship with God, and not to have such a low self image.

7:11 All we have, are, were or shall ever be, is purely His gift. Therefore to take for ourselves what is God's is to play God. Materialism and selfishness are in this sense playing God. This was Achan's sin – to take what was devoted to God for himself. And this was why he is described as having 'stolen'. But from whom? From God (cp. 6:18). The fact God owns everything means that there can be no distinction between what is ours and what is God's. To think like that is to steal from Him. And hence the power and force of Mal. 3:8: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me". Have we robbed God in this way, especially in our attitudes and perceptions?

7:13 "Get up!" is repeated twice (:10), as if Joshua was so easily discouraged that he was still lying on the ground, disobedient to God's encouragement.

He brought near the family of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was selected. ¹⁸ He brought near his household man by man, and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected. ¹⁹ Joshua said to Achan, My son, please give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him. Tell me now what you have done! Don't hide it from me! ²⁰ Achan answered Joshua and said, I have truly sinned against Yahweh the God of Israel, and this is what I have done. ²¹ When I saw among the spoil a beautiful Babylonian robe, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, then I coveted them and took them. Behold, they are hidden in the ground in the middle of my tent, with the silver under it. ²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent. Behold, it was hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. ²³ They took them from the middle of the tent, and brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel. They laid them down before Yahweh. ²⁴ Joshua and all Israel with

him took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his cattle, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, Why have you troubled us? Yahweh will trouble you this day. All Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. ²⁶ They raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Yahweh turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place was called The valley of Achor to this day.

CHAPTER 8 May 22

The Conquest of Ai

Yahweh said to Joshua, Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai. Behold, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, with his people, his city, and his land. ² You shall do to Ai and her king as you did to Jericho and her king, except its spoil and its livestock, you shall take for a plunder

7:19 Joshua correctly perceived that repentance is a giving of glory to God's Name.

7:21 A condemned man having hidden God's money in the ground is clearly the basis of Christ's parable about the man who was given one talent, who hid it in the ground and did nothing with it (Mt. 25:25). But in the parable, the man didn't steal it; he was given it by Jesus, but didn't do anything with it. The connection is to perhaps teach us that passively doing nothing with God's wealth is the same as actively stealing it from Him; the sin of omission is just as bad as that of commission.

8:1 Joshua's dismay was a loss of faith in 1:3,9.

8:2 God told Israel to totally destroy the spoil from the cities they attacked. But when they failed to do this with Jericho, God told them that with Ai, the next city on the agenda, they were allowed to keep the spoil; even though Dt. 20:14-16 said that this was how they should treat their distant enemies, but *not* cities like Ai which were part of their inheritance. This was an undoubted concession to human weakness. The

for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it.³ So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up to Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand men, the mighty men of valour, and sent them out by night.⁴ He commanded them, saying, Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. Don't go very far from the city, but all of you be ready.⁵ I, and all the people who are with me, will approach to the city. It shall happen, when they come out against us, as at the first, we will flee before them.⁶ They will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city; for they will say, 'They flee before us, like the first time'. So we will flee before them,⁷ and you shall rise up from the ambush, and take possession of the city; for Yahweh your God will deliver it into your hand.⁸ It shall be, when you have seized on the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do this according to the word of Yahweh. Behold, I have commanded you.⁹ Joshua sent them out; and they went to prepare the ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua stayed among the people that night.¹⁰ Joshua rose up early in the morning, mustered the people, and

went up, he and the elders of Israel, at the head of the people to Ai.¹¹ All the people, even the men of war who were with him, went up and drew near to the city, and encamped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai.¹² He had set about five thousand men in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.¹³ So they set the people, even all the army who was on the north of the city, and the ambush on the west of the city; and Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.¹⁴ It happened, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hurried and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at the time appointed, before the Arabah; but he didn't know that there was an ambush against him behind the city.¹⁵ Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness.¹⁶ All the people who were in the city were called together to pursue after them. They pursued Joshua, and were drawn away from the city.¹⁷ There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who didn't go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel.¹⁸ Yahweh said to Joshua,

same concession to human weakness applied to other cities apart from Ai; it became a general policy that Israelites took all the spoil of the Canaanite cities for themselves; and yet following straight on from this we are told that Joshua "left nothing undone of all that Yahweh commanded Moses" (11:14,15). God accepted those concessions to human weakness, this living on a lower level, as total obedience. The grace of all this is marvellous.

8:5 *We will flee before them* – Fleeing before their enemies was perhaps a recognition of the truth of Dt. 28:25. This was included in the battle plan in order to show recognition that they had sinned and deserved to flee. God gave them, and us, victory on the basis that they recognized that they deserved to be defeated.

Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand. Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city.¹⁹ The ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, entered into the city and took it. They hurried and set the city on fire.²⁰ When the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way. The people who fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers.²¹ When Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and killed the men of Ai.²² The others came out of the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, some on that side. They struck them so that they let none of them remain or escape.²³ They captured the king of Ai alive, and brought him to Joshua.²⁴ It happened that when Israel had made an end of killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness in which they pursued them, and they had all fallen by the edge of the sword until they were

consumed, that all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword.²⁵ All that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.²⁶ For Joshua didn't draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.²⁷ Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took for prey to themselves, according to the word of Yahweh which He commanded Joshua.²⁸ So Joshua burnt Ai and made it a heap forever, even a desolation, to this day.²⁹ He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until the evening, and at the sundown Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raised a great heap of stones on it that remains to this day.

The Blessing and Curse Pronounced

³⁰ Then Joshua built an altar to Yahweh, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal,³¹ as Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones, on which no man had lifted

8:18 The glint of the sun on the javelin would've been the signal for the ambushers to come and attack the city.

8:26 Given the similarities with the battle against Amalek, were Joshua's arms held up in fervent prayer? Prayer is commonly associated with upheld arms. Earlier, Moses had held his hands up whilst Joshua led the army into battle, succeeding because Moses had his hands held up in prayer (Ex. 17:10). Now, Joshua is the one holding his hands up in prayer, whilst Israel are in battle. Lesson: We go through experiences which later repeat; and we are in the position of those who had before prayed for us, and are expected to replicate their examples.

up any iron. They offered burnt offerings on it to Yahweh, and sacrificed peace offerings.³² He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.³³ All Israel, their elders and officers and their judges, stood on both sides of the ark before the priests the Levites who carried the ark of Yahweh's covenant, the foreigner as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of Yahweh had commanded at the first, for the blessing of the people of Israel.³⁴ Afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law.³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua didn't read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the foreigners who were among them.

CHAPTER 9 May 23

The Deception by the Gibeonites

When all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country, and in the lowland, and on all the shore of the great sea in front

of Lebanon, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard of it,² they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel.³ But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai,⁴ they in their turn resorted to a ruse, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins, old and torn and bound up,⁵ and old and patched shoes on their feet, and wore old garments. All the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.⁶ They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, We have come from a far country. Now therefore make a covenant with us.⁷ The men of Israel said to the Hivites, What if you live among us. How could we make a covenant with you?⁸ They said to Joshua, We are your servants. Joshua said to them, Who are you? Where do you come from?⁹ They said to him, Your servants have come from a very far country because of the name of Yahweh your God; for we have heard of His fame, all that He did in Egypt,¹⁰ and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were

9:7 One gets the sense that the Gibeonites' deception was somehow guessed by the elders of Israel, but against their better judgment they disregarded the tell-tale signs. We all have a tendency to go against our better judgment.

9:10 Because a word or phrase means something in one context doesn't mean it *always* means this in *any* context. Thus "yeast" can be a symbol of both the Gospel and also sin. Another simple example is in Dt. 3:20; the land "beyond Jordan" refers to land on the West of the river; but in Josh. 9:10 the same phrase refers to land on the East. That same phrase "beyond Jordan" means something different in different contexts. We can't always assume, therefore, that the same phrase *must* refer to the same thing wherever it occurs.

beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. ¹¹ Our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us saying, ‘Take provision in your hand for the journey and go to meet them, and tell them, We are your servants. Now make a covenant with us’. ¹² This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we went out to go to you; but now, behold, it is dry, and has become mouldy. ¹³ These wineskins which we filled were new; and behold, now they are torn. These our garments and our shoes have become old because of the very long journey. ¹⁴ The men examined their provisions, and didn’t ask counsel from the mouth of Yahweh.

The Covenant Made with the Gibeonites

¹⁵ Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live. The princes of the congregation swore an oath to them. ¹⁶ It happened at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they lived among them. ¹⁷ The children of Israel travelled and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim. ¹⁸ The children of Israel didn’t strike them, because the princes of the congregation had

sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel. All the congregation murmured against the princes. ¹⁹ But all the princes said to all the congregation, We have sworn to them by Yahweh the God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. ²⁰ This we will do to them, and let them live; lest wrath be on us, because of the oath which we swore to them. ²¹ The princes said to them, Let them live, so they became wood cutters and drawers of water for all the congregation, as the princes had spoken to them. ²² Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them saying, Why did you deceive us by saying, ‘We are very far from you’, when you live among us? ²³ Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you will never fail to be bondservants, both wood cutters and drawers of water for the house of my God. ²⁴ They answered Joshua and said, Because your servants were certainly told how Yahweh your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were very afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. ²⁵ Now, behold, we are in your hand. Do to us as it seems good and right to you to do. ²⁶ He did so to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they didn’t kill them. ²⁷ That day Joshua made them wood cutters and drawers

9:14-18 Joshua here was too influenced by his ‘committee’, acting against his better judgment, it seems, because of the pressure of others upon him.

9:23 *The house of my God* – Paralleled with “the congregation” (:21). God’s house is His people rather than any physical building.

of water for the congregation and for the altar of Yahweh, to this day, in the place which He should choose.

CHAPTER 10 May 24

Adoni-Zedek Organizes Opposition to the Israelites

Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; and that as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them. ² The people of Jerusalem were very afraid, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty. ³ Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hotham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon saying, ⁴ Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel. ⁵ Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of

Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish and the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together and went up, they and all their armies, and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it. ⁶ The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal saying, Don't abandon your servants! Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill country have gathered together against us. ⁷ So Joshua went up from Gilgal, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. ⁸ Yahweh said to Joshua, Don't fear them, for I have delivered them into your hands. Not a man of them will stand before you. ⁹ Joshua therefore came on them suddenly. He went up from Gilgal all night. ¹⁰ Yahweh confused them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth Horon, and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. ¹¹ It happened that as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the

10:8 Was this a lack of faith in 1:5?

10:10 It was due to Joshua's faithfulness to the Gibeonites that this great battle and victory occurred. We see how God worked through the Gibeonites' deception and Israel's unwisdom – to bring about a situation whereby His people could take possession of the Kingdom. He does things like this all the time; rather than turning away from human failure in disgust, He works through it; just as we should when confronted by it in ourselves and in others.

10:11 Joshua's conquest of the Canaanite tribes looks forward to the work of his greater namesake, Jesus, at His return. Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem and the counterpart of Melchizedek, is representative of the latter day anti-Christ figure who will rule there in the last days. He leads a confederacy of Arab nations against Joshua-Jesus, and is destroyed with hailstones (:11) – an event which is the basis for the latter day prophecy of Rev. 16:21. Joshua's men placing their feet upon the necks of their enemies (:24) is the prototype of all enemies being subdued under the Lord in the last

descent of Beth Horon, that Yahweh cast down great stones from the sky on them to Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the children of Israel killed with the sword.

The Sun Stands Still

¹² Then Joshua spoke to Yahweh in the day when Yahweh delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand still on Gibeon! You, moon, stop in the valley of Aijalon!

¹³ The sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies. Isn't this written in the book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the midst of the sky and didn't hurry to go down about a whole day. ¹⁴ There was no day like that before it or after it, that Yahweh listened to the voice of a man; for Yahweh fought for Israel.

¹⁵ Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp to Gilgal. ¹⁶ These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. ¹⁷ Joshua was told saying, The five kings are found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah. ¹⁸ Joshua said, Roll large stones to the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them; ¹⁹ but don't stay. Pursue your enemies, and attack their rearguard. Don't allow them to enter into their cities; for Yahweh your God has delivered them into your hand. ²⁰ It happened, when Joshua and the children of Israel had finished killing them with a very great slaughter until they were consumed, and the remnant which remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, ²¹ that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. None moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. ²² Then Joshua said, Open the mouth

day; and the way "the God of Israel fought for Israel" at this time (:42) is the basis of many latter day statements to the same effect.

10:12 This is amazing faith in prayer; Joshua commanded things to happen, so sure was he of the prayer being heard.

10:13 There are a number of references in Scripture to books like the Book of Jashar which we no longer have available to us. Whether they were inspired or not, we don't know; but the point is, they are no longer available to us because God knows that we do not need them. By contrast, the books in the Bible *have* been preserved for us; God would not have inspired and preserved books like Leviticus or the Chronicles genealogies unless they were important for us in some way.

10:14 The sun standing still could mean that a different dimension of time was entered into – see on :42. But in the midst of a very literal record, it could equally well be understood literally. This would've meant that the entire solar system was affected; for no one part of it can stop dead in its tracks without affecting the whole planetary system. And perhaps the effects of that would have been felt even further... possible the entire cosmos stopped. All because of the fervent prayer of a man standing on planet earth. Such is the power of prayer. And further, Joshua didn't just ask for this in case God might hear it. He prayed the prayer of command, so intense was his faith that God would do this mighty act so that His work could go ahead.

of the cave, and bring those five kings out of the cave to me. ²³ They did so, and brought those five kings out of the cave to him: the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. ²⁴ It happened that when they brought those kings out to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who went with him, Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings. They came near, and put their feet on their necks. ²⁵ Joshua said to them, Don't be afraid, nor be dismayed. Be strong and courageous, for Yahweh will do this to all your enemies against whom you fight. ²⁶ Afterward Joshua put them to death, and hanged them on five trees. They hung on the trees until the evening. ²⁷ It happened at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees and threw them into the cave in which they had hidden themselves, and laid great stones on the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day.

Joshua's Lightning Campaign

²⁸ Joshua took Makkedah on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword, with its king. He utterly destroyed them and all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining. He did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho. ²⁹ Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah,

and fought against Libnah. ³⁰ Yahweh delivered it also, with its king, into the hand of Israel. He struck it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining in it. He did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho. ³¹ Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it. ³² Yahweh delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel. He took it on the second day, and struck it with the edge of the sword, with all the souls who were in it, according to all that he had done to Libnah. ³³ Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he had left him none remaining. ³⁴ Joshua passed from Lachish, and all Israel with him, to Eglon; and they encamped against it and fought against it. ³⁵ They took it on that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed all the souls who were in it that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish. ³⁶ Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it. ³⁷ They took it, and struck it with the edge of the sword, with its king and all its cities, and all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but he utterly destroyed it, and all the souls who were in it. ³⁸ Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir, and fought against it. ³⁹ He

10:25 See on 14:8.

10:28 *On that day* – A huge amount happened that day and over the next two days; see on 10:42.

took it, with its king and all its towns. They struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls who were in it. He left none remaining. As he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and to its king; as he had done also to Libnah and to its king.⁴⁰ So Joshua struck all the land, the hill country, the South, the lowland, the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but he utterly destroyed all that breathed, as Yahweh the God of Israel commanded.⁴¹ Joshua struck them from Kadesh Barnea even to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even to Gibeon.⁴² Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time, because Yahweh, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.⁴³ Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

CHAPTER 11 May 25

A Coalition of Local Kings Oppose Israel

It happened that when Jabin king of Hazor heard of it, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph² and to the kings who were on the north, in the hill country, in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west,³ to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpah.⁴ They went out, they and all their armies with them, many people, even as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots.⁵ All these kings met to-

10:42 The events around Christ's return were prefigured by those at the time of Joshua's conquest of the land. Some of the records of his campaigns require a huge amount to have been achieved by his soldiers within around 36 hours. The comment that so much was achieved "at one time" may hint at a compression of time to enable it. "The sun stood still" may well be intended to teach that the meaning of time was collapsed by God, rather than that the sun literally stood still (:12,13). And the sun standing still over Gibeon is mentioned in Is. 28:21 as typical of the time when Yahweh will do "His strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act" in the last days. The same may be true when the shadow went back for Hezekiah. The movement of the planets need not have been altered; the meaning of time was simply suspended. This collapsing of time would also explain why it is impossible to construct a chronology of events in real time for the coming of Christ; the various prophecies of the last days just don't seem to fit together in chronological sequence. If indeed time is collapsed, this would enable all these prophecies to come true, but not in time as we know it. Babylon is to be punished with famine in one day; yet famine is a process (Rev. 18:8). In one day her judgments come, and yet also in one hour (18:10). Surely the lesson is that time is compressed. Rev. 8:12, also speaking of the last days, says that "the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise". Could this mean that one day and one night last only two thirds of their usual length, whilst the judgments of the fourth Angel are poured out upon the land? This collapsing of time will enable us each to be judged individually without having to wait our turn in line.

11:4 *As the sand that is on the seashore* – The same phrase used about Israel (Gen. 32:12). The kingdoms of this world masquerade as the kingdom of God. The world is

gether; and they came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight with Israel. ⁶ Yahweh said to Joshua, Don't be afraid because of them; for tomorrow at this time, I will deliver them up all slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire. ⁷ So Joshua and all the people of war with him suddenly came against them by the waters of Merom, and fell on them. ⁸ Yahweh delivered them into the hand of Israel, and they struck them and chased them to great Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim and to the valley of Mizpeh eastward. They struck them until they left them none remaining. ⁹ Joshua did to them as Yahweh told him. He hamstrung their horses and burnt their chariots with fire. ¹⁰ Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword: for Hazor used to be the head of all those kingdoms. ¹¹ They struck all the souls who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was no one left who breathed. He burnt Hazor with fire. ¹² Joshua captured all the cities of those kings, with their kings, and he struck them with

the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed them; as Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded. ¹³ But as for the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only; Joshua burned that one. ¹⁴ The children of Israel took all the spoil of these cities, with the livestock, as spoils for themselves; but every man they struck with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They didn't leave any who breathed.

Summary of Joshua's Victories

¹⁵ As Yahweh had commanded Moses His servant, so Moses had commanded Joshua. Joshua did so. He left nothing undone of all that Yahweh commanded Moses. ¹⁶ So Joshua captured all that land, the hill country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel, and the lowland of the same; ¹⁷ from Mount Halak that goes up to Seir, even to Baal Gad in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon. He took all their kings, struck them and put them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. ¹⁹ There

set up as a fake people of God, and this will lead to the final conflict between the real Christ and the imitation or anti-Christ at His return.

11:6, 14 Can this be considered a lack of faith in 1:9?

11:9 This made no human sense, to destroy the latest military technology which had fallen into their hands. But this is the way of faith.

11:11 The word "soul" here doesn't refer to anything inherently immortal within us. It refers to the human person. All the people (*nephesh*) that were within the city of Hazor were killed by the sword (cp. 10:30-39). The "soul" is therefore not immortal.

He burnt Hazor with fire – A destruction of Hazor by fire at this time has been confirmed by archaeological exploration there.

11:15 – see on 8:2.

was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took all in battle. ²⁰ For Yahweh hardened their hearts, to come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, that they might have no favour, but that He might destroy them, as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ²¹ Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel: Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. ²² There were none of the Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel. Only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did some remain. ²³ So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Yahweh spoke to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. The land had rest from war.

CHAPTER 12 May 26

The Conquered Kings on the East of the Jordan

Now these are the kings of the land whom the children of Israel struck, and possessed their land beyond the Jordan toward the sun-

rise, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah eastward: ² Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the middle of the valley, and half Gilead, even to the river Jabbok, the border of the children of Ammon; ³ and the Arabah to the sea of Chinneroth, eastward, and to the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, eastward, the way to Beth Jeshimoth; and on the south, under the slopes of Pisgah: ⁴ and the border of Og king of Bashan, of the remnant of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, ⁵ and ruled in Mount Hermon, and in Salecah, and in all Bashan, to the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. ⁶ Moses the servant of Yahweh and the children of Israel struck them. Moses the servant of Yahweh gave it for a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

The Conquered Kings on the West of the Jordan

⁷ These are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the children of Israel struck beyond the Jordan west-

11:22 Samson went to Gaza conscious that his people had failed to drive out the tribes. Judah had captured it in Joshua's strength (1:18), but had let the Philistines return. We too must do our part to retain the victory for us which has been won by Joshua-Jesus.

11:23 Much land was still not possessed (13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4); does 11:23 therefore imply that the land had been possessed only in the perceptions of Israel? How responsible was Joshua for this? Or was it that Joshua destroyed the leadership structure of the Canaanites, but Israel failed to go and possess what he had secured for them, just as we fail to appropriate to ourselves all the victory of Christ?

12:1, 7 *The kings of the land* – The Hebrew word *eretz* refers to both the land promised to Abraham, and to the whole planet. When we read of “the kings of the earth /

ward, from Baal Gad in the valley of Lebanon even to Mount Halak that goes up to Seir. Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions; ⁸ in the mountains, and in the lowland, and in the Arabah, and in the slopes, and in the wilderness, and in the South; the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite: ⁹ the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; ¹⁰ the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; ¹¹ the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; ¹² the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; ¹³ the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; ¹⁴ the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; ¹⁵ the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; ¹⁶ the king of Makedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; ¹⁷ the king of Tap-

puah, one; the king of Hephher, one; ¹⁸ the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lass Sharon, one; ¹⁹ the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; ²⁰ the king of Shimron Meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; ²¹ the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; ²² the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; ²³ the king of Dor in the height of Dor, one; the king of Goiim in Gilgal, one; ²⁴ the king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty-one.

CHAPTER 13 May 27

The Areas of Land Still to Be Possessed

Now Joshua was old and well advanced in years. Yahweh said to him, You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to be possessed. ² This is the land that still remains: all the

land” in Revelation, these likewise refer to the rulers within the territory promised to Abraham, from the Nile to the Euphrates.

12:7 *Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions* – The comment of Ps. 136:17,22 is that the 31 kings were slain as an act of God’s grace, in order to give the land to Israel for a heritage or possession. Israel didn’t deserve these victories, they were by God’s grace.

12:8 *The mountains... the slopes... the wilderness* – The conquests of Joshua-Jesus were extensive. Yet when Israel took the land, they settled just in the fertile areas and let the Canaanites live in those infertile areas, rather than completely destroy them (Jud. 1:34). We too can as it were take possession of those parts of the Kingdom life which are convenient to us, rather than in the spirit of Jesus-Joshua take full possession

12:9 The list of kings which follows appears to be in the order in which they were defeated. Not all these battles and victories are recorded, in the same way as not all the struggles and victories of Jesus are known or perceived by us.

13:1 *There remains yet very much land to be possessed* – Joshua, like Jesus, had won all the battles; but God’s people failed to go and possess what could so easily have been theirs. Defining what exactly hadn’t been possessed was a good idea psychologically; it also helps us if we set ourselves specific spiritual objectives, no matter how limited, so that we can tackle them.

regions of the Philistines, and all the Geshurites; ³ from the Shihor, which is before Egypt, even to the border of Ekron northward, which is counted as Canaanite; the five lords of the Philistines; the Gazites, and the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avvim, ⁴ on the south; all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the border of the Amorites; ⁵ and the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal Gad under Mount Hermon to the entrance of Hamath; ⁶ all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, even all the Sidonians; them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only allocate it to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you. ⁷ Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh. ⁸ With him the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses had given them beyond the Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of Yahweh gave them: ⁹ from Aroer, that is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain of Medeba to Dibon; ¹⁰ and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, to the border of the children of Am-

mon; ¹¹ and Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan to Salecah; ¹² all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (the same was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); for Moses attacked these, and drove them out. ¹³ Nevertheless the children of Israel didn't drive out the Geshurites nor the Maacathites: but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day. ¹⁴ Only He gave no inheritance to the tribe of Levi. The sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel made by fire are his inheritance, as He spoke to him. ¹⁵ Moses gave to the tribe of the children of Reuben according to their families. ¹⁶ Their border was from Aroer that is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain by Medeba; ¹⁷ Heshbon, and all its cities that are in the plain; Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon, ¹⁸ Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, ¹⁹ Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shahar in the mount of the valley, ²⁰ Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, Beth Jeshimoth, ²¹ all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses struck with the chiefs of Midian, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land. ²² The children of Israel also

13:14 The Levites had no material inheritance because “the sacrifices of Yahweh... are his inheritance... Yahweh... was their inheritance” (:14,33). Notice how “Yahweh” is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so.

13:22 *Among the rest of their slain* – The impression is given that Balaam suffered

killed Balaam the son of Beor the soothsayer with the sword, among the rest of their slain. ²³ The border of the children of Reuben was the bank of the Jordan. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben according to their families, the cities and its villages. ²⁴ Moses gave to the tribe of Gad, to the children of Gad, according to their families. ²⁵ Their border was Jazer and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, to Aroer that is before Rabbah; ²⁶ and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpeh, and Betonim; and from Mahanaim to the border of Debir; ²⁷ and in the valley, Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, the Jordan's bank, to the uttermost part of the sea of Chinnereth beyond the Jordan eastward. ²⁸ This is the inheritance of the children of Gad according to their families, the cities and villages. ²⁹ Moses gave an inheritance to the half-tribe of Manasseh. It was for the half-tribe of the children of Manasseh according to their families. ³⁰ Their border was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair which are in Bashan, sixty cities. ³¹ Half Gilead,

Ashtaroath, and Edrei, the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were for the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, even for the half of the children of Machir according to their families. ³² These are the inheritances which Moses distributed in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho, eastward. ³³ But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance. Yahweh, the God of Israel, was their inheritance, as He had told them.

CHAPTER 14 May 28

Caleb Given an Inheritance

These are the inheritances which the children of Israel took in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed to them, ² by the lot of their inheritance, as Yahweh commanded by Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half-tribe. ³ For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. ⁴ For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: and they gave no portion to the Levites in the land, except towns to dwell in,

their punishment and was counted amongst them. Yet it would seem that he was an Israelite, at one time a prophet of Yahweh, and in touch with the true God. Yet he died with the Midianites. If we side with this world in this life, then we will share their condemnation at Christ's return and not inherit the Kingdom; we will be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

13:30 *Sixty cities* – Christ's parable of Lk. 19:12-18 likens our rewards in God's future Kingdom to being given varying numbers of cities to rule over. This confirms that Israel's entry to Canaan was seen by Him as typical of our entry into God's Kingdom on earth when Christ returns.

with their suburbs for their livestock and for their property.⁵ The children of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses, and they divided the land.⁶ Then the children of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal. Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, You know the thing that Yahweh spoke to Moses the man of God concerning me and concerning you in Kadesh Barnea.⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the servant of Yahweh sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land. I brought him word again as it was in my heart.⁸ Nevertheless, my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed Yahweh my God.⁹ Moses swore on that day saying, ‘Surely the land where you walked shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because

you have wholly followed Yahweh my God’.¹⁰ Now, behold, Yahweh has kept me alive as He spoke these forty-five years, from the time that Yahweh spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. Now, behold, I am eighty-five years old today.¹¹ As yet I am as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war, to go out and to come in.¹² Now therefore give me this hill country, of which Yahweh spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and great and fortified cities. It will surely be that Yahweh will be with me and I shall drive them out, as Yahweh spoke.¹³ Joshua blessed him; and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance.¹⁴ Therefore

14:8 Joshua and Caleb were earlier characterized by the comment that they “wholly followed the Lord” when they went to spy out Canaan, and urged Israel to go up and inherit it (:8,9,14; Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36). This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever he led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would ‘go before’ them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives. As Joshua had been told to be strong and of good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (10:25). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was himself to be faithfully followed. We must walk in step with the Spirit / Angel in our lives; and yet no matter how much we’ve walked in step with Him, we can always allow pressure of circumstances to let us fall out of step with Him.

14:12-14 On one level, we can quite rightly ask for material blessing, and the Father is pleased that we should. But there is a higher level we can live on, where requesting physical blessings doesn’t figure so largely. We can be like Caleb, who conquered Hebron (his part in the Kingdom) for himself and then gave it to others. In any case, Hebron became a priestly city for the Levites to live in. He gave his place in the Kingdom to others, reflecting the grace he had received – that was the level of love this great man reached. Moses reached a similar height of loving devotion to God’s people in Ex. 32:32-34.

Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day; because he wholly followed Yahweh the God of Israel. ¹⁵ Now the name of Hebron before was Kiriath Arba, after the greatest man among the Anakim. The land had rest from war.

CHAPTER 15 May 29

The Inheritance of Judah

The lot for the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families was to the border of Edom, even to the wilderness of Zin southward, at the uttermost part of the south. ² Their south border was from the uttermost part of the Salt Sea, from the bay that looks southward; ³ and it went out southward of the ascent of Akkrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and went up by the south of Kadesh Barnea, and passed along by Hezron, went up to Addar, and turned about to Karka; ⁴ and it passed along to Azmon, went out at the brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your

south border. ⁵ The east border was the Salt Sea, even to the end of the Jordan. The border of the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the end of the Jordan. ⁶ The border went up to Beth Hoglah, and passed along by the north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. ⁷ The border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that is over against the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the river. The border passed along to the waters of En Shemesh, and ended at En Rogel. ⁸ The border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom to the side of the Jebusite southward (the same is Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lies before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the farthest part of the valley of the Rephaim northward. ⁹ The border extended from the top of the mountain to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of Mount Ephron;

14:14 This is in the context of the Angel going before the people. Caleb zealously followed the Angel who went before him, and therefore he obtained his inheritance which in prospect the Angel had prepared for him. Our guardian Angels are preparing victories in prospect for us too. 'Caleb' means 'dog' and so the language of faithful following is a play on his name.

15:8 In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated 'hell' in many Bibles. The Greek *hades* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *sheol* which refers to the grave. 'Gehenna' is the name of the rubbish tip which was just outside Jerusalem, where the refuse from the city was burnt. As a proper noun – i.e. the name of an actual place – it should have been left untranslated as 'Gehenna' rather than be translated as 'hell'. 'Gehenna' is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew 'Ge-ben-Hinnon'. This was located near Jerusalem (15:8; 18:16), and at the time of Christ it was the city rubbish dump. Dead bodies of criminals were thrown onto the fires which were always burning there, so that Gehenna became symbolic of total destruction and rejection. What was thrown onto those fires did not remain there forever – the bodies decomposed into dust.

and the border extended to Baalah (the same is Kiriath Jearim); ¹⁰ and the border turned about from Baalah westward to Mount Seir, and passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (the same is Chesalon), and went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed along by Timnah; ¹¹ and the border went out to the side of Ekron northward; and the border extended to Shikkeron, and passed along to Mount Baalah, and went out at Jab-neel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea. ¹² The west border was to the shore of the great sea. This is the border of the children of Judah according to their families.

The Spiritual Ambition of Caleb and His Family

¹³ To Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a portion among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of Yahweh to Joshua, even Kiriath Arba, named after the father of Anak (the same is Hebron). ¹⁴ Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak: Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak. ¹⁵ He went up against the inhabitants of Debir: now the name of Debir before was Kiriath Sepher. ¹⁶ Caleb said, He who strikes Kiriath Sepher and takes it, to

him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife. ¹⁷ Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. ¹⁸ It happened that she came to ask her father for a field. She got off her donkey, and Caleb said, What do you want? ¹⁹ She said, Give me a blessing. Because you have set me in the land of the South, give me also springs of water. He gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

The Cities and Villages of Judah

²⁰ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families. ²¹ The farthest cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the border of Edom in the South were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, ²² Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, ²³ Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, ²⁴ Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, ²⁵ Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (the same is Hazor), ²⁶ Amam, Shema, Moladah, ²⁷ Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, ²⁸ Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah, ²⁹ Baalah, Iim, Ezem, ³⁰ Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, ³¹ Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, ³² Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. All the cities are twenty-nine, with their villages. ³³ In the lowland, Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,

15:13 Joshua had taken Hebron (10:36) but Israel had not followed up his victory, and the Philistines had returned; and so Caleb then took it. Joshua / Jesus has won great victories for us against every barrier which might stop us entering the Kingdom – but we have to do our part in making good that victory.

15:18 Such examples of spiritual ambition are inspirational; just as soldiers inspire each other by their acts of bravery. Achsah followed her father Caleb's spiritual ambition in specifically asking for an inheritance in the Kingdom (14:12); and this in turn inspired another woman to ask for an inheritance soon afterwards (17:4). And so it ought to be in any healthy congregation of believers.

³⁴ Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, ³⁵ Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, ³⁶ Shaaraim, Adithaim and Gederah (or Gederothaim); fourteen cities with their villages. ³⁷ Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad, ³⁸ Dilean, Mizpeh, Joktheel, ³⁹ Lachish, Boz-kath, Eglon, ⁴⁰ Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish, ⁴¹ Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages. ⁴² Libnah, Ether, Ashan, ⁴³ Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, ⁴⁴ Keilah, Achzib, and Mare-shah; nine cities with their villages. ⁴⁵ Ekron, with its towns and its villages; ⁴⁶ from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages. ⁴⁷ Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the brook of Egypt, and the great sea with its coastline. ⁴⁸ In the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, ⁴⁹ Dannah, Kiriath Sannah (which is Debir), ⁵⁰ Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, ⁵¹ Goshen, Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages. ⁵² Arab, Dumah, Eshan, ⁵³ Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, ⁵⁴ Humtah, Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron) and Zior; nine cities with their villages. ⁵⁵ Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Jutah, ⁵⁶ Jezreel, Jok-

deam, Zanoah, ⁵⁷ Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages. ⁵⁸ Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, ⁵⁹ Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages. ⁶⁰ Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages. ⁶¹ In the wilderness, Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, ⁶² Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi; six cities with their villages. ⁶³ As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah couldn't drive them out; but the Jebusites live with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

CHAPTER 16 May 30

The Territory of Ephraim and Manasseh

The lot came out for the children of Joseph from the Jordan at Jericho, at the waters of Jericho on the east, even the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel. ² It went out from Bethel to Luz, and passed along to the border of the Archites to Ataroth; ³ and it went down westward to the border of the Japhletites, to the border of Beth Horon the lower as

15:33-36 Zorah, Samson's home town, was originally Judah's inheritance, but they spurned it, and passed it to Dan (19:41), who also weren't interested; for they migrated to the north and took over the land belonging to the less warlike Sidonians (Jud. 18:2,7-10). Those who don't want an inheritance in the Kingdom won't have it; those who truly love Christ's appearing and the things of the Kingdom will be given it (2 Tim. 4:8). Yet from such a weak, spiritually uninterested background, a man of faith like Samson came.

15:60 *Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim)* – Often in the lists of place names we are told that the name was changed; in this case, from “Baal” to “Jearim”. All restimulations of and associations with paganism, idolatry and the old life are to be erased.

15:63 They, like us, could have driven them out, because Joshua-Jesus had won the victory; but they failed to follow it up.

far as Gezer; and ended at the sea.

⁴ The children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

⁵ This was the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families. The border of their inheritance eastward was from Ataroth Addar to Beth Horon the upper. ⁶ The border went out westward at Michmethath on the north. The border turned about eastward to Taanath Shiloh, and passed along it on the east of Janoah.

⁷ It went down from Janoah to Ataroth, to Naarah, reached to Jericho, and went out at the Jordan. ⁸ From Tappuah the border went along westward to the brook of Kanah and ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim according to their families; ⁹ together with the cities which were set apart for the children of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. ¹⁰ They didn't drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell in

the midst of Ephraim to this day, and became servants to do forced labour.

CHAPTER 17 May 31

Some Issues with the Inheritance of Manasseh

This was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. As for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan. ² So this was for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, for the children of Helek, for the children of Asriel, for the children of Shechem, for the children of Hephher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families. ³ But Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ⁴ They came near

16:9 God redefined the boundaries of the land in accordance with what Israel had the strength to subdue; He made account for their weakness as He does for us. Thus Ephraim were given some cities within the inheritance of Manasseh, presumably because Manasseh wouldn't drive out the tribes living there. And the Lord Jesus seems to have alluded to this by saying that *we* will be given cities, the number of which depends upon our zeal to possess them. God had clearly promised that He would expel the tribes and "You *shall* possess their land" (23:5). But this promise was conditional upon them making the effort, even though that condition is not specifically mentioned. Ultimately, God will "enlarge all the borders of the land" (Is. 26:15 RV) because Israel will finally rise up to the spiritual ambition He desires of them.

17:1 *Because he was a man of war; therefore he had Gilead and Bashan* – These areas were where resistance was strongest. God will give us a unique place in the Kingdom appropriate to our personality.

17:4 We note the spiritual ambition of these women, bravely pushing forward their desire for personal inheritance in the Kingdom in a male world which generally ignored them.

before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the princes, saying, Yahweh commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers. Therefore according to the commandment of Yahweh he gave them an inheritance among the brothers of their father. ⁵ Ten parts fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan; ⁶ because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh. ⁷ The border of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, which is before Shechem. The border went along to the right hand, to the inhabitants of En Tappuah. ⁸ The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh; but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim. ⁹ The border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook. These cities belonged to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook, and ended at the sea. ¹⁰ Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea was his border. They reached to Asher on the north, and to Issachar on the east. ¹¹ Within the territories of Issachar and Asher,

Manasseh possessed Beth Shan and Ibleam, along with their surrounding towns, as well as Dor (the one on the coast), Endor, Taanach, Megiddo, and their surrounding towns. ¹² Yet the children of Manasseh couldn't drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites continued to dwell in that land.

Failure to Possess the Land

¹³ It happened that when the children of Israel had grown strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, and didn't utterly drive them out. ¹⁴ The children of Joseph spoke to Joshua saying, Why have you given me just one lot and one part for an inheritance, since I am a great people, because Yahweh has blessed me so far? ¹⁵ Joshua said to them, If you are a great people, go up to the forest, and clear land for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim; since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you. ¹⁶ The children of Joseph said, The hill country is not enough for us. All the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth Shean and its towns, and those who are in the valley of Jezreel. ¹⁷ Joshua

17:13 One reason why Israel failed to drive out the tribes, and thereby lost the Kingdom, was simply because they wanted to take tribute from them. Ez. 7:19 defines "silver and gold" as Israel's stumbling block – moreso than idols. Wealth and the easy life have been the most common form of spiritual destruction in the history of God's people.

17:14 *Why have you given me just one lot* – The people were lazy to inherit the Kingdom, and lacking in real faith. So they blamed their lack of full inheritance on Joshua. The lazy and faithless will always seek a human scapegoat to excuse themselves for things which are solely their fault.

spoke to the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh saying, You are a great people, and have great power. You shall not have one lot only; ¹⁸ but the hill country shall be yours. Although it is a forest, you shall cut it down, and it shall be yours from one end to the other; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong.

CHAPTER 18 Jun. 1

The Remaining Land Is Assigned

The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The land was subdued before them. ² Seven tribes remained among the children of Israel, which had not yet been assigned their inheritance. ³ Joshua said to the children of Israel, How long will you delay possession of the land, which Yahweh the God of your fathers has given you?

⁴ Appoint for yourselves three men from each tribe. I will send them, and they shall go through the land, and describe it according to their inheritance; and they shall come to me. ⁵ They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall live in his borders on the south, and the house of Joseph shall live in their borders on the north. ⁶ You shall survey the land into seven parts, and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before Yahweh our God. ⁷ For the Levites have no portion among you; for the priesthood of Yahweh is their inheritance. Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave them. ⁸ The men arose and went to survey the land saying, Go walk through the land, survey it, and come again to me. I will cast lots for you here before Yahweh in Shiloh. ⁹ The

17:18 *You shall drive out the Canaanites* – This is an example of what appears to be prophecy being actually a command, not a prediction. For those tribes proved too strong for lazy, minimising Israel. And so in that sense the ‘prophecy’ wasn’t fulfilled. Israel failed to be inspired by it. They waited for its fulfilment rather than going out to fulfil it. And we can do likewise.

18:3 One simple reason why Israel failed to inherit the Kingdom in the time of Joshua / Judges was that they were simply “slack”, lazy, to drive out the tribes (the same Hebrew word is used in Ex. 5:8 regarding how the Egyptians perceived them to be lazy; and also in Prov. 18:9). They were happy to receive tribute from them, and to enjoy what blessings they received. They were satisficers, not men of principle or mission; not real bond slaves. And for this, God rejected them and they never really inherited the Kingdom prepared for them.

18:8 When Joshua told the spies “Go walk through the land...”, they ought to have perceived that he was asking them to walk in the faith of Abraham – to believe that this land truly had been promised to them, as his seed. God sometimes sets us up in situations in which we are intended to perceive the similarity with some incident in Biblical history, and to thereby be encouraged to act appropriately and in faith. For

men passed through the land, and recorded it by cities into seven portions in a book. They came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh. ¹⁰ Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before Yahweh. There Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.

The Territory of Benjamin

¹¹ The lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families. The border of their lot went out between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph. ¹² Their border on the north quarter was from the Jordan. The border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the hill country westward and ended at the wilderness of Beth Aven. ¹³ The border passed along from there to Luz, to the side of Luz (the same is Bethel) southward. The border went down to Ataroth Addar, by the mountain that lies on the south of Beth Horon the lower. ¹⁴ The border extended, and turned around on the west quarter southward, from the mountain that lies before Beth Horon southward; and ended at Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim), a city of the children of Judah. This was the west quarter. ¹⁵ The southern side began at the outskirts of Kiriath Jearim. The border went out westward, and went out to the spring of

the waters of Nephtoah. ¹⁶ The border went down to the farthest part of the mountain that lies before the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is in the valley of the Rephaim northward. It went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En Rogel. ¹⁷ It extended northward, went out at En Shemesh, and went out to Geliloth, which is over against the ascent of Adummim. It went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. ¹⁸ It passed along to the side over against the Arabah northward and went down to the Arabah. ¹⁹ The border passed along to the side of Beth Hoglah northward; and the border ended at the north bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This was the south border. ²⁰ The Jordan was its border on the east quarter. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, boundary by boundary all around, according to their families. ²¹ Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, ²² Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, ²³ Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, ²⁴ Chephar Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba; twelve cities with their villages. ²⁵ Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, ²⁶ Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, ²⁷ Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, ²⁸ Zelah, Eleph, the Jebusite (the same is Jerusalem), Gibeath, and

this to 'work' it requires a sensitive familiarity with Scripture; hence the advisability of daily Bible reading.

18:16 *The valley of Hinnom* – See on 15:8.

18:28 All these names would likely have been listened to by the tribes with the same attitude as we have when we hear or read them – they are places unknown to us, and so we

Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

CHAPTER 19 Jun. 2

The Territory of Simeon

The second lot came out for Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. Their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the children of Judah. ² They had for their inheritance Beersheba (or Sheba), Moladah, ³ Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, ⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, ⁵ Zik-

lag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah, ⁶ Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhin; thirteen cities with their villages; ⁷ Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan; four cities with their villages; ⁸ and all the villages that were around these cities to Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. ⁹ Out of the part of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon; for the portion of the children of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the children of Simeon had inheritance in the midst of their inheritance.

tend to indifferently let them pass us by. But the tribes, in this case Benjamin, should've been paying careful attention and perceiving the extent of their inheritance, and what exactly was required of them. Instead they were satisfied with their farms and didn't want to see the bigger picture of what was possible for them. They could've not only possessed their own land allocation to its fullness, but also inherited the territory right up to the Euphrates. God conceded to their smallness of vision by trying to get them to concentrate on the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea; but they didn't want to even exploit that area as God enabled them to. We too can read the descriptions of God's Kingdom and not be really motivated by grasping the reality of the fact that this is really our land, our inheritance, our eternal destiny that's being described.

19:1 The inheritance of Simeon and Judah was merged because of their inability to expel the Canaanites. The boundaries of the promised land and indeed the individual possessions of the tribes were changed by God in accordance with the weakness of Israel to actually drive out the tribes and take the inheritance. Thus He "changed the portion of My people" (Mic. 2:4). Right up to our own day we see the same Divine sensitivity to the weakness of His people and His eagerness to work with them at whatever low level they relate to Him on.

19:9 We see a lot of grace in how the Biblical records are written, in how God perceives history. "The portion of the children of Judah was too much for them" almost implies God made an error in allocating them too much; when actually the problem was that they lacked the faith to drive out the tribes living there. Likewise the extension of Dan's border by them in :47 overlooks the fact that actually the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, and Dan wasn't strong or faithful enough to live in the valley areas (Jud. 1:34). When Dan fought against Leshem, this one act of obedience is so magnified in :47 to sound as if in their zeal to inherit their territory they actually found they had too little land and therefore attacked Leshem. But actually it was already part of their allotted inheritance. Yet God graciously comments that "all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel" (Jud. 18:1).

The Territory of Zebulun

¹⁰ The third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families. The border of their inheritance was to Sarid. ¹¹ Their border went up westward, even to Maralah, and reached to Dab-besheth. It reached to the brook that is before Jokneam. ¹² It turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrise to the border of Chisloth Tabor. It went out to Daberath, and went up to Japhia. ¹³ From there it passed along eastward to Gath Hepher, to Ethkazim; and going on to Rimmon it bent toward Neah. ¹⁴ The border turned around on the north to Hannathon; and it ended at the valley of Iphtah El. ¹⁵ It included Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Beth-lehem: twelve cities with their villages. ¹⁶ This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

The Territory of Issachar

¹⁷ The fourth lot came out for Issachar, even for the children of Issachar according to their families. ¹⁸ Their border was to Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, ¹⁹ Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, ²⁰ Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, ²¹ Remeth, Engannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez. ²² The border reached to Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth Shemesh. Their border ended at the Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. ²³ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities with their villages.

The Territory of Asher

²⁴ The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families. ²⁵ Their border was Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, ²⁶ Allammelech, Amad, Mishal. It reached to Carmel westward, and to Shihorlibnath. ²⁷ It turned toward the sunrise to Beth Dagon, and reached to Zebulun, and to the valley of Iphtah El northward to Beth Emek and Neiel. It went out to Cabul on the left hand, ²⁸ and Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, even to great Sidon. ²⁹ The border turned to Ramah, to the fortified city of Tyre; and the border turned to Hosah. It ended at the sea by the region of Achzib; ³⁰ Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty-two cities with their villages. ³¹ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

The Territory of Naphtali

³² The sixth lot came out for the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families. ³³ Their border was from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim, Adaminekeb, and Jabneel, to Lak-kum. It ended at the Jordan. ³⁴ The border turned westward to Aznoth Tabor, and went out from there to Hukkok. It reached to Zebulun on the south, and reached to Asher on the west, and to Judah at the Jordan toward the sunrise. ³⁵ The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, ³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, ³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, En

Hazor, ³⁸ Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages. ³⁹ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities with their villages.

The Territory of Dan

⁴⁰ The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families. ⁴¹ The border of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Irshemesh, ⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, ⁴³ Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, ⁴⁵ Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon, ⁴⁶ Me-Jarkon and Rakkon, with the border over against Joppa. ⁴⁷ The border of the children of Dan went out beyond them; for the children of Dan went up and fought against Leshem and took it, and struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and lived therein, and called it Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father. ⁴⁸ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages. ⁴⁹ So they made an end of distributing the land for inheritance by its borders.

The Inheritance of Joshua

The children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun in their midst. ⁵⁰ According to the commandment of Yahweh, they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnathserah in the hill country of Ephraim; and he built the city, and lived there. ⁵¹ These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance by lot in Shiloh before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting. So they made an end of dividing the land.

CHAPTER 20 Jun. 3

The Cities of Refuge

Yahweh spoke to Joshua saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel saying, 'Assign the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you by Moses, ³ that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there. They shall be to you for a refuge from the avenger of blood. ⁴ He shall flee to one of those cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and declare his cause in the ears of the elders of

19:50 This is an example of spiritual ambition. Note the huge breadth in attitude amongst the children of God at this time; some were so indifferent to their inheritance that they gave it to other tribes or never even went there to try to possess it; others took their inheritance and had the initiative to ask for more land. This breadth in commitment levels within the people of God can be very discouraging, but thus it has always been. Joshua and Caleb must have found the negative, faithless attitude of the others hard to live with, but they didn't let it take away from their own zeal for God.

20:4 Heb. 6:18 invites us to see ourselves as this person who had committed sin worthy of death and yet, as it were, without his conscious, wilful desire to do so; and our city of refuge is the Lord Jesus.

that city. They shall take him into the city with them and give him a place, that he may live among them.

⁵ If the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver up the manslayer into his hand; because he struck his neighbour unintentionally, and didn't hate him beforehand.

⁶ He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days.

Then the manslayer shall return, and come to his own city, and to his own house, to the city he fled from'.

⁷ They set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. ⁸ Beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness in

the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. ⁹ These were the appointed cities for all the children of Israel, and for the alien who lives among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stands before the congregation.

CHAPTER 21 Jun. 3

Cities Given to the Levites

Then the heads of fathers' houses of the Levites came near to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel. ² They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan saying, Yahweh commanded Moses to

20:6 Final deliverance for the manslayer was given at the death of the High Priest, when his case was judged. This pointed forward to the final freedom achieved for us by Christ's death, which was in a sense our judgment (Jn. 12:31; 16:11). Christ's death on the cross is repeatedly presented as our judgment; hence in remembering His death in the breaking of bread we have a foretaste of our future judgment, and are in a sense judged there.

20:7, 8 The cities of refuge were in inaccessible areas – up mountains or in the desert. There had to be a conscious effort to go there, just as we don't drift into Christ but must take the conscious decision to be baptized into Him, which is the counterpart to entering into the city of refuge (:4).

21:2 The implication could be that the people had been slack to give the Levites their cities. We get the impression that once they entered the land, it was every man for himself; very few saw the wider, larger picture of possessing the entire land and establishing a nationwide worship system whereby the Levites would teach the people about God. The people of God today can likewise be very self-centred rather than thinking what would be best for the community as a whole. The Levites' request for an inheritance to be given them can be seen in continuity with Joshua, Caleb and Caleb's daughter asking for a specific inheritance and being given it; whoever really wants to be in the Kingdom will be there, all who truly love Christ's appearing (with all that true love implies) will be given salvation (2 Tim. 4:8). Maybe Jesus was alluding to these passages in Joshua when He taught that whoever asks will receive (Mt. 7:7).

give us cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for our livestock. ³ The children of Israel gave to the Levites out of their inheritance, according to the commandment of Yahweh, these cities with their suburbs. ⁴ The lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. The children of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, had thirteen cities by lot out of the tribe of Judah, out of the tribe of the Simeonites, and out of the tribe of Benjamin. ⁵ The rest of the children of Kohath had ten cities by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh. ⁶ The children of Gershon had thirteen cities by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, out of the tribe of Asher, out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. ⁷ The children of Merari according to their families had twelve cities out of the tribe of Reuben, out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun. ⁸ The children of Israel gave these cities with their suburbs by lot to the Levites, as Yahweh commanded by Moses. ⁹ They gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are mentioned by name. ¹⁰ They were for the children of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi; for theirs was the first lot. ¹¹ They gave them Kiriath Arba, named after the father of Anak (the same is Hebron), in the hill country

of Judah, with its suburbs around it. ¹² But they gave the fields of the city and its villages to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession. ¹³ To the children of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, Libnah with its suburbs, ¹⁴ Jattir with its suburbs, Eshtemoa with its suburbs, ¹⁵ Holon with its suburbs, Debir with its suburbs, ¹⁶ Ain with its suburbs, Juttah with its suburbs, and Beth Shemesh with its suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes. ¹⁷ Out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its suburbs, Geba with its suburbs, ¹⁸ Anathoth with its suburbs, and Almon with its suburbs; four cities. ¹⁹ All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs. ²⁰ The families of the children of Kohath, the Levites, even the rest of the children of Kohath, had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim. ²¹ They gave them Shechem with its suburbs in the hill country of Ephraim, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Gezer with its suburbs, ²² Kibzaim with its suburbs, and Beth Horon with its suburbs; four cities. ²³ Out of the tribe of Dan, Elteke with its suburbs, Gibbethon with its suburbs, ²⁴ Aijalon with its suburbs, Gath Rimmon with its suburbs; four cities. ²⁵ Out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Taanach with its suburbs, and Gath Rimmon with its suburbs; two cities. ²⁶ All the cities of the families of the rest of the children of Kohath

This isn't a blank cheque promise, but rather saying that whoever really wants salvation and an inheritance in the Kingdom will receive it.

were ten with their suburbs. ²⁷ They gave to the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Beeshterah with its suburbs; two cities. ²⁸ Out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishion with its suburbs, Daberath with its suburbs, ²⁹ Jarmuth with its suburbs, En Gannim with its suburbs; four cities. ³⁰ Out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with its suburbs, Abdon with its suburbs, ³¹ Helkath with its suburbs, and Rehob with its suburbs; four cities. ³² Out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, Hammothdor with its suburbs, and Kartan with its suburbs; three cities. ³³ All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their suburbs. ³⁴ To the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its suburbs, Kartah

with its suburbs, ³⁵ Dimnah with its suburbs and Nahalal with its suburbs; four cities. ³⁶ Out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with its suburbs, Jahaz with its suburbs, ³⁷ Kedemoth with its suburbs and Mephaath with its suburbs; four cities. ³⁸ Out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with its suburbs, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Mahanaim with its suburbs, ³⁹ Heshbon with its suburbs, Jazer with its suburbs; four cities in all. ⁴⁰ All these were the cities of the children of Merari according to their families, even the rest of the families of the Levites. Their lot was twelve cities. ⁴¹ All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the children of Israel were forty-eight cities with their suburbs. ⁴² Each of these cities included their suburbs around them. It was this way with all these cities. ⁴³ So Yahweh gave to Israel all the land which He swore to give to their fathers. They possessed it, and lived in it. ⁴⁴ Yahweh gave them rest all around, according to all

21:41 The Levites were one of the smallest tribes and yet were given 48 cities, far more cities than some of the larger tribes. This was perhaps because it was God's intention to dramatically increase the number of the Levites if they were faithful (Ps. 115:12-14) in order to spiritually strengthen Israel yet more. But again, a great potential was set up by God, in some detail, but wasn't realized because of human weakness.

21:43, 44 The Lord gave them the land, i.e. potentially, but they failed to possess it. Yahweh gave them rest, and yet Heb. 4:8 says that Joshua did *not* give them rest, and therefore there remains this "rest" to be received by God's people at Christ's return. Is this therefore an implied criticism of Joshua, or of Israel?

21:44 *Not a man of all their enemies stood before them* – But their enemies did stand before them, they didn't possess all the land. Yet God puts it over so positively, as if it's a story with a happy ending – when actually it's a tragedy. Even when rebuking them, God sees Israel as in some ways perfect (Num. 23:21; Is. 42:18-20). We stand related to the same grace, and should reflect it in being positive and gracious in our view of our brethren.

that He swore to their fathers. Not a man of all their enemies stood before them. Yahweh delivered all their enemies into their hand. ⁴⁵ Nothing failed of any good thing which Yahweh had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass.

CHAPTER 22 Jun. 4

The Two and a Half Tribes Return to Their Possessions

Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh ² and said to them, You have kept all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. ³ You have not left your brothers these many days to this day, but have performed the duty commanded by Yahweh your God. ⁴ Now Yahweh your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them. Therefore now return and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the

servant of Yahweh gave you beyond the Jordan. ⁵ Only take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁶ So Joshua blessed them and sent them away; and they went to their tents. ⁷ Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given inheritance in Bashan; but to the other half gave Joshua among their brothers beyond the Jordan westward. Moreover when Joshua sent them away to their tents he blessed them ⁸ and spoke to them saying, Return with much wealth to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, gold, brass, iron and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers. ⁹ The children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned,

21:45 *All came to pass* – The promises by the Angel at the exodus came true in prospect; but tragically Israel did not make them good, so that in reality only a fraction of the blessings were realized. All of God’s people today have in a sense been given the Kingdom; but not all will possess it because not all want to.

22:2–4 This seems an over positive view of Israel, an exaggeration of their true spiritual position – cp. 23:4; 24:14,23. Or is this rooted in Joshua’s love for them, not seeing iniquity in Jacob? Moses had told the Reubenites and Gadites that they could return to their possessions when God had given rest to the other tribes and they had also possessed their lands (Dt. 3:20). But Joshua tells them to go to their possessions simply because their brethren were now at “rest”; although Heb. 4:8 says that they did not inherit the “rest” at Joshua’s time. He significantly omits the proviso that their brethren must also possess the land – because much of the land wasn’t possessed. Was this Joshua getting slack, thinking that the main thing was that people were living in peace, even though they weren’t possessing the Kingdom? Or is it a loving concession to human weakness? Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20–32.

22:4 – see on 1:13–15.

and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they owned, according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses. ¹⁰ When they came to the region about the Jordan, that is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, a great altar to look at.

The Ten Tribes Accuse Others of Apostasy

¹¹ The children of Israel heard a report that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar in the forefront of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that pertains to the children of Israel. ¹² When the children of Israel confirmed this, the whole congrega-

tion of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up against them to war. ¹³ The children of Israel sent to the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead. They sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, ¹⁴ and with him ten princes, one prince of a fathers' house for each of the tribes of Israel; and they were each one of them head of their fathers' houses among the thousands of Israel. ¹⁵ They came to the children of Reuben and to the children of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying, ¹⁶ Thus says the whole congregation of Yahweh, 'What trespass is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following Yahweh, in that you have built yourselves an altar, to rebel this day against Yahweh?' ¹⁷ Is the iniquity

22:12 There is no record that they first of all attempted to ascertain the truth or otherwise of the accusation. The two and a half tribes had been fighting for them, helping them get their possessions, and had now returned home. The ten tribes should have been grateful to them; but instead they accuse them of apostasy on hearsay evidence alone, and seem eager to kill them. It so often happens that those we help the most, later turn against us. This is rooted in pride; we don't like to accept help, we like to think we have what we have because of our own efforts rather than the kindness of others; and so we like to find fault with our helpers. All the tribes should've been helping each other secure their inheritance, but it seems most of them just grabbed some land for themselves and didn't see the bigger picture of helping and enabling their brethren to also possess their inheritances. When we see others doing what we have failed to do and ought to be doing, we tend to want to pull them down to our level, eagerly listen to gossip against them, imagine the worst about them, condemn them and even destroy them. The Biblical record of this kind of thing happening is a comfort to us.

22:16 *Thus says the whole congregation of Yahweh* – It was unlikely that these hypocritical heresy hunters [see on :18] had actually got consent from every single person in Israel to say this; so often, divisive heresy hunters falsely claim to be speaking on behalf of all God's people.

of Peor of little consequence for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although there came a plague on the congregation of Yahweh,¹⁸ that you must turn away this day from following Yahweh? It will be, since you rebel today against Yahweh, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.¹⁹ However, if the land of your possession is unclean, then pass over to the land of the possession of Yahweh, in which Yahweh's tabernacle dwells, and take possession among us; but don't rebel against Yahweh, nor rebel against us, in building an altar other than the altar of Yahweh our God.²⁰ Didn't Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the devoted thing, causing wrath to fall on all the congregation of Israel? That man didn't perish alone in his iniquity'.²¹ Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the thou-

sands of Israel,²² The Mighty One, God, Yahweh, the Mighty One, God, Yahweh, He knows; and Israel shall know if it was in rebellion, or in trespass against Yahweh (don't save us this day).²³ He knows whether we have built us an altar to turn away from following Yahweh; or to offer burnt offering or meal offering, or sacrifices of peace offerings. Let Yahweh Himself decide²⁴ if we have not out of concern done this, and for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your children might speak to our children saying, What have you to do with Yahweh, the God of Israel?'²⁵ For Yahweh has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no portion in Yahweh'. So your children might make our children cease from fearing Yahweh.²⁶ Therefore we said, 'Let's now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice;²⁷ but it will be a witness between us

22:18 *Since you rebel today against Yahweh* – This was hypocritical, for the prophets repeatedly declare that Israel as a whole were persistently rebellious against Yahweh from the day that He had entered covenant with them at Sinai (Dt. 31:27; Ps. 78:8; Is. 63:10; 65:2; Ez. 2:3; 20:8). They were still themselves worshipping idols (24:14). Such hypocrisy is understandable in psychological terms; on a subconscious level, sinners know they have sinned and rebelled against God, and so they transfer this on to others and eagerly give them punishment for it. By facing up fully to our sins, repenting and accepting as just whatever judgment God gives us, we are saved from this tendency. We will not be hypocrites.

22:19 It seems they perceived the land to the East of Jordan as "unclean" (see :25 too) – even though right up to the Euphrates had been promised to them. They were told that if they considered it unclean, then they could inherit on the West of Jordan. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them. And so with us – as we define God's working, so, in some ways, will it be unto us (Lk. 19:22,23). Note how they ended up playing God: "rebel against Yahweh... rebel against us", and went madly ahead quoting lots of 'Biblical' history which was irrelevant to the case in hand to try to justify their own anger.

and you, and between our generations after us, that we may perform the service of Yahweh before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings;’ that your children may not tell our children in time to come, ‘You have no portion in Yahweh’. ²⁸ Therefore we said, ‘It shall be, when they tell us or our generations this in time to come, that we shall say, Behold the pattern of the altar of Yahweh, which our fathers made, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice; but it is a witness between us and you’. ²⁹ Far be it from us that we should rebel against Yahweh, thus turning away this day from following Yahweh to build an altar for burnt offering, for meal offering, or for sacrifice, in competition with the altar of Yahweh our God that is before His tabernacle! ³⁰ When Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, even the heads of the thousands of Israel that were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them well. ³¹ Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, Today we know that Yahweh is in the midst of us, because you have not committed this trespass against Yahweh. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of Yahweh. ³² Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from

the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. ³³ The thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and spoke no more of going up to destroy in warfare the land in which the children of Reuben and the children of Gad lived. ³⁴ The children of Reuben and the children of Gad named the altar ‘A Witness Between Us that Yahweh is God’.

CHAPTER 23 Jun. 5

Joshua’s Parting Speech to Israel

It happened after many days, when Yahweh had given rest to Israel from their enemies all around and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, ² that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, their heads, their judges and for their officers and said to them, I am old and well advanced in years. ³ You have seen all that Yahweh your God has done to all these nations because of you; for it is Yahweh your God who has fought for you. ⁴ Behold, I have allotted to you these nations that remain to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even to the great sea toward the going down of the sun. ⁵ Yahweh your God will thrust them out from before you, and drive them from out of your sight. You shall possess their land, as Yahweh your God spoke to you. ⁶ There-

23:6 As God had charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law (1:7,8), so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people. In spiritual maturity, our con-

fore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that you not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left; ⁷ that you not mingle with these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow down yourselves to them; ⁸ but hold fast to Yahweh your God, as you have done to this day. ⁹ For Yahweh has driven great and strong nations out from before you. But as for you, no man has stood before you to this day. ¹⁰ One man of you shall chase a thousand; for it is Yahweh your God who fights for you, as He spoke to you. ¹¹ Take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh your God. ¹² But if you do at all mix with and hold fast to the remnant of these nations, even these who remain among you, and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you; ¹³ know for a certainty that Yahweh your God will no longer drive these na-

tions from out of your sight; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, a scourge in your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which Yahweh your God has given you. ¹⁴ Behold, today I am going the way of all the earth. You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which Yahweh your God spoke concerning you. All have happened to you, not one thing has failed of it. ¹⁵ It shall happen that as all the good things have come on you of which Yahweh your God spoke to you, so Yahweh will bring on you all the evil things until He has destroyed you from off this good land which Yahweh your God has given you, ¹⁶ if you disobey the covenant of Yahweh your God which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down yourselves to them. Then the anger of Yahweh will be kindled against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given to you.

cern will be for the things of God's people rather than ourselves. We will encourage others from our own experience and example. See on 14:8.

23:7 This command not to make mention of other gods is alluded to in Eph. 5:3; the various ways of the flesh equate with the idols of Joshua's time.

23:9, 14 Was Joshua being too positive, seeing things as achieved that hadn't been (cp. Jud. 1:1)? He seems to have tried to perceive the promises, which were conditional upon obedience, as having been fulfilled fully when they hadn't been. Solomon made the same mistake. See on 24:14.

23:12, 13 To marry back into Egypt or Canaan, the non-Kingdom people, is to despise the covenant, to reverse the redemptive work which God has done for us, to not *love* God (:11). In the context of marriage out of the Faith, we read that God will destroy 'him that *hates* Him', and repay him to his face (Dt. 7:2-11). On the other hand, not marrying Gentiles was part of *loving* God. Wilful marriage out of the faith is a very wrong and sad thing, although God will seek to work through it as He does with all human failure.

CHAPTER 24 Jun. 5***A Summary of Israel's History***

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. ² Joshua said to all the people, Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old time beyond the River, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods. ³ I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. ⁴ I gave to Isaac Jacob and Esau. I gave to Esau Mount Seir, to possess it. Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. ⁵ I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt according to that which I did in its midst: and afterward I brought you out. ⁶ I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and you came to the sea. The Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and with horsemen to the

Red Sea. ⁷ When they cried out to Yahweh, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians and brought the sea on them, and covered them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness many days. ⁸ I brought you into the land of the Amorites that lived beyond the Jordan; and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand. You possessed their land; and I destroyed them from before you. ⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor king of Moab arose and fought against Israel. He sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you; ¹⁰ but I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he blessed you still. So I delivered you out of his hand. ¹¹ You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. The men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; and I delivered them into your hand. ¹² I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; not with

24:2 Righteous Abraham was "gathered to his people" (or ancestors), on death (Gen. 25:8); and they were idolaters. Believers and unbelievers all go to the same place at death; it's not true that the good go to Heaven and the bad to 'hell'. The separation between sheep and goats happens at the day of judgment at Christ's return.

24:10 Balaam, in his heart, didn't want to bless Israel; he wanted to curse them so he could get his hands on the riches Balak promised him if he did so (Num. 22,23). Balaam knew if God had told him to bless Israel, there was no way of changing things. But God here says that He refused to hear Balaam's prayer to curse Israel. It seems that Yahweh read Balaam's latent, unexpressed desires as prayer to Him. When we are too weak or sick to pray, God still reads our situations as prayer, even if unexpressed in so many words.

24:12 Jacob's last words claim that he had taken Shechem from the Amorites "with my sword and with my bow" (Gen. 48:22). These very words are alluded to here and in Ps. 44:1-6, where the Spirit says that the land was given to Israel *not* on account of their bow and sword. Even at the end of his life, Jacob's old self-reliance was still not

your sword, nor with your bow. ¹³ I gave you a land whereon you had not laboured, and cities which you didn't build, and you live in them. You eat of vineyards and olive groves which you didn't plant.

Israel Urged to Choose between Yahweh and Idols

¹⁴ Now therefore fear Yahweh, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth. Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh. ¹⁵ If it seems evil to you to serve Yahweh, choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh. ¹⁶ The people answered, Far be it from us that we should forsake Yahweh to serve other gods; ¹⁷ for it is Yahweh our God who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our

sight, and preserved us in all the way in which we went, and among all the peoples through the midst of whom we passed. ¹⁸ Yahweh drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve Yahweh; for He is our God. ¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, You can't serve Yahweh; for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your disobedience nor your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake Yahweh and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you evil and consume you, after He has done you good. ²¹ The people said to Joshua, No, but we will serve Yahweh. ²² Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you yourselves have chosen Yahweh, to serve Him. They said, We are witnesses. ²³ Now therefore put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to Yahweh, the God of Israel. ²⁴ The people said to Joshua, We will serve Yahweh our God, and we will listen to His voice. ²⁵ So Joshua

totally gone; his sense that through his own effort he could bring about the fulfilment of God's promises for Him. In this area, the weakness of Jacob remained. This gives us patience with our fellow believers who never seem to 'get it' in some spiritual areas; and comforts us in our own failures to achieve perfection in other aspects of spirituality.

24:14 Compare Joshua's earlier over-positive statements (see on 22:2; 23:9). Now in his spiritual maturity it seems he came to a final sense of realism about sin, obedience and Israel's failure.

24:15 *As for me... we will serve* – Joshua realized that Israel, whom he had seen as so obedient (see on 22:2; 23:9), actually weren't serving God at all.

24:16 *Far be it from us* – The kind of hypocrisy of 22:18 [see note there].

24:19, 23 Joshua at the end of his life came to a final realism as to the real nature of sin, and the ultimate demands which God makes upon human life in practice.

24:24 *We will listen to His voice* – The people don't respond to the command to throw away their idols by saying 'Yes OK, we shall do so'; instead they say that they will

made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. ²⁶ Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of Yahweh. ²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of Yahweh which He spoke to us. It shall be therefore a witness against you, lest you deny your God. ²⁸ So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

The Death of Joshua

²⁹ It happened that, after these things, Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, being one hundred and ten years old. ³⁰ They

buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. ³¹ Israel served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work of Yahweh that He had worked for Israel. ³² They buried the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. They became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. ³³ Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in the hill of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

hear God's word. Interest in the Bible, reading it and even enthusing about it, can be done whilst at the same time still serving idols.

24:30 *Buried him in the border of his inheritance* – As if they expected him to be resurrected and then enter into it at Messiah's coming.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 6

Judah Takes Their Inheritance

After the death of Joshua the children of Israel asked Yahweh, Who should go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them? ² Yahweh said, Judah shall go up. Behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. ³ Judah said to Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my designated portion so that we can fight against the Canaanites, and I likewise will go with you into yours. So Simeon went with him. ⁴ Judah went up and Yahweh delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hand. They killed ten thousand men in Bezek. ⁵ They found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they killed the Canaanites and the Perizzites. ⁶ But Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him, caught him and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. ⁷ Adoni-Bezek said, Seventy kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, scavenged under

my table. As I have done, so God has requited me. They brought him to Jerusalem and he died there. ⁸ The men of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it, putting it to the sword, and set the city on fire. ⁹ Afterwards the men of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the South and in the lowland. ¹⁰ Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (the name of Hebron before was Kiriath Arba), and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi. ¹¹ From there he went against the inhabitants of Debir. The name of Debir before was Kiriath Sepher. ¹² Caleb said, He who strikes Kiriath Sepher and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife. ¹³ Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. ¹⁴ When she came, she got him to ask her father for a field, and she alighted from off her donkey and Caleb said to her, What would you

1:1 After the leadership of Moses, there came that of Joshua. When he died, Israel expected that another such leader would be raised up. They expected a single man to be named. But instead, they were told that the whole tribe of Judah must go up. The reality would have sunk home – no more charismatic leaders, now the ordinary people must take responsibility. The same is true in our generation.

1:3 This was effectively a lack of faith that God would give Judah victory; but God still worked through this lower level of faith, and gave them victory (:4). God so thirsts for relationship with us that He is prepared to accept lower levels of faith than the ideal; this shouldn't elicit from us any sense of personal lack of commitment, but rather inspire us to greater patience with others whose faith isn't on the highest level it could be.

1:14 We see here a wonderful spiritual ambition; not merely accepting the portion given by God and wondering how ever even this was to be possessed. Rather does Achsah have the ambition to ask for even more territory to possess.

like? ¹⁵ She said to him, Give me a blessing, for that you have set me in the land of the South; give me also springs of water. Then Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. ¹⁶ The descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the men of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad, and they went and lived with those people. ¹⁷ Judah went with Simeon his brother and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed the town. The name of the town was Hormah. ¹⁸ Also Judah took Gaza with its border and Ashkelon with its border and Ekron with its border. ¹⁹ Yahweh was with Judah and drove out the inhabitants of the hill country, for he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron. ²⁰ They gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had promised, and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak. ²¹ The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem, but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

Failure to Completely Destroy the Canaanites

²² The house of Joseph went up against Bethel, and Yahweh was with

them. ²³ The house of Joseph sent to spy out Bethel. The name of the city before was Luz. ²⁴ The spies saw a man come out of the city and they said to him, Please show us the entrance into the city and we will deal kindly with you. ²⁵ He showed them the entrance into the city and they put the city to the sword, but they let the man go and all his family. ²⁶ The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and called it Luz, which is its name to this day. ²⁷ Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam or Megiddo and their surrounding settlements; the Canaanites continued to dwell in that land. ²⁸ When Israel had grown strong they put the Canaanites to forced labour and did not utterly drive them out. ²⁹ Ephraim didn't drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, but the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. ³⁰ Zebulun didn't drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol, but the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labour. ³¹ Asher didn't drive out the inhabitants of Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob, ³² but the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out. ³³ Naphtali didn't drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath, but he lived

1:21 The fact we fail to realize our potentials doesn't mean God quits working with us. Reflect how Judah was given the potential to possess the whole land, and yet they selfishly only focused upon their own inheritance (:2,3). And yet God still worked with them, giving them victory in what battles they did fight (:4). Yet even then, Judah didn't follow through with the help God was so eager to give them. They took Jerusalem, but later we read that the Jebusites were soon back living there (:8,21).

among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land who became subject to forced labour.³⁴ The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill country, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley,³⁵ but the Amorites continued to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim. Yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became subject to forced labour.³⁶ The border of the Amorites was from the ascent of Akrabbim, from the rock and upward.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 7

An Angel Warns the People

The angel of Yahweh came up from Gilgal to Bochim. He said, I brought you up out of Egypt and have brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers, and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you,² and you must make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; break down their altars’. But you have not listened to My voice; why have you done this?³ Therefore I tell you that I will not drive them

out from before you, but they shall be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.⁴ When the angel of Yahweh spoke these words to all the children of Israel, the people lifted up their voice and wept.⁵ They called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to Yahweh.

The Death of Joshua

⁶ Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the children of Israel went every man to his inheritance to possess the land.⁷ The people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Yahweh that He had worked for Israel.⁸ Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, being one hundred and ten years old.⁹ They buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnah Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash.¹⁰ Also all that generation were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who didn’t know

1:34 God’s grace to His people is reflected in how He records their weaknesses, and always focuses upon their obedience no matter how small. Thus the allotted inheritance of the children of Dan is described as too small for them (Josh. 19:47), although actually “the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill country, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley”. When Dan fought against Leshem, this one act of obedience is so magnified in Josh. 19:47 to sound as if in their zeal to inherit their territory they actually found they had too little land and therefore attacked Leshem. But actually it was already part of their allotted inheritance.

2:1-3 The Angel here speaks as if he is God Himself speaking. Both men and Angels can carry God’s Name (Ex. 23:21) and thus can functionally be as God, whilst not being God Himself in person. This explains how God’s Son, Jesus, isn’t God Himself but carries God’s Name (Jn. 5:43) and acts as God whilst not being God Himself.

2:9 *They buried him in the border of his inheritance* – So that when Joshua is resurrected at Christ’s return, he can go directly into his inheritance.

Yahweh, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

Israel Turns to Idols

¹¹ The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and served the Baals. ¹² They forsook Yahweh the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods of the peoples who were around them and bowed themselves down to them; and they provoked Yahweh to anger. ¹³ They forsook Yahweh and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. ¹⁴ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel and He delivered them into the hands of raiders who plundered them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. ¹⁵ Wherever they went the hand of Yahweh was against them for evil, as Yahweh had spoken and as Yahweh had sworn to them; and they were very distressed. ¹⁶ Yahweh raised up judges who saved them from those who plundered them. ¹⁷ Yet they didn't listen to their judges; for they played the prostitute after other gods and bowed themselves down

to them. They turned aside quickly out of the way in which their fathers walked, who had obeyed the commandments of Yahweh. They didn't do so. ¹⁸ When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh was with the judge and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for it grieved Yahweh because of their distress because of the oppression. ¹⁹ But when the judge was dead they turned back and behaved more corruptly than their fathers in following other gods to serve them and to bow down to them. They didn't cease from their evil practices or from their stubborn ways. ²⁰ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel and He said, Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to Me, ²¹ I also will no longer drive out from before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died. ²² So by them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of Yahweh to walk therein as their fathers did, or not. ²³ So Yahweh left those nations without driving them out quickly and didn't deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

2:18 *It grieved Yahweh because of their distress* – God like the truly loving parent took no pleasure in punishing His children. The idea of eternal conscious torture of the wicked isn't taught in the Bible; God has no pleasure at all in punishing sinners (Ez. 18:23; 33:11).

2:22 This is rather similar to God telling Balaam to go with the messengers of Balak, but to be obedient to His word. God as it were pushes people down the downward spiral if this is the way they choose to go. Obedience would be so much harder with the Canaanite tribes still existing amongst Israel; but God let this be so. We pray "lead us not into temptation" (Mt. 6:13) because it is possible for God to lead us into such situations, even though the process of temptation is internal to ourselves (James 1:13-15).

2:23 God drove out the tribes from Canaan slowly, not immediately – or at least, He potentially enabled this to happen. But Israel were to destroy those tribes "quickly"

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 7***The Nations Left in the Land***

Now these are the nations which Yahweh left to test Israel, those who had not known all the wars of Canaan, ² so that the later generations of the children of Israel might learn battle experience, those who before knew nothing of it: ³ the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites, the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. ⁴ They were left to test Israel, to know whether they

would listen to the commandments of Yahweh which He commanded their fathers by Moses. ⁵ The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, ⁶ and they took their daughters to be their wives and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. ⁷ The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and forgot Yahweh their God, and served the Baals and the Asherahs. ⁸ Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel and He sold them into the hand

(Dt. 9:3); yet they chose not to. Because they didn't want to be obedient to that, or at least to only be 'slowly' obedient, God went along with them and confirmed them in the level of response to Him which they chose.

3:1 *The nations which Yahweh left to test Israel* – The process of temptation is internal to the human mind (James 1:13-15; Mk. 7:15-23). But God can test us as He did Abraham (Gen. 22:1). It could be argued that God knows all about us anyway, and so the testing process is really to reveal us to ourselves. Another angle is that this language is relevant to the Angels, who were the practical manifestation of God at this time (see on 2:1-3), but their knowledge isn't total (Mt. 24:36); it could be that some of our tests are to reveal us to our guardian Angels. The cases of Divine 'testing' of people are usually in the context of Angelic involvement with people.

3:2 *Might learn battle experience* – Elsewhere the presence of those remaining nations is clearly linked to Israel's faithlessness, and their survival in the land was actually part of God's punishment of Israel. God therefore works through His judgments of sin in order to try to positively teach His ways to people.

3:6 In nearly every reference to marriage to Gentiles, there is the comment that this would surely lead to adopting the religious views of the Gentile partner; views which inevitably take a man away from his covenant with Yahweh. The connection between marriage out of the covenant and adopting idolatry is emphasized: Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:2-9; 1 Kings 11:2,3; Mal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14. Dt. 7:4 dogmatically predicts that a Gentile man will definitely turn away the heart of his Hebrew son-in-law. So certain is it that marriage to Gentiles leads to accepting their idols that Ezra 9:1,2 reasons that Israel hadn't separated from idols *because* they had married Gentiles. Time and again, those who marry out of the covenant claim that they feel strong enough to cope with it, that marriage is only a human thing, and that their spiritual relationship with God is between them and God, and unaffected by their worldly partner. Yet this is exactly the opposite of what God's word says. It's not true that you can marry into the world and be unaffected in your own spirituality.

3:8 The book of Judges describes a consistent sequence of Israel turning away from

of Cushan Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. The Israelites served Cushan Rishathaim for eight years.

Othniel Saves Israel

⁹ When the Israelites cried to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a saviour for them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of Yahweh came on him and he judged Israel. He went out to war and Yahweh delivered Cushan Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Cushan Rishathaim. ¹¹ The land had rest forty years. Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Ehud Saves Israel

¹² The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh. Yahweh strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of Yahweh. ¹³ He gathered to him the Ammonites and Amalek and he went and struck Israel; and they took possession of the city of palm trees. ¹⁴ The Israelites served Eglon king of Moab

for eighteen years. ¹⁵ But when the Israelites cried to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a saviour for them, Ehud the son of Gera the Benjamite, a left-handed man. The children of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. ¹⁶ Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length; and he wore it under his clothing on his right thigh. ¹⁷ He offered the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. ¹⁸ When he had finished offering the tribute he sent away the people who carried the tribute, ¹⁹ but he himself turned back from the idols that were by Gilgal and said, I have a secret errand to you, king. The king said, Keep silence! All his attendants left him. ²⁰ Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in the cool upper room. Ehud said, I have a message from God to you. He arose out of his seat. ²¹ Ehud put forth his left hand and took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his body. ²² The handle also went in after the blade and the fat closed on the

God, being punished by neighbouring Arab enemies, and then being sent a 'saviour' – a 'Jesus'. This points forward to how Israel will be brought to her knees by the future Arab oppression, resulting in the coming of the true Saviour (cp. Mt. 1:21). It is significant that almost all the judges were initially rejected by Israel, and had various features which meant that they did not have charismatic appeal to the people. Those facets make them all types of Christ. The pattern of 'serving' their Arab conquerors and then 'crying unto the Lord' (:8,9,14,15) recalls their servitude to the Egyptians, resulting in Israel 'crying to the Lord' (Ex. 2:23), and being answered by the Passover deliverance – which also represented Christ's coming. Their deliverances by the judges also typify this. "Saviours (judges) shall come up upon mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau (so that) the Kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Obadiah 21). "Saviours / judges" may be an intensive plural referring to the one true saviour / judge, Jesus.

3:21 There are seven weak things which are mentioned in Judges as being the tools of God's salvation: a left handed man; an ox goad (3:31); a woman (4:4); a nail (4:21); a piece of a millstone (9:53); a pitcher and trumpet (7:20), a jaw bone of an ass (15:16).

blade, for he didn't draw the sword out of his body, and it came out behind. ²³ Then Ehud went out into the porch and shut the doors of the upper room on him and locked them. ²⁴ Now when he had gone out, the servants came and saw that the doors of the upper room were locked, and they said, Surely he is covering his feet in the upper room. ²⁵ They waited until they were ashamed; but still he didn't open the doors of the upper room, therefore they took the key and opened them and behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. ²⁶ Ehud escaped while they waited and passed beyond the idols and escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ When he had arrived, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hill country, and he went before them. ²⁸ He said to them Follow me, for Yahweh has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. They followed him and took the fords of the Jordan opposite the Moabites and didn't allow any man to pass over. ²⁹ They struck down about ten thousand Moabite men at that time, every strong man and every man of valour, and none escaped. ³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. The land had rest for eighty years. ³¹ After him came Shamgar

the son of Anath, who killed six hundred Philistine men with an ox goad, and he also saved Israel.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 8

Deborah Saves Israel

The children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, when Ehud was dead. ² Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose army was Sisera who lived in Harosheth of the Gentiles. ³ The Israelites cried to Yahweh, for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and for twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. ⁴ Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, judged Israel at that time. ⁵ She lived under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. ⁶ She sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh Naphtali and said to him, Hasn't Yahweh, the God of Israel, commanded 'Go to Mount Tabor and take with you ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and Zebulun? ⁷ I will draw to you, to the river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army with his chariots and his multitude, and I will deliver him into your hand'. ⁸ Barak said to her, If you

God delights to work through the weak; indeed, only if we perceive our own weakness can God work through us.

4:7 *I will deliver him into your hand* – It was God's desire to effect deliverance for Israel at the hands of a man, Barak; but he failed to live up to that potential, indeed the male leadership collapsed in Israel (5:7), and so God worked through a woman.

4:8, 9 The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was counted as full faith by later inspiration (Heb. 11:32). God likewise counts our weak spirituality as total if we are in Christ, whose righteousness is counted to all those baptized into Him.

will go with me then I will go, but if you will not go with me I will not go. ⁹ She said, I will surely go with you; nevertheless the journey that you take will not be for your honour, for Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kadesh. ¹⁰ Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kadesh and he went with ten thousand men following him; and Deborah went with him. ¹¹ Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the children of Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent by the oak in Zaanannim which is by Kadesh. ¹² They told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. ¹³ Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles to the river Kishon. ¹⁴ Deborah said to Barak, Go, for this is the day in which Yahweh has delivered Sisera into your hand. Hasn't Yahweh gone out before you? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor and ten thousand men after him. ¹⁵ Yahweh routed Sisera and all

his chariots and all his army with the sword before Barak, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. ¹⁶ But Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth of the Gentiles, and all the army of Sisera fell by the sword; there was not a man left.

The Death of Sisera

¹⁷ However Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸ Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; don't be afraid. He came in to her into the tent and she covered him with a rug. ¹⁹ He said to her, Please give me a little water to drink for I am thirsty. She opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. ²⁰ He said to her, Stand at the door of the tent and when any man comes and asks you 'Is there any man here?' say 'No'. ²¹ Then Jael Heber's wife took a tent peg and a hammer in her hand and went quietly to him and hammered the peg into his temples, and it pierced through

4:14 Deborah here quotes the words of Dt. 9:3 concerning the Angel going before Israel to drive out the nations to Barak, to inspire him with courage in fighting them. She recognized that the work the Angels did when they went out many years ago to do all the groundwork necessary for Israel to destroy all the tribes of Canaan was done for all time. It was not too late to make use of that work by making a human endeavour in faith. So with us, the smaller objectives in our lives as well as our main goal of reaching the Kingdom have all been made possible through the work of Christ and the Angels in the past. Deborah's recognition of this is shown in her song, when she says that the Angels fought against Sisera (5:20).

4:21 We have to piece together all Scripture to get an accurate picture of events. 5:27 suggests he arose and then fell down, as if she didn't kill him with just one blow as he lay asleep but had some struggle with him.

into the ground, for he was in a deep sleep; so he died. ²² As Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, Come and I will show you the man whom you seek. He came to her and there lay Sisera, dead; and the tent peg was in his temples. ²³ So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the Israelites. ²⁴ The hand of the Israelites prevailed more and more against Jabin the king of Canaan until they had destroyed him.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 8

The Song of Deborah

Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang this song: ² Because the leaders took the lead in Israel, because the people offered themselves willingly, blessed be Yahweh! ³ Hear, you kings! Give ear, you princes! I, even I, will sing to Yahweh. I will sing praise to Yahweh the God of Israel. ⁴ Yahweh, when

You went forth out of Seir, when You marched out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens poured. Yes, the clouds poured down water. ⁵ The mountains melted at the presence of Yahweh, even Sinai at the presence of Yahweh the God of Israel. ⁶ In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were deserted, the travelers walked through byways. ⁷ The rulers ceased to rule in Israel. They ceased until I, Deborah, arose; until I arose, a mother in Israel. ⁸ They chose new gods, therefore war came to the gates. Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel? ⁹ My heart is with the governors of Israel, who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless Yahweh! ¹⁰ Speak, you who ride on white donkeys, you who sit on rich carpets and you who walk by the way. ¹¹ Far from the noise of archers, in the watering places,

5:2 The examples of leaders amongst God's people can influence the flock positively or negatively – when the leaders “offered themselves willingly”, so did the people (:9).

5:4 As so often in the Psalms, God's people see the deliverances He works in this life as repeating in essence the great deliverance at the Red Sea and His entering covenant with His people, which things represent our baptism and deliverance from this world (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

5:5: *The mountains melted* – To a distant onlooker, the water flowing down the mountains gave the impression that they themselves were melting; not, of course, that they actually were. The Bible sometimes speaks of things as they appear to human eyes; hence the use of the language of ‘demon possession’ in the New Testament. Demons don't exist, but the miracles of healing mental illness are described from the viewpoint of a human observer. This principle must be remembered when reading the account of creation.

5:6 This was the first time in which the curses of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 began to be realized upon Israel. “Your highways shall be desolate” (Lev. 26:22) is alluded to here.

5:11 *His rule in Israel* – Israel at this time were the Kingdom of God on earth, a Kingdom which was overthrown when they repeatedly refused His Kingship over them (Ez. 21:25-27) and which will be re-established at Christ's return (Acts 1:6).

there they will recite the righteous acts of Yahweh, the righteous acts of His rule in Israel. Then the people of Yahweh went down to the gates. ¹² ‘Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead away your captives, you son of Abinoam’. ¹³ Then a remnant of the nobles and the people came down. Yahweh came down to me against the mighty. ¹⁴ Those whose root is in Amalek came out of Ephraim after you, Benjamin, among your peoples. Governors came down out of Machir. Those who handle the writer’s quill came out of Zebulun. ¹⁵ The princes of Issachar were with Deborah. As was Issachar, so was Barak. They rushed into the valley at his feet. By the watercourses of Reuben there were great divisions of heart. ¹⁶ Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, to hear the whistling for the flocks?

At the watercourses of Reuben there was much searching of heart. ¹⁷ Gilead remained beyond the Jordan. Why did Dan remain in ships? Asher remained still at the haven of the sea, and lived by his creeks. ¹⁸ Zebulun was a people that jeopardized their lives to the death; Naphtali also, on the high places of the field. ¹⁹ The kings came and fought, then the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo. They took no plunder of silver. ²⁰ From Heaven the stars fought. From their courses they fought against Sisera. ²¹ The river Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. My soul, march on with strength. ²² Then the horse hoofs stamped because of the prancing, the prancing of their strong ones. ²³ ‘Curse Meroz’, said the angel of Yahweh. ‘Curse bitterly its inhabitants, because they didn’t

5:13 The coming down of Yahweh is paralleled with the coming down of His willing people. One theme of this victory is that God’s people on earth acted in tandem with the Angelic movements in Heaven above.

5:14 Barak’s victorious warriors were civil servants and writers, not military men; in the same way as God used goldsmiths and traders to do the work of builders and engineers to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls at the time of Ezra. God often uses those not suited to a particular job to do it, because the victory must always be of Him and not of human ability.

5:19, 20 The reference is to the Angels fighting on Israel’s behalf. If we walk in step with the Angels, success is assured. Here, Israel’s fighting is paralleled with the Heavens and stars [=Angels, Rev. 1:20] fighting for them. The Lord of Hosts of Angels was working in tandem with the hosts of Israel. And it’s the same for the new Israel. Heb. 12:22 speaks of how we, the hosts of the church, are paralleled with hosts of Angels.

5:20 The Hebrew for ‘courses’ is almost identical with that for ‘ladder’ in the account of Jacob’s vision of a ladder of Angels; it strictly means a ‘staircase’. See on 4:14; 5:19,20.

5:23 *To help Yahweh* – The fact that God so loves us is itself a limitation to Him. Because in any relationship, one person usually loves more than the other. And the one who loves the most – which is unquestionably God – has the least power. This is why He, the more powerful in physical terms, speaks with such language of limitation. In a

come to help Yahweh, to help Yahweh against the mighty'. ²⁴ Jael shall be blessed above women, the wife of Heber the Kenite; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. ²⁵ He asked for water and she gave him milk. She brought him butter in a lordly dish. ²⁶ She put her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's hammer. With the hammer she struck Sisera. She struck through his head. Yes, she pierced and struck through his temples. ²⁷ At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay. At her feet he bowed, he fell. Where he bowed, there he fell down dead. ²⁸ Through the window she looked out and cried; Sisera's mother looked through the lattice. 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why do the wheels of his chariots delay?' ²⁹ Her wise ladies answered her, yes she answered herself: ³⁰ 'Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil? A girl, two girls for every man; to Sisera a spoil of dyed garments, a spoil of dyed garments embroidered, of dyed garments embroidered on both sides, on the necks of the spoil?' ³¹ So let all Your enemies perish, Yahweh, but let those who love Him be as the

sun when it rises forth in its strength. Then the land had rest forty years.

CHAPTER 6 Jun. 9

Israel Oppressed by Midian

The children of Israel did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and Yahweh delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. ² The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, and because of Midian the Israelites made themselves dens in the mountains, the caves and the strongholds. ³ So when Israel had sown their seed, the Midianites, the Amalekites and the people of the east came up against them ⁴ and they encamped against them, and destroyed the crops as far as Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. ⁵ For they came with their livestock and their tents; they came up as locusts for multitude; both they and their camels were without number, and they came into the land to destroy it. ⁶ Israel was brought very low because of Midian and the children of Israel cried to Yahweh. ⁷ When the Israelites cried to Yahweh because of Midian ⁸ Yahweh sent a prophet to them, and

sense God requires not help from man; and yet in another sense He has delegated His work to us, and limits His achievements according to what we are willing to do.

5:24 *Blessed above women* – Lk. 1:28,42 alludes here, as if Mary was already as Jael who had killed Sisera, an incident typical of Christ's destruction of sin with the hammer of God's word. Mary is tied up with her son's victory – for He was part of her.

6:2 The Israelites who fled to the dens and caves at this time are described as heroes of faith because of what they did (Heb. 11:38). And yet their domination by the Philistines was a result of their idolatry. They were idolatrous, and yet some had faith; and it was this faith which was perceived by God. God is so eager to perceive spirituality and faith amongst His people, despite their weakness in other areas; we should have the same positive attitude to each other.

he said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of slavery, ⁹ and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, drove them out from before you, and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, I am Yahweh your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But you have not listened to My voice'.

Gideon

¹¹ The angel of Yahweh came and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite, and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. ¹² The angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said, Yahweh is with you, you mighty man of valour! ¹³ Gideon said to him Oh, my lord, if Yahweh is with us why then has all this hap-

6:12 *You mighty man of valour* – Gideon's constant need for Divine reassurance indicates he wasn't so brave; but God addressed him according to his spiritual potential. He does the same with us, hence the challenges He sometimes gives us which appear far beyond what we feel capable of.

6:12, 13 We need to realize that God deals with us as individuals. No matter how functional and holy, or dysfunctional and evil, is our church, we are still treated by the Father as His individual children. So many have struggled with this, tending to see themselves rather as inevitably part of a community, faceless cogs in a machine. And this is actually quite attractive to humanity – hence the popularity of Roman Catholicism. God told Gideon: "Yahweh is with you" [you singular], and yet Gideon responds: "Oh, my Lord, if Yahweh is with *us*..." (:13). Gideon had to be taught that God saw him as a separate, unique individual, and didn't deal with him automatically merely as part of a community as a whole. But it was a slow process. When Gideon saw in a dream a man saying that God had delivered Midian into *his* [singular] hand, Gideon then tells Israel that God had delivered Midian into *their* hands (7:14,15). He still found it so hard to believe that God treated *him* as so important to Him. It could be that Gideon intentionally misunderstood the offer of personal strengthening by arguing back that if Yahweh is really with *us*, then why are they suffering so much (6:13). He flinched at the personal call of his Angel to action – just as we can, seeking instead to take refuge behind the community. Yet God Himself turns to Gideon and bids him "go in the strength of this One" – the Hebrew grammar referring to the Angel. And this is the same call to us – to go in the strength of the Angel which goes before us, and seek to replicate Him, Heaven's plan for us, on this earth. And God backed up this call to Gideon to follow the Angel by saying he should go out in faith, because "I will be with you" (:16) – a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12. It's an interesting exercise to follow the parallels between the Angelic commander of Yahweh's armies, and Joshua as the human commander of them on earth. And one doesn't have to be a military leader in iron-age Israel to feel that same call to follow the Angel.

6:13 Gideon knew that God forsaking Israel was a punishment for their sin (as in 2 Kings 21:14; Is. 2:6; Jer. 23:33). God would forsake Israel only if they forsook Him (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). This opens up our understanding of Christ's cry from the cross "Why have You forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). It seems He was so identified

pened to us? Where are all His wondrous works which our fathers told us of, saying ‘Didn’t Yahweh bring us up from Egypt?’ But now Yahweh has forsaken us and delivered us into the hand of Midian. ¹⁴ Yahweh looked at him and said, Go in the strength of this One and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Haven’t I sent you? ¹⁵ He said to him, O Lord, how can I save Israel? My family is the poorest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father’s house. ¹⁶ Yahweh said to him Surely I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man. ¹⁷ He said to Him, If now I have found grace in Your eyes, then show me a sign that it is really You Who talk with me. ¹⁸ Please don’t go away until I come to you and bring out my present and lay it before you. He said, I will wait until you come back. ¹⁹ Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes of an ephah of meal. He put the meat in a basket and he put the broth in a pot and brought it out to him under the oak and presented it. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened cakes and lay them on this rock and pour out the broth. He did so. ²¹ Then the angel of Yahweh stretched out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes, and fire went up out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes, and the angel of Yahweh departed out of his sight. ²² Gideon

saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, and Gideon said, Alas, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face! ²³ Yahweh said to him, Peace! Don’t be afraid. You will not die. ²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh and called it Yahweh is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal

²⁵ The same night Yahweh said to him, Take your father’s bull, the second bull seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the Asherah that is by it, ²⁶ build an altar to Yahweh your God on the top of this stronghold in the proper way, and take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you cut down. ²⁷ Then Gideon took ten of his servants and did as Yahweh had spoken to him, and because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city, he could not do it by day, so he did it by night. ²⁸ When the men of the city arose early in the morning, the altar of Baal was broken down and the Asherah was cut down that was by it and the second bull had been offered on the altar that was built. ²⁹ They said one to another, Who has done this? When they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash has done this. ³⁰ Then the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son that he may die, because he has broken

with us that He genuinely felt He was bearing the punishment for sin as a sinner; thus although He never sinned, He genuinely felt as a sinner, so that not even our sin means that Christ can’t empathize with us.

down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the Asherah that was by it. ³¹ Joash said to all who stood against him, Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? He who will contend for him, let him be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has broken down his altar. ³² Therefore on that day he named him Jerub-Baal, saying, Let Baal contend against him because he has broken down his altar.

The Midianites and Amalekites Invade

³³ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east assembled themselves together and they crossed over and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ But the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered together after him. ³⁵ He sent messengers throughout all Manasseh and they also were gathered together after him, and he sent messengers to Asher, to Zebulun and to Naphtali and they came up to meet them. ³⁶ Gideon said to God, If You will save Israel by my hand, as You have spoken, ³⁷ I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only and it is dry

on all the ground, then I will know that You will save Israel by my hand as You have said. ³⁸ That is what happened, for he got up early the next day and squeezed the fleece together and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. ³⁹ Gideon said to God, Don't let Your anger be kindled against me and I will speak but this once. Please let me make a trial just this once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece and on all the ground let there be dew. ⁴⁰ God did so that night, for it was dry on the fleece only and there was dew on all the ground.

CHAPTER 7 Jun. 10

Gideon Defeats the Midianites

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people who were with him rose up early and encamped beside the spring of Harod, and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. ² Yahweh said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast against Me saying, 'My own hand has saved me'. ³ Now therefore announce to the people, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead'.

6:31 Joash told the Baal worshippers to let Baal plead for himself, rather than them pleading for him. He was saying that they were assuming that they had to 'play God' for Baal; they had to manifest the god they thought existed. Joash says that if Baal really exists, he himself will act for himself, openly. And this of course is where the One True God excels; He does act for Himself, and doesn't rely *solely* upon manifesting Himself through men in order to achieve anything. He doesn't need us to as it were apologize for Him through 'apologetics'; He Himself is witness unto Himself regardless of us.

Twenty-two thousand of the people returned and ten thousand remained. ⁴ Yahweh said to Gideon, The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Those of whom I tell you, ‘This one shall go with you’ shall go, and those of whom I tell you, ‘This one shall not go with you’ shall remain. ⁵ So he brought down the people to the water and Yahweh said to Gideon, Each one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, set him by himself; likewise each one who bows down on his knees to drink. ⁶ The number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, was three hundred men, but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink. ⁷ Yahweh said to Gideon, By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, each to his own place. ⁸ So the three hundred men took food and their trumpets, and he sent all the rest of them to

their tents; and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley. ⁹ The same night Yahweh said to him, Arise, go down into the camp; for I have delivered it into your hand. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp ¹¹ and you will hear what they say. After that your hands will be strengthened to go down into the camp. Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outskirts of the armed men who were in the camp. ¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude, and their camels were without number, as the sand which is on the seashore for multitude. ¹³ When Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his fellow. He said, I had a dream: a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat. ¹⁴ His fellow answered, This is none

7:4 God said that He would try / judge the people with Gideon at the waters – but they effectively judged themselves by deciding with their own freewill whether to kneel down [as before an idol?], or lap. Idols were worshipped by kneeling before them, and perhaps those who lapped rather than knelt were the minority with sensitive consciences to Yahweh, not wanting to even ‘go there’ by even vaguely appearing to have anything in common with idolatry.

7:10 Gideon’s constant need for reassurance is found throughout the record. Yet God knew that potentially, Gideon was a brave, faithful servant of His (6:12); and yet He made concessions to Gideon’s weakness and need for human company, whilst at the same time strongly teaching him that God saves by the few and the weak (:7). He works in the same way with us, teaching and stretching us whilst sensitive to our weaknesses and fears.

7:12 Saul tried to copy Gideon in his own fighting with his enemies (1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 1 Sam. 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 1 Sam. 14:24,28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5). We too should be inspired by Gideon’s victory in our battles. See on 13:15.

7:14, 15 – see on 6:12,13.

other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has delivered Midian into his hand with all the army. ¹⁵ When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped, and he returned into the camp of Israel. He said, Arise, for Yahweh has delivered the army of Midian into your hand! ¹⁶ He divided the three hundred men into three companies and he gave each of them a trumpet and an empty pitcher, with a torch inside the pitcher. ¹⁷ He said to them, Watch me, and do as I do when I come to the outermost part of the camp. ¹⁸ When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow your trumpets too, on every side of the camp, and shout 'For Yahweh and for Gideon!' ¹⁹ So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch. They blew the trumpets and broke in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands. ²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers and held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands with which to blow, and they shouted, The sword of Yahweh and of Gideon! ²¹ They each stood in

his place around the camp and all the army ran, and they shouted and put them to flight. ²² They blew the three hundred trumpets, and Yahweh set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army, and the army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah by Tabbath. ²³ The men of Israel were gathered together out of Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian. ²⁴ Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim saying, Come down against Midian and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah. So all the men of Ephraim were gathered together and took the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. ²⁵ They took the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

CHAPTER 8 Jun. 10

Zeba and Zalmunna

The men of Ephraim said to him, Why have you treated us this way, that you didn't call us when you went to fight with Midian? They re-

7:19 *They had but newly set the watch* – This was humanly speaking the worst time to attack, when the guards were fresh and alert. Likewise going in to battle cumbered with pitchers and trumpets rather than weaponry was a sign of trusting in God for victory rather than human strength. God's battle plans often specifically require us to attain victory in a way which is foolish and weak in human terms.

7:22 God so often destroyed mighty armies by setting them against each other. Division is not only a human work, but is used by God to destroy communities which displease Him.

buked him sharply. ² He said to them, What have I now done in comparison with you? Isn't the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? ³ God has delivered into your hand the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb! What was I able to do in comparison with you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that. ⁴ Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over with the three hundred men, exhausted yet pursuing. ⁵ He said to the men of Succoth, Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. ⁶ The princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your possession, that we should give bread to your army? ⁷ Gideon said Because of that, when Yahweh has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. ⁸ He went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way, and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. ⁹ He said to the men of Penuel, When I come again in peace I will break down this tower. ¹⁰ Now Zebah and Zalmunna

were in Karkor and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the army of the people of the east; one hundred and twenty thousand fighting men having been killed. ¹¹ Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the army, which was unsuspecting. ¹² Zebah and Zalmunna fled and he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed all the army. ¹³ Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle from the ascent of Heres. ¹⁴ He caught a young man of Succoth and asked of him, and he described for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men. ¹⁵ He came to the men of Succoth and said, See Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your possession, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?' ¹⁶ He took the elders of the city and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth a lesson. ¹⁷ He broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city. ¹⁸ Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, What kind of men were

8:3 *Then their anger was abated* – The Proverbs are full of allusion to Israel's earlier history; Prov. 15:1 "a soft answer turns away wrath" clearly alludes here. Gideon could've responded that they could've come to help him in his hour of need but chose not to, and now wanted to share the glory of the victory. But he speaks humbly to them. We don't always have to state truth as it is; rather there are times when we must follow the things which make for peace with people, however wrong they may be (Rom. 14:19). See on 12:2.

8:6 This was the exact spirit of Israel's suspicious cousins when they were on their way from Egypt to Canaan (Num. 20:17,18). They should have learnt the lesson from Divine history.

they whom you killed at Tabor? They answered, They were like you. Each one resembled the children of a king. ¹⁹ He said, They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As Yahweh lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you. ²⁰ He said to Jether his firstborn, Get up and kill them! But the youth didn't draw his sword for he was afraid, because he was still a youth. ²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Get up and do it yourself, for as the man is, so is his strength. Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna and took the crescents that were on their camels' necks.

Gideon Makes an Ephod

²² Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us, both you and your son and your son's son also, for you have saved us out of the hand of Midian. ²³ Gideon said to them,

I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you. Yahweh shall rule over you. ²⁴ Gideon said to them, I would make a request of you, that every man would give me the earrings of his spoil. They had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites. ²⁵ They answered, We will willingly give them. They spread a garment and each man threw the earrings of his spoil into it. ²⁶ The weight of the golden earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescents, the pendants and the purple clothing that was on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were about their camels' necks. ²⁷ Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah, and all Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there; and it became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

8:23 Here we again see how Israel were God's Kingdom on earth; this Kingdom was overturned when the last king of Judah was removed (Ez. 21:25-27) and will be re-established on earth at Christ's return (Acts 1:6).

8:24-27 When Gideon received the golden earrings of the Ishmaelites, his mind should have flown back to how golden earrings were turned into the golden calf (Ex. 32:2). He was potentially given the strength to resist the temptation to turn them into an idol. But he must have blanked out that Biblical precedent in his heart; he ignored his spiritual potential, just as we are tempted to do so often.

8:27 Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (6:9). The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our internal sinful tendencies which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is that it results in a sudden and *unexpected* destruction. The implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their besetting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with frequent references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is that the desire for wealth in our generation is the equivalent of idolatry in the Old Testament.

The Death of Gideon

²⁸ So Midian was subdued before the Israelites, and they exalted their heads no more. The land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon. ²⁹ Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. ³⁰ Gideon had seventy sons conceived from his body, for he had many wives. ³¹ His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son and he named him Abimelech. ³² Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ³³ As soon as Gideon was dead, the people of Israel turned again and played the prostitute after the Baals, and made Baal Berith their god. ³⁴ The Israelites didn't remember Yahweh their God Who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side, ³⁵ neither did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, that is, Gideon, according to all the kindness which he had showed to Israel.

CHAPTER 9 Jun. 11***Abimelech Is Made King***

Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and

with all the family of the house of his mother's father saying, ² Please speak to all the men of Shechem and say, 'Is it better for you that all the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy persons, should rule over you, or that one rule over you?' Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. ³ His mother's brothers told all the men of Shechem all these words, and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, He is our brother. ⁴ They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal Berith, with which Abimelech hired reckless adventurers who followed him. ⁵ He went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy persons, on one stone; but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal escaped, for he hid himself. ⁶ All the men of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem.

Jotham's Parable

⁷ When they told Jotham he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted to them, Listen to me, you men of Shechem, so that God will listen to you. ⁸ The trees went

8:30 Although Heb. 11:32 speaks of Gideon as one of the faithful who will be resurrected to live eternally in God's Kingdom on earth at Christ's return, it seems that he rested on the laurels of earlier spiritual victories, and in later life became complacent. Although this is a failure we should avoid, we are comforted by God's grace in still accepting Gideon.

9:7 *Listen to me... so that God will listen to you* – Jotham was speaking prophetic words from God. Insofar as we hear God's word, so He will hear our words in prayer; if His words abide in us, we shall know His will, and our will becomes His will, and thereby our prayers according to His will are heard (Jn. 15:7). See on 13:9.

out one day to anoint a king to be over them; they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us’. ⁹ But the olive tree said to them ‘Should I give up my oil with which they honour God and man to go and hold sway over the trees?’ ¹⁰ The trees said to the fig tree, ‘Come and reign over us’. ¹¹ But the fig tree said to them, ‘Should I give up my good, sweet fruit to go to hold sway over the trees?’ ¹² The trees said to the vine ‘Come and reign over us’. ¹³ The vine said to them, ‘Should I give up my new wine, which cheers God and man, to go to hold sway over the trees?’ ¹⁴ Then all the trees said to the thorn bush, ‘Come and reign over us’. ¹⁵ The thorn bush said to the trees, ‘If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; if not, let fire come out of the thorn bush and devour the cedars of Lebanon’. ¹⁶ Now therefore, consider whether you have done what is true and right in making Abimelech king, and whether you have done justly to Jerubbaal and his house as he deserves. ¹⁷ (For my father fought for

you and risked his life and delivered you out of the hand of Midian, ¹⁸ yet you have risen up against my father’s house this day and have slain his sons, seventy persons, on one stone, and have made Abimelech the son of his female servant king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brothe.) ¹⁹ If you have done what is true and right with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech and let him also rejoice in you. ²⁰ But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo, and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from the house of Millo and devour Abimelech. ²¹ Jotham ran away and fled and went to Beer and lived there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

Gaal Leads a Rebellion against Abimelech

²² Abimelech was prince over Israel for three years. ²³ God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with

9:9, 10 People of true integrity will get on with what they are obviously called to do by God, rather than seeking leadership for the sake of it, swaying around in a light and meaningless way above others.

9:18 *You... have slain his sons* – Abimelech personally had slain Gideon’s sons, but the people of Shechem had enabled it by their lack of resistance. The Bible doesn’t teach ‘guilt by association’, but there is also a sense in which communities are counted as guilty for allowing evil to be perpetrated by individuals.

9:23 *God sent an evil spirit* – To say that demons were cast out of someone is to say that they were cured of a mental illness, or an illness which was not understood at the time. People living in the first century tended to blame everything which they couldn’t understand on imaginary beings called ‘demons’. Mental illness being hard to understand with their level of medical knowledge, the people spoke of those afflicted as ‘demon possessed’. In Old Testament times, an evil or unclean spirit referred to a troubled mental state (as here and 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10), in that the ‘spirit’ often refers

Abimelech, ²⁴ so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be avenged, and that their blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother who killed them, and on the men of Shechem who helped him to kill his brothers. ²⁵ The men of Shechem set an ambush for him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who came along that way. This was reported to Abimelech. ²⁶ Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem, and the men of Shechem put their trust in him. ²⁷ They went out into the field and harvested their vineyards, trod the grapes and held a festival, and went into the house of their god, ate and drank and cursed Abimelech. ²⁸ Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Isn't he the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his

officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem, but why should we serve Abimelech? ²⁹ If only this people were under my hand! Then I would remove Abimelech. He said to Abimelech, Increase your army and come out! ³⁰ When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. ³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech secretly saying, Look, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem and they are inciting the city against you. ³² Now therefore, go up by night, you and the people who are with you, and lie in wait in the field. ³³ In the morning, as soon as the sun is up, you can rise early and rush on the city, and when he and the people who are with him come out against you, then may you do to them as you see fit. ³⁴ Abimelech and all the people who were with him got

to the mind or disposition. Note that in every Old Testament reference to evil spirits, they were sent *by God*, not a personal, sinful 'Satan' being.

God is capable of sending a spirit of disunity between people, as He did to Egypt (Is. 19:1,2,14). God created the division between Israel and Judah as a punishment for their apostasy. Whilst division between people is a work of the flesh, it's also true that God confirms people in the divisions they wish to have, and He does this as a punishment. There are times when people who have an existing disagreement encounter situations which involve genuine misunderstanding and unfortunate coincidence of circumstances which confirm their division yet further; and this 'extra' factor in their relationship breakdown is sent by God. In this sense stubborn hearts are also sent from God (Ps. 81:13); God can work positively and negatively directly upon the human heart. Likewise God confirms a desire for unity amongst His people.

9:27 This was some kind of dedication of the harvest to Baal; yet God had commanded that the firstfruits of the harvest should be given to Him, and His people should rejoice before *Him* (Lev. 19:23-25). We see here how Israel appropriated pagan rituals and mixed them with Yahweh worship, in the same way as an apostate church took the pagan Winter solstice festival of December 25 and applied it to Jesus. We too are ever tempted to worship our own flesh in the guise of Yahweh worship – e.g. we may gossip, kidding ourselves that this is in the defence of God's Truth (as if it needs any defence by us); hoard huge wealth under the excuse we may one day use it for God.

up by night and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies. ³⁵ Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, and Abimelech and the people who were with him got up from the ambush. ³⁶ When Gaal saw the people he said to Zebul, Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains. Zebul said to him, You are seeing the shadows of the mountains as if they were men. ³⁷ Gaal spoke again and said, Look, people are coming down by the middle of the land, and one company is coming by the way of the oak of Meonenim. ³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, Now where is your boast when you said 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' Isn't this the people that you have despised? Go out now and fight with them. ³⁹ Gaal went out before the men of Shechem and fought with Abimelech. ⁴⁰ Abimelech chased him and he fled from him, and many fell wounded, up to the entrance of the gate. ⁴¹ Abimelech lived at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they should not dwell in Shechem. ⁴² Next day the people went out into the field and told Abimelech. ⁴³ He took the people and divided them into three companies and laid wait in the field, and when he saw the people coming out of the city, he rose up against them and struck them. ⁴⁴ Abimelech and the companies that were with him rushed forward and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, and the two companies rushed on all who were in the field and struck them.

⁴⁵ Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he took the city and killed the people who were in it, and he beat down the city and sowed it with salt.

The Death of Abimelech

⁴⁶ When all the men of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the house of Elberith. ⁴⁷ It was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. ⁴⁸ Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him, and Abimelech took an axe in his hand and cut down a branch from the trees, took it up and laid it on his shoulder, and he said to the people who were with him, What you have seen me do, hurry and do the same! ⁴⁹ All the people likewise each cut down his branch and followed Abimelech, and they put them at the base of the stronghold and set the stronghold on fire on them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about one thousand men and women. ⁵⁰ Then Abimelech went to Thebez and encamped against Thebez and took it. ⁵¹ But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women of the city fled to it and shut themselves in, and went up to the roof of the tower. ⁵² Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. ⁵³ A woman cast an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and broke his skull. ⁵⁴ Then he called hastily to the young man who carried his armour and said to him,

Draw your sword and kill me, so that men will not say of me, ‘A woman killed him’. His young man thrust him through and he died.⁵⁵ When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead they departed each man to his place.⁵⁶ Thus God rewarded the wickedness of Abimelech which he did to his father, in killing his seventy brothers,⁵⁷ and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem God repaid on their heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

CHAPTER 10 Jun. 12

Tola and Jair

After Abimelech, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar arose to save Israel, and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.² He judged Israel twenty-three years and died, and was buried in Shamir.³ After him arose Jair the Gileadite, and he judged Israel twenty-two years.⁴ He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkey colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havvoth Jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.⁵ Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

Israel Returns to Idolatry

⁶ The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and

served the Baals and Ashtaroath, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines; they forsook Yahweh and didn’t serve Him.⁷ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel and He sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the people of Ammon.⁸ They troubled and oppressed the Israelites that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites that were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.⁹ The Ammonites passed over the Jordan to fight also against Judah and Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was very distressed.¹⁰ The Israelites cried to Yahweh saying, We have sinned against You because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals.¹¹ Yahweh said to the Israelites, Didn’t I save you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites, and from the Philistines?¹² The Sidonians also and the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, and you cried to Me, and I saved you out of their hand.¹³ Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will save you no more.¹⁴ Go and cry to the gods which you have cho-

9:54 Abimelech therefore knew that it was a woman who had thrown the millstone; presumably he had looked up at her and seen her and assumed that a woman could never kill him as a man. His despising of the person of another and assumption of intrinsic superiority because of his gender led him to his death.

9:56 Abimelech appeared to have had a very blessed and successful life; but the lesson of the story is that finally, sin catches up with us and will have its judgment, if not in this life, then at the day of judgment when Christ returns.

10:13 *I will save you no more* – But they begged Him, and He did. Likewise in Hosea,

sen. Let them save you in the time of your distress! ¹⁵ The Israelites said to Yahweh, We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to You, only deliver us, please, this day. ¹⁶ They put away the foreign gods from among them and served Yahweh; and His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. ¹⁷ Then the Ammonites were gathered together and encamped in Gilead. The Israelites assembled themselves and encamped in Mizpah. ¹⁸ The people, the princes of Gilead, said one to another, Who will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

CHAPTER 11 Jun. 12

Jephthah

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and

he was the son of a prostitute; and Gilead was the father of Jephthah. ² Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when his wife's sons grew up they drove out Jephthah, and said to him, You shall not inherit in our father's house because you are the son of another woman. ³ Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob, and a group of adventurers gathered to Jephthah, and they went out with him. ⁴ After a while the Ammonites made war against Israel. ⁵ When the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah out of the land of Tob, ⁶ and they said to Jephthah, Come and be our chief, so that we can fight the Ammonites. ⁷ Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, Didn't you hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why have

He said He would love them no more, but just couldn't bring Himself to do it (Hos. 9:15; 14:4). These aren't contradictions, but rather a window onto the passion and emotion of God; how His love is greater than His anger with sin. And this God is our God.

10:16 *His soul was grieved* – There is in the Hebrew text here something which defies translation. We read there that God was so hurt by Israel's sufferings that in sympathy with them, "His *nephesh* ["soul"] was grieved / shortened" or expended. The phrase is used in 16:16 and Num. 21:4 about death or the diminishment of life. God's pain was such that this was how He felt, because He so internalized the sufferings of His people. And how much more in the death of His Son? He even feels like that for the sufferings of Gentiles. As something of each of us dies in the death of those we love, so "God was in Christ", sharing in His sufferings and death. It was not of course that God died. But He fully shared in the sufferings of His Son unto death. We also see here how God truly takes no pleasure in punishing His children; eternal conscious torment of the wicked isn't a Bible teaching (Ez. 18:32; 33:11).

11:2 Again we see how God worked to save Israel through a man whom others despised and rejected, looking forward to His Son, Jesus, the stone whom the Jewish builders rejected who became the corner stone (Mt. 21:42).

11:7,8 Israel's attitude to Jephthah was their attitude to God; they rejected Him, but turned to Him in times of trouble. The way Jephthah speaks in :7 and :12 suggests he appreciated this, and took comfort from it.

you come to me now when you are in distress? ⁸ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, Therefore we have turned again to you now, so that you may go with us and fight the Ammonites, and you shall be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. ⁹ Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, If you bring me home again to fight the Ammonites and Yahweh delivers them to me, shall I be your head? ¹⁰ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, Yahweh shall be witness between us; certainly we will do as you say. ¹¹ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them, and Jephthah spoke all his words before Yahweh in Mizpah. ¹² Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites saying, What have you against me, that you have come to me to fight against my land? ¹³ The king of the Ammonites answered the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land when he came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to the Jordan; now therefore restore that territory again peaceably. ¹⁴ Jephthah sent messengers back to the king of the Ammonites ¹⁵ and said to him, This is what Jephthah says: Israel didn't

take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the Ammonites, ¹⁶ but when they came up from Egypt Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. ¹⁷ Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom saying, 'Please let me pass through your land;' but the king of Edom didn't listen. In the same way he sent to the king of Moab, but he would not, and Israel stayed in Kadesh. ¹⁸ Then they went through the wilderness and skirted around the land of Edom and the land of Moab and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and they encamped on the other side of the Arnon, but they didn't come within the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab. ¹⁹ Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, 'Please let us pass through your land to our place'. ²⁰ But Sihon didn't trust Israel to pass through his border, but Sihon gathered all his people together and encamped in Jahaz and fought against Israel. ²¹ Yahweh the God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they struck them; so Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

11:8 Both illegitimate children like Jephthah and Ammonites were excluded from Yahweh's congregation (Dt. 23:2,3). But God brought the Israelites to such desperation that they had to recognize that the letter of God's law couldn't save them. Jephthah could have reasoned that because his brethren excluded him, therefore he would have no passion for his own people and would certainly not fight for them. But he adopted, as we should, a more gracious perspective. Whatever the rejections suffered at the hands of God's hypocritical people, he still saw them as God's people and identified with them. This is a lesson for the many who have been unjustly excluded from congregations of God's people over technical issues which weren't their personal fault; this is no reason to be unfaithful to or cease to identify with God's people as a whole.

22 They captured all the border of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jab-bok, and from the wilderness to the Jordan. 23 So now Yahweh, the God of Israel has driven out the Amorites from before His people Israel, and should you take it over? 24 Won't you inherit that which Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever Yahweh our God has given to us, that we will take. 25 Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zipor king of Moab? Did he ever strive successfully against Israel, or did he ever fight against them? 26 While Israel lived in Heshbon and its towns, in Aroer and its towns and in all the cities that are along by the side of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why didn't you recover them within that time? 27 I therefore have not sinned against you, but you do me wrong to fight against me. Let Yahweh the Judge be judge this day between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon. 28 However the king of the Ammonites didn't listen to the words of Jephthah which he sent him. 29 Then the Spirit of Yahweh came

on Jephthah and he crossed over Gilead, Manasseh and Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he crossed over to the Ammonites.

Jephthah's Vow

30 Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh and said, If You will indeed deliver the Ammonites into my hand, 31 then whatever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites, it shall be Yahweh's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. 32 So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them and Yahweh delivered them into his hand. 33 He struck them from Aroer to Minnith, twenty cities, and to Abelcheramim, with a very great slaughter. So the Ammonites were subdued before the children of Israel. 34 Jephthah came to Mizpah to his house and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. She was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 When he saw her he tore his clothes and said, Alas my daughter! You have made

11:24 Jesus spoke about demons as if such things existed, even though He did not believe they did; for demons referred to idols, which have no real existence (1 Cor. 8:4). In a similar way, faithful Jephthah spoke of the idol Chemosh *as if* he existed.

11:27 We are in God's judgment presence in this life just as much as we will be in the last day. The day of the Lord is coming, but it is even now (Mic. 7:4 Heb.). Jephthah understood this when he said that Yahweh the Judge *is* judge "this day". Because God *is* judge right now, this means we should realize that He will and does judge here and now.

11:35 Jephthah could have redeemed his daughter from the vow he involved her with (Lev. 27:4). But he decided in his mind: "I have made a vow to Yahweh and I can't go back on it". Actually he could have done; but he so firmly chose the higher level that it was as if there was no way back. Ps. 15:4, in evident allusion to Jephthah, describes those who will attain the Kingdom as fearing Yahweh, and swearing to their own hurt and changing not. Some may swear and change and attain the Kingdom; but we are in-

me very sad and troubled, for I have made a vow to Yahweh and I can't go back on it. ³⁶ She said to him, My father, you have made a vow to Yahweh; do to me what you have vowed, because Yahweh has taken vengeance for you on your enemies the people of Ammon. ³⁷ She said to her father, Let this one thing be done for me: let me alone two months to go around on the mountains and bewail my virginity, I and my companions. ³⁸ He said, Go. He sent her away for two months, and she and her companions went and mourned her virginity on the mountains. ³⁹ At the end of two months she returned to her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed, and she was a virgin. It was a custom in Israel, ⁴⁰ that the daughters of Israel went each year to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

CHAPTER 12 Jun. 13

Jephthah Fights Ephraim

The men of Ephraim were gathered together and passed northward, and they said to Jephthah,

Why did you go to fight against the Ammonites and didn't call us to go with you? We will burn your house around you with fire! ² Jephthah said to them, I and my people were at great strife with the Ammonites and when I called you, you didn't save me out of their hand. ³ When I saw that you didn't save me, I put my life in my hand and went against the Ammonites, and Yahweh delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day, to fight against me? ⁴ Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim, and the men of Gilead struck Ephraim because they said, You Gileadites are renegades of Ephraim from Ephraim and Manasseh. ⁵ The Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites. When the fugitives of Ephraim said, Let me cross over, the men of Gilead said to him, Are you an Ephraimite? If he said No; ⁶ then they said to him, Now say 'Shibboleth;' and he said Sibboleth, for he couldn't manage to pronounce it right, then they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. At that time, forty-two

vited to follow Jephthah to the highest level. Another possibility is that Jephthah was ignorant of the Lev. 27:4 provision that he could rescind a vow. In which case we learn that someone can be of great faith and acceptability to God even if they are ignorant of part of His word. This shouldn't justify us in a careless attitude to His service, but rather should inspire our toleration and acceptance of our more ignorant brethren.

12:2 An identical thing happened to Gideon – see on 8:3. Gideon could've said the same as Jephthah, but instead gave a soft answer and turned away wrath (Prov. 15:1). Here, Jephthah answers the complaint on a purely factual level – and conflict ensued. We are perhaps left to conclude that we can answer provocation in either of these two ways – it's not a moral issue, it's totally our choice, but we can avoid conflict if we take the “soft answer” route.

12:6 *Shibboleth* means ‘the river’, so presumably the Gileadites made them ask if they could cross ‘the river’.

thousand of Ephraim fell. ⁷ Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in a city of Gilead.

Ibzan, Elon and Abdon

⁸ After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He sent his daughters away in marriage, and brought in thirty women for his sons. He judged Israel for seven years. ¹⁰ Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem. ¹¹ After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel for ten years. ¹² Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. ¹³ After him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkey colts, and he judged Israel for eight years. ¹⁵ Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in

Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

CHAPTER 13 Jun. 13

The Birth of Samson

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and Yahweh delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. ² There was a man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and childless. ³ The angel of Yahweh appeared to the woman and said to her, Look now, you are barren and childless but you will conceive and bear a son. ⁴ Now therefore you must be careful and drink no wine nor strong drink, and don't eat any unclean thing. ⁵ You shall conceive and bear a son, and no razor must come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he will begin to save Israel out of the

12:8, 10 The double connection of Ibzan with Bethlehem exemplifies how all the judges – the Hebrew word means ‘saviours’ – were types of Jesus, the ultimate ‘saviour’ of God’s people. The Hebrew form of “Jesus” means ‘Yahweh is saviour’.

13:5 Although he was to be the beginning of serious deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, the whole story of Samson is prefaced by the fact that during the 40 years of Samson’s ministry (15:20;16:31), “Yahweh delivered (Israel) into the hand of the Philistines” (:1). It is emphasized in 14:4 that “at that time the Philistines had domination over Israel” (see too 15:11). The point is hammered home in 15:20: “He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years”. God’s intention was that Samson was to deliver Israel from the Philistines; but somehow he never rose up to it. They remained under the Philistines, even during his ministry. One interpretation of his life is that he made a few sporadic attempts in red hot personal zeal, confirmed by God, to deliver Israel. But he never rose up to the potential level that God had prepared for him in prospect. And yet for all this, he was accepted in the final analysis as a man of faith. This provides comfort not only to us in our weakness, but assists us in more positively and hopefully perceiving others whose weaknesses are so apparent to us. When she relayed the incident to her husband, Samson’s mother omitted to repeat the part of the Angel’s conversation about Samson delivering Israel from the Philistines (:7) – perhaps because she didn’t believe that her child would be capable of this. And perhaps this was a factor in his failure to achieve what God had intended for him.

hand of the Philistines. ⁶ Then the woman went and told her husband, A man of God came to me, and his face was like the face of the angel of God, very awesome. I didn't ask him where he was from, neither did he tell me his name, ⁷ but he said to me 'You will conceive and bear a son; drink no wine or strong drink, and eat no unclean thing, for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death'. ⁸ Then Manoah entreated Yahweh and said, Oh Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we should do to the child who will be born. ⁹ God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field, but

Manoah her husband, wasn't with her. ¹⁰ The woman quickly ran and told her husband, and said to him, The man has appeared to me, who came to me that day. ¹¹ Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, Are you the man who spoke to the woman? He said, I am. ¹² Manoah said, Now may your words come true. What should the child's way of life and mission be? ¹³ The angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, All that I said to the woman she must do. ¹⁴ She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; all that I commanded her let her observe. ¹⁵ Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, Please, let us detain you

13:7 It may be possible to understand that the breaking of his Naziriteship was yet another way in which he never lived up to his God-given potential. He was "a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death". Yet he broke the Nazirite vow by touching dead bodies and having his hair shaven (Num. 6:6). This may mean that he chose to break God's ideal intention for him, to take a lower and lower level of service to God until actually he had slipped away altogether. This is the problem with eagerly making use of God's concessions to human weakness. However, it may be that God counted *his desire* for the high standard of Naziriteship to him. He saw him as if this never happened, in the same way as He saw Abraham as if he had offered up Isaac, even though ultimately he didn't (Heb. 11:17; James 2:21). Intention, not the human strength of will to do the act, seems to sometimes be what God earnestly looks for.

13:8 *The child who will be born* – We see here Manoah's respect and belief of his wife's word, which he accepted as God's word. When a wife says she is pregnant because an Angel visited her – it's quite something for the husband to believe that, especially in a culture which stereotyped women as untruthful and likely to be unfaithful. Manoah's example likely inspired Joseph centuries later when Mary said the same. Manoah's respect of his wife's word was again put to the test in :9,10.

13:9 *God listened to the voice of Manoah* – His hearkening to *God's* word led to God hearing *his* word in prayer – see on 9:7. Manoah asked for the prophet (whom he thought the Angel was) to come again and tell them how to train their new child. His prayer was answered – but actually, his request wasn't specifically dealt with. The Angel came – not a prophet, as he asked – and confirmed to Manoah that really his wife was going to have a child. The spirit behind his request was understood and answered, rather than the actual words which he spoke.

so that we may make a young goat ready for you. ¹⁶ The angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, Though you detain me, I won't eat your food, and if you prepare a burnt offering, you must offer it to Yahweh. Manoah didn't know that he was the angel of Yahweh. ¹⁷ Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, What is your name, that when your words come true, we may honour you? ¹⁸ The angel of Yahweh said to him, Why do you ask about my name, since it is beyond understanding? ¹⁹ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to Yahweh. Then the angel did a wonderful thing as Manoah and his wife looked on. ²⁰ When the flame went up toward the sky from the altar, the angel of Yahweh ascended in the flame of the altar, and Manoah and his wife looked on, and they fell on their faces to the ground. ²¹ But the angel of

Yahweh didn't appear to Manoah or to his wife any more. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Yahweh. ²² Manoah said to his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. ²³ But his wife said to him, If Yahweh wanted to kill us He wouldn't have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from us, neither would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these. ²⁴ The woman bore a son, and named him Samson, and the child grew and Yahweh blessed him. ²⁵ The Spirit of Yahweh began to trouble him in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

CHAPTER 14 Jun. 14

Samson Marries a Philistine woman

Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

13:15 The record of Samson and his parents has a large number of situations where he was connected into the experience of those who had gone before; they were intended to learn the lessons, as we are to turn God's word into flesh, making the historical accounts have practical relevance to life today. Consider: Manoah's desire to detain the Angel (cp. Gen. 18:5). Manoah's desire to detain the Angel and offer sacrifice was exactly that of Gideon (6:18). His belief after he had seen the Angel ascend (13:20 = 6:21), and his subsequent fear, were again expressed in the words of Gideon (13:21,22 cp. 6:22). As Gideon was, perhaps subconsciously, the hero of Manoah, so Samson followed his father's spirituality in this (see on 14:1; 15:4). It seems he lived out parental expectation, and imbibed the spirituality of his father without making it his own. Born and raised believers, beware. See on :24; 14:1,3; 15:4,15,19; 16:24,25.

13:24 *The child grew, and Yahweh blessed him* – cp. Samuel, John, the Lord Jesus – all chosen from the womb.

13:25 The Spirit of the Lord had been troubling his conscience as to why the people of Dan had not followed up Joshua's victories, and had allowed themselves to be overrun by the uncircumcised. The only other references to "troubled" are in Gen. 41:8; Ps. 77:4; Dan. 2:1,3. The Spirit of God worked with Samson's spirit, so that it was troubled as he went for his solitary walks of meditation.

14:1 Judah also did wrong in Timnah (14:1) with a woman, and was deceived and shamed by her (15:1 = Gen. 38:17). Earlier Scripture, which it seems Samson well

² He came up and told his father and mother, I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore get her for me as my wife. ³ Then his father and mother said to him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of your brothers, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? Samson said to his father, Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes. ⁴ But his father and mother didn't know that it was from Yahweh, for He sought an occasion against the Philistines, for at that time the Philistines had domination over Israel. ⁵ Then Samson went down with his father and mother, to

knew and appreciated, was crying out to Samson to take heed. But he was blind to the real import of it all. See on 13:15. Samson "went down" to take a Philistine girl for wife (:1,5,7,10); and yet by doing so he was seeking an opportunity to slay Philistines. He may well have had in mind the emphasis on the fact that Gideon went *down* to destroy the Midianites (7:9,10,11,24). He went down morally and physically, and yet he justified this by thinking that as Gideon went down physically, so would he. Such is the complexity of the process of temptation.

14:2 It could be argued that because the father was responsible for his son's marriage partner (12:9; 15:2; Gen. 24:3-9; Neh. 10:30), therefore Samson's father was equally guilty for Samson's marriage out of the faith. Many of the commands against intermarriage were directed to parents, commanding them not to give their children in intermarriage.

14:3 The disappointment of Samson's parents cp. that of Esau's (cp. Gen. 26:35; 27:46; 28:1). See on 13:15.

"Is there *never* a woman among the daughters of your brothers" implies that she wasn't the first one; he had often got involved with Philistine girls down in the valley, despite his conscience for Yahweh troubling him as he walked alone on the heights (13:25 Heb.). Samson gave no good answer to his parents: simply "Get her for me; for she is right in my eyes" (repeated in :7 for emphasis – he really did fall for the lust of the eyes). This insistence rather than explanation would suggest a bad conscience in Samson. Likewise the crowd only shouted out the more when asked why and for what crime they wished to crucify Jesus (Mt. 27:23). But she was 'right in his eyes', not for beauty but in the sense that 'she suits my purpose' (Heb.). The same Hebrew is used not concerning beauty but rather utility in 1 Sam. 18:20; 2 Sam. 17:4; 1 Kings 9:12. The way in which Samson set up the riddle, almost expecting that they might tease it out of him through his wife, the way in which he agreed that if they did this, he would give them the clothes of 30 Philistines... it all suggests that Samson set the whole thing up to seek an opportunity against the Philistines.

14:4 The whole question of Samson's marriage is overshadowed by the fact that "It was from Yahweh"; He used this failure to deliver His people. There are a number of other passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. How-

Timnah and came to the vineyards of Timnah, and suddenly a young lion roared against him. ⁶ The Spirit of Yahweh came mightily on him and he tore it as he would have torn a young goat, having nothing in his hand, but he didn't tell his father or his mother what he had done. ⁷ He went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. ⁸ After a while he returned to take her and he turned

aside to see the carcass of the lion. In it there was a swarm of bees, in the body of the lion, and honey, ⁹ which he took it into his hands and went on, eating as he went. He came to his father and mother and gave some to them and they ate, but he didn't tell them that he had taken the honey out of the body of the lion. ¹⁰ His father went down to the woman, and Samson made a drinking feast as was the

ever, it is more likely that God worked through Samson's wrong desires, through his human weakness, to bring about God's purpose and glory.

14:5 Not only do circumstances repeat between the lives of God's children, but also within our lives. We may pass through a very similar experience more than once. The similarity and repetition may be so that we learn the lesson we failed to learn; or it could even be a punishment for not learning the lessons we should have learned. Samson's life demonstrates this. The lion roared against him as the Philistines did (s.w. 15:14); and not least in the uncanny similarities between the way his first wife enticed him and wrung his secrets from him, and the way 40 years later another worthless woman did the same to him (14:15-17 = 16:5,15,16). He just didn't see the similarities, or if he did, he didn't learn any lessons. Admittedly, it's far easier for us, presented with the records as they are, spanning 40 years within a few pages.

To the vineyards – Why did he as a Nazirite go for a walk in vineyards, among the forbidden fruit? This was typical of him: a great zeal and understanding, mixed with a desire to walk as close to the edge as possible, and to ultimately have a little of both. He had a fascination with vineyards, which the record brings out. Like an ex-alcoholic staring at the bottles in the shop 'just out of interest', so Samson fooled about with what was forbidden – just as we all tend to. He later teased Delilah to tie him with seven "cords" (16:7), the Hebrew word implying made from a vine. He just would mess with the forbidden. The way he burnt up those vineyards in 15:5 may have been as a result of realizing that the answer lay in total devotion and rooting out of temptation; cutting out the eye that offends.

14:6 Samson's zeal to deliver Israel was confirmed by God, in that he was given gifts of Holy Spirit in order to enable him to deliver Israel. However, this doesn't mean that he himself was a man rippling with muscle. The Philistines wanted to find out the *secret* of his strength; it wasn't that he had such evidently bulging muscles that the answer was self-evident. He told Delilah that if his head were shaved, he would be like any other man (16:17). He was therefore just an ordinary man, made strong by the Father after the pattern of the Saviour he typified. The stress is on the way in which the Spirit came upon Samson (14:6,19; 15:14), as it did on other judges (3:10; 6:34; 11:29). The New Testament gifts of the Holy Spirit were likewise for specific things at specific times, and were withdrawn once the intended work had been done.

14:10 Samson was a Nazirite to God (i.e. in God's eyes?) all his life (13:7) – although he broke his Naziriteship by contact with dead bodies (14:19; 15:15 cp. Num. 6:6) and

custom for the young men. ¹¹ When they saw him they brought thirty companions to be with him.

Samson's Riddle

¹² Samson said to them, Let me tell you a riddle now. If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. ¹³ But if you can't give me the answer, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. They said to him, Tell us your riddle, that we may hear it. ¹⁴ He said to them, Out of the eater came forth food. Out of the strong came forth sweetness. They couldn't give the answer in three days. ¹⁵ On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, Entice your husband to tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you called us here to

mock us? ¹⁶ Samson's wife wept before him and said, You must hate me, and don't love me. You have given a riddle to my people but you haven't told it to me. He said to her, I haven't even told it to my father or my mother; why should I tell you? ¹⁷ She wept before him for seven days, while their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him severely. Then she told the riddle to her people. On the seventh day before the sun went down, ¹⁸ the men of the city said to him, What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? He said to them, If you hadn't ploughed with my heifer you wouldn't have found out my riddle. ¹⁹ The Spirit of Yahweh came mightily on him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck thirty men of them and took their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. His anger

probably here by drinking wine at his wedding ("drinking feast"). This was not only imputed righteousness, but God counting the essential intentions of a weak willed man to him as if he had actually achieved what he fain would do.

14:16 "Why should I tell *you*" implied that his wife should expect that he was closer to his Hebrew parents than to her. Gen. 2:24 taught that a man must leave his parents and cleave to his wife in marriage; she must be closer to him than them. It could be that by saying this, Samson was reminding her that he didn't see their relationship as full marriage; he was only using her (cp. how he "used" a Philistine as his best man, :20). Yet he did what only days before had been unthinkable: he told her his finest and most personal secret, which he wouldn't even tell his dear parents. Such is the fickleness of our nature. Yet it seems no accident that he chose Timnah, 'a portion assigned' – to Israel. This was part of the land promised to Dan, but which they had allowed the Philistines to overrun (Josh. 19:43,47).

14:18 They had to declare the riddle "and find it out" (:12). This would indicate that they had to actually find the carcass of a lion with honey in it. They ploughed behind his wife as a heifer, and so were led by her to Samson's secret place of meditation where the dead lion was (:18).

14:19 When he slew the thirty men at Ashkelon, as he seemed to have planned right at the start in his seeking occasion against the Philistines, he was burning with anger.

was burning, and he went up to his father's house.²⁰ But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had considered a friend.

CHAPTER 15 Jun. 14

Samson Takes Revenge

But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat. He said, I will go in to my wife into the room.

But her father wouldn't allow him to go in.² Her father said, I was certain that you utterly hated her, therefore I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead.³ Samson said to them, This time I will be blameless of harm to the Philistines.⁴ Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches, tied them tail to tail in pairs and put a

His motive was partly bitterness and the revenge of a man humiliated and deceived by a woman; but his slaughter of the Philistines was also done in faith (Heb. 11:32-34), with God given strength to confirm his faith. Our motives can be terribly mixed, even when doing God's work.

15:2 He seems angry that he had let himself fall too deeply for that Philistine girl (14:19), and "utterly hated her" (15:2). He transferred his anger with himself onto someone close to him; and we must beware we deal with our guilt and sin by repentance, rather than transferring it onto another and harshly punishing them for our own sin. Yet Samson really loved that girl (14:3,17; 15:1,7,11), even though he also hated her (15:2; he must have gone through this process again with Delilah in the time that led up to her final betrayal). This true love for her makes Samson's marriages look more questionable.

15:3 He burnt those vineyards in a desire to be "blameless in regard to the Philistines". The same word is translated unpunished, guiltless, innocent, clean, acquitted; as if he knew he had sinned, but believed that by further fighting of Philistines he could gain his forgiveness. He had to be brought to the shame of Gaza Prison to learn that forgiveness was by absolute faith, not works and hatred of this present world, nor by transferring our sin and deserving of judgment onto others.

15:4 As the Spirit came upon Gideon (6:34), so it is described as coming upon Samson (14:6). It seems that when Samson visits his wife with a kid and uses this as an excuse to kill many Philistines, this was planned by him to reflect Gideon's zeal. The way Gideon brought a kid to Yahweh (6:19) may reflect how Samson came with a kid (15:1). He then takes 300 foxes and puts firebrands in their tails. Why 300? Maybe in conscious imitation of how Gideon took 300 men and put firebrands in their hands, and with them destroyed God's enemies (7:16). The connection between the faithful 300 and the foxes could suggest that in Samson's eyes, he didn't even have one faithful Israelite to support him; he had to use animals instead. As Gideon "went down" to destroy God's enemies (7:9), so Samson justified his 'going down' to the Philistines to take their women, as well as to destroy their warriors (14:1,5,7,10). As Gideon was somehow 'separate from his brethren' in his zeal, so was Samson. And yet Samson seems to have copied just the externalities of Gideon; not the real spirit. And therefore as Gideon foolishly multiplied women to himself in the spiritual weakness of his middle age, so perhaps Samson saw justification for his attitude. 'If heroic Gideon could indulge the flesh in this area, I surely can'. He fell into our common trap: to compare

firebrand between each pair of tails.
⁵ When he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing grain of the Philistines and burnt up both the shocks and the standing grain, and also the olive groves. ⁶ Then the Philistines said, Who has done this? They said, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because his wife was given her to his companion. The Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire. ⁷ Samson said to them, If you behave like this, surely I will be avenged on you. ⁸ He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them, then he went and lived in the cave in the rock of Etam. ⁹ Then the Philistines went up, and encamped in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. ¹⁰ The men of Judah

said, Why have you come up against us? They said, We have come up to take Samson prisoner, to do to him as he has done to us. ¹¹ Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave in the rock of Etam and said to Samson, Don't you know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that you have done to us? He said to them, As they did to me, so have I done to them. ¹² They said to him, We have come down to tie you up so that we can deliver you into the hand of the Philistines. Samson said to them, Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves. ¹³ They said, No, we will tie you up and deliver you into their hand, but we will not kill you. They bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from

ourselves amongst ourselves, to measure ourselves against human standards as we find them among the contemporary brotherhood (2 Cor. 10:12). See on 13:15.

15:5 Burning up the corn and vineyards of the Philistines was in conscious allusion to how the law stipulated that a man who did this to his Israelite neighbour must make retribution (Ex. 22:5). He was emphasizing that these people were *not* his neighbours, they were not in covenant relationship, and he openly showed that he treated them accordingly. Likewise he took vengeance on the Philistines (15:5; 16:28), when the Law taught that Israel were not to take vengeance (same word) *on each other* (Lev. 19:18), but could do so on their enemies (Num. 31:2; Dt. 32:43 cp. Josh. 10:13).

15:11 *As they did to me, so have I done to them* – If we ask ‘What exactly did they do to him? What did they kill and burn of his?’, the answer must be ‘His wife’. He perhaps felt that she was worth hundreds of them, and the burning of their livelihood, causing famine as a result, was what they had done to him emotionally. Yet it is curious how he loved the Philistines and yet hated them; was humble and yet had too high an opinion of himself. We see the same contradictions of human nature within ourselves. The Philistines had earlier said that they wanted to take Samson “to do to him as he did to us” (:10). And Samson replies in the same primitive way: that he only did to them what they did to him. It seems that Samson spoke to them on their level. It seems his zeal for God was also very humanly motivated.

15:12 It should be noted that his strength was not somehow magically associated with his hair; his strength went from him because Yahweh departed from him (16:19,20). He had to beg his own people not to try to kill him themselves (even whilst he had long hair), because he knew that the strength he had was only for certain specific purposes – i.e., to deliver God's people from the Philistines.

the rock. ¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him, and the Spirit of Yahweh came mightily on him. The ropes that were on his arms became as charred flax, and his ropes dropped off his hands. ¹⁵ He found a fresh jawbone of an ass and struck down a thousand men with it. ¹⁶ Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps on heaps; with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men. ¹⁷ When he had finished speaking he threw away the jawbone, and that place was called Ramath Lehi. ¹⁸ He was very thirsty and called on Yahweh and said, You have given this great deliverance by

the hand of Your servant; now shall I die for thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? ¹⁹ But God split the hollow place that is in Lehi and water came out of it. When he had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived, therefore its name was called En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. ²⁰ He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.

CHAPTER 16 Jun. 15

Samson and Delilah

Samson went to Gaza and saw there a prostitute, and went in to her. ² The Gazites were told, Sam-

15:14 When he was strolling in the Timnah vineyards, a lion had come across him (14:5). It was only after it roared against him that the Spirit came upon him and enabled him to kill it. He had to take the first nervous steps towards that lion in faith, and then the Spirit came upon him and confirmed his actions. The fact he didn't tell his parents what he had done may not only indicate his humility, but also suggests he was not naturally a strong man. To say he had just killed a lion would seem ridiculous (14:6). The Spirit likewise came upon him to kill the Philistines in Lehi (15:14). It wasn't a permanent strength. This is in harmony with the way in which the Spirit was used in the NT. The Spirit came upon the apostles and they were filled up with it, as it were, and then drained of it once the work was done; and had to be filled with it again when the next eventuality arose.

15:16 Samson slaying Philistines with a jawbone suggests Shamgar slaying Philistines with an ox goad (15:15 cp. 3:31). See on 13:15. Samson grabbed a jaw-bone and exalted that with *that* he had slain a thousand men at Lehi. This was a conscious allusion to Josh. 23:10 (and Lev. 26:8), that one faithful man would chase a thousand. It could be that he counted the bodies, or counted each man he slew, consciously trying to get up to 1,000 in order to fulfil the prophecy. Samson doesn't say that he alone killed the thousand men; he did it with the jaw-bone (coming from a Hebrew root meaning 'soft', 'weak'). This jaw bone is one of the seven weak things which are mentioned in Judges as being the tools of God's salvation: a left handed man (3:21); an ox goad (3:31); a woman (4:4); a nail (4:21); a piece of a millstone (9:53); a pitcher and trumpet (7:20).

15:19 Samson dying of thirst crying desperately for water recalls Hagar's experience (15:19 cp. Gen. 21:19). See 13:15.

16:1 When Samson decided to attack Gaza by going into a harlot's house, he may have been consciously imitating the way the spies played their part in Jericho's destruction. And yet it was once again only a surface imitation. He fell for the 'little of both' syn-

son is here! They surrounded him and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, staying quiet all night and saying, Wait until dawn, then we will kill him! ³ Samson lay until midnight, then arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, picked them up, along with the bar, put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain that faces Hebron. ⁴ Afterward, he fell in love with a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. ⁵ The lords of the Philistines came to her and said, Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and how we might prevail against

him to tie him up and subdue him. Then we will each one of us give you eleven hundred pieces of silver. ⁶ Delilah said to Samson, Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be tied up and subdued. ⁷ Samson said to her, If I am tied with seven fresh cords that were never dried, then shall I become weak like other men. ⁸ Then the lords of the Philistines brought to her seven fresh cords which had not been dried, and she tied him with them. ⁹ Now she had an ambush waiting in the inner room. She said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson! He broke the cords, as a string of tow is

drome, justifying it under the guise of Scriptural examples. The warnings about not *looking* at a strange woman recall how Samson *saw* the Philistine girl in Timnah and the prostitute in Gaza (14:1; 16:1). The wicked woman lying in wait to kill the simple man (Prov. 23:25–27) is a clear enough reference to Delilah and her henchmen lying in wait in the bedroom. And yet, for all this reflection upon Samson, Solomon went and did *par excellence* according to Samson's well-studied folly. And we can do the same, in principle. There is a vast distance between knowledge and belief.

16:3 Samson went in to spend the night with the prostitute, but Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the city gate. If he went in to spend the night there, he presumably entered the house at around 7 or 8. He had what he wanted, and then lay there thinking, the record seems to suggest, and decided to not lay there all night as he planned, but get up and do God's work. Whilst it is unrecorded, surely there were prayers of deep and fervent repentance as he lay there? His conscience likewise seems to have struck him after he attempted to marry the Philistine girl, and also when he burnt up the vineyards. And so again here. He may have justified his behaviour by reference back (in his deep subconscious, maybe) to how the spies sought to destroy Jericho by entering the city and lodging with a whore. We must ever examine our motives.

16:7 *Cords* – See on 14:5.

16:9 *Samson should have already learnt.* As his first wife had vexed her with her words to tease his secret from him, so Delilah did. As the Philistines laid wait for Samson as he lay with the whore in Gaza (16:2), so they laid wait in Delilah's bedroom (16:9). He had already repented of using God's service as an excuse for satisfying his own flesh in the incident with the Gaza prostitute. He had bitterly walked away from his first Philistine wife. He burnt down the vineyards, recalling how he had foolishly strolled in them as a Nazirite. He must have looked back and seen how he had played with fire. And now, he goes and does it all again. He goes to the valley of

broken when it touches the fire. So his strength was not known. ¹⁰ Delilah said to Samson, You have made a fool of me and told me lies! Now please tell me how you can be tied.

¹¹ He said to her, If I am tied with new ropes with which no work has been done, then I shall become weak like other men. ¹² So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them and said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson! The ambush was waiting in the inner room. He broke them off his arms like a thread. ¹³ Delilah said to Samson, Until now you have fooled me and told me lies. Tell me how you can be tied. He said to her, If you weave the seven braids of

my hair into the fabric on the loom, I will become as weak as other men.

¹⁴ She wove his hair into the fabric and fastened it with the pin, and said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson! He awoke and pulled away the pin from the loom and the fabric.

¹⁵ She said to him, How can you say, ‘I love you’, when your heart is not with me? You have fooled me three times and have not told me where your great strength lies. ¹⁶ When she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, he became tired to death.

¹⁷ So he told her everything, and said to her, No razor has ever come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am

Sorek, ‘choice vines’, and Samson falls for Delilah, ‘the vine’. He went down to the vineyards again; the Nazirite tried to take fire into his bosom again.

16:13 “If *they* tie me...” (:7) now changes to “If *you* [singular]”; he knew beforehand that she would betray him, although couldn’t admit it to himself. And so we see the complexity of Samson’s situation. It was not that his telling of the secret to Delilah was necessarily a sin in itself. He trusted her and yet knew on another level she would betray him. This is just a psychological condition. It helps explain why the Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him (Jn. 6:64), and yet how He could really trust in Judas as his own familiar friend, confide in him (Ps. 41:9), telling him that he would sit with the other eleven on thrones in the Kingdom (Mt. 19:28). A man can know something about someone on one level, but in love act and feel towards them in a quite different way than this knowledge requires.

16:17 The question arises: Why did Samson tell Delilah that if his hair were cut, he would become weak? Surely he must have known within him that she would do it, in line with past experience? He went out as before to fight the Philistines, surely aware that he had been shaved, and yet assuming God would still be with him. He had come to realize that his long hair was not the real source of his strength, on some kind of metaphysical level. He saw that his strength was from the Spirit of God, not long hair or Naziriteship. He went out knowing, presumably, that his hair had been shaven, and yet still assumed he would have God’s strength. And even when his hair began to grow again, he still had to pray for strength (:28). He fell into the downward spiral of reductionism. He figured that if his hair was shaved, well it was no big deal. He was supposed to be a Nazirite all the days of his life, and yet perhaps he came to reason that because he had touched plenty of dead bodies, he therefore needed to be shaved anyway (Num. 6:9). He thought that therefore God would accept him in principle as a Nazirite even though he had broken the letter of Naziriteship, and therefore losing

shaved, then my strength will go from me and I will become weak like any other man. ¹⁸ When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent for the lords of the Philistines saying, Come up once more, for he has told me everything. Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought the money with them. ¹⁹ She made him sleep on her knees, and then she called for a man who shaved off the seven braids of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. ²⁰ She said, The

Philistines are upon you, Samson! He awoke out of sleep and said, I will go out as before and shake myself to be free of them. But he didn't know that Yahweh had departed from him. ²¹ The Philistines seized him and put out his eyes, and they brought him down to Gaza, bound him with fetters of brass, and made him work at grinding in the mill in the prison.

The Death of Samson

²² However the hair of his head began to grow again after he had been

his hair was only a surface level indicator of spirituality. And yet there is also good reason to think that there was an association in Samson's mind between his hair and his God-given strength. For why did he "tell her all his heart" by saying that if he were shaved, he would lose his strength? And of course, when his hair was cut off, then his strength went. Samson saw a link between being a Nazirite and having strength (:17). When Samson went outside from Delilah and shook himself as he usually did, was he not shaking his hair free before attacking the Philistines, as if he saw in his hair the source of his strength?

16:20 The way Samson was so deeply sleeping on Delilah's knees that he didn't feel them shave him, and then he went out and shook himself – all this could suggest he was drunk. There is no concrete evidence for this, but his love of vineyards would suggest he had a yearning for the forbidden fruit. He had broken the Nazirite vow by touching dead bodies, he obviously thought that having unshaven hair was only tokenistic and irrelevant to the real spirit of Naziriteship, and therefore he may have reasoned that alcohol was also another tokenism. Thus his reductionism destroyed him (almost). Perhaps it was brought about by a misunderstanding of God's waiving of the Nazirite ban on touching dead bodies; for after all, God had made Samson a Nazirite, and then empowered him to go and kill Philistines in personal combat, thereby touching dead bodies. So God waived one principle for a more important one; and yet Samson abused this, taking the principle far further than God intended, to the point that he ended up justifying sin as righteousness. The idea of binding the strong man (Mt. 12:29) must surely look back to Samson. This means that Jesus saw Samson at that time as the very epitome of Satan, even though ultimately he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32). Thus the Spirit doesn't forget a man's weakness, even though ultimately he may be counted righteous.

16:22 He only ground in the prison a short time, until the great sacrifice was offered to Dagon in thanks for Samson's capture. In that time, his hair grew – but not very long, in such a short time (no more than months, :22,23). The growth of his hair is to be associated with his renewed determination to keep the Nazirite vow. He was reckoned by God as a lifelong Nazirite (15:7); the time when his hair was cut was therefore

shaved.²³ The lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, for they said, Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.²⁴ When the people saw him, they praised their god. They said, Our god has delivered our enemy, the destroyer of our country who has slain many of us, into our hand!²⁵ When their hearts were merry they said, Call for Samson so that he can entertain us. They called Samson out of the prison, and he performed before them. They set him between the pillars,²⁶ and Samson said to the boy who held him by the hand, Allow me to feel the pillars on which the house rests so that I can lean on them.²⁷ Now the house was full of

men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about three thousand men and women watching while Samson performed.²⁸ Samson called to Yahweh and said, Lord Yahweh, remember me please, and strengthen me please, just this once oh God, that I may with one blow be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.²⁹ Samson took hold of the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and leaned on them, one with his right hand and the other with his left.³⁰ Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines! He pushed with all his might and the house fell on the lords and on all the people who were there. So he killed more in his death than he killed in his life.³¹ Then his

overlooked by God. His zealous repentance and desire to respond to the gracious way in which God still recognized him as a lifelong Nazirite, although he wasn't one, inspired him to a real faith and repentance. It was this, not the fact he had some hair again, which led to God empowering him to destroy the palace of Dagon.

16:24 Gentiles praising their gods, mocking Yahweh, and then suddenly being destroyed (16:24) was a scene repeated in Dan. 5:4. See on 13:15.

16:25 Samson suddenly called up out of the prison house cp. Joseph (Gen. 41:14) and John (Mt. 14:9). See on 13:15.

16:30 Samson's desire to die with the Philistines could be read as suicidal. In this case, he had elements of weakness at the end, and yet he was accepted as dying in faith. Or it could be understood that he wanted to die because he believed that through his death, he would achieve God's plan for taking the gates of his enemies. In this case he would have had the spirit of Christ. Samson's death plea for vengeance against the Philistines for his two eyes (:28) sounds woefully human. In some ways, for all the intensity of weeping before God in repentance (16:28 LXX), Samson had not progressed much from his attitude in 15:7, over 20 years before – where he once again had admitted that his motive for 'seeking occasion against the Philistines' was partly just personal revenge. The spirit of not avenging oneself but leaving it to God to do was evidently something he never quite rose up to in his life (Rom. 12:19). Although it seems to me it was wrong, and betrayed some unspirituality, yet it is taken as the epitome of the desire of all the faithful for vindication through the coming of Christ (Rev. 6:10).

16:31 Heb. 11:34 says that that Samson was a man of outstanding faith – yet the record in Judges seems framed to paint Samson as a womanizer, a man who lacked self-control and who only came to God in times of dire personal need. But imagine if

brothers and all the household of his father came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burial site of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel for twenty years.

CHAPTER 17 Jun. 16

Micah Makes Idols

There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. ² He said to his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which I heard you utter a curse - I took them. His mother said, Yahweh bless you my son. ³ He returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother and she said, I solemnly dedicate my silver to Yahweh for my son to make an engraved image and a molten image. Then I will give it back to you. ⁴ So he returned the

money to his mother and she took two hundred pieces of it and gave them to the silversmith, who made it into an engraved image and a molten image, and they were put into Micah's house. ⁵ This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods and consecrated one of his sons to be his priest. ⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

A Levite Comes to Micah

⁷ There was a young Levite who had been living in Bethlehem Judah, ⁸ and he left the city to find a better place, and came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. ⁹ Micah said to him, Where have you come from? He said to him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem Judah, and I am looking for a place to live. ¹⁰ Micah

only the negative incidents in our own lives, over a period of 40 years, were recorded. Anyone reading it would conclude that we were hypocritical to claim to have any hope of salvation. In our self-examination, we sometimes see only this negative record; we fail to see that God has justified us, that in His record book, we are ranked among the faithful, as Samson was in Hebrews 11. Any reflection on Samson needs to bear this in mind. He seems to have lived the rest of his life full of faith and zeal – although this doesn't minimize the mistakes he made.

17:3 We see here the continued theme of Judges – that the people confused serving the true God with serving idols. The man repents, he has a conscience; and his mother isn't an atheist, she's not rejected Yahweh; but their morality has become so confused. We see the same all around us today both doctrinally and practically, and we can easily be sucked into the same nexus of confusion unless we base our conscience, faith and understanding upon God's revealed word. The fault for the situation is also put upon the fact there was no leadership, and people did what *they* felt was right rather than what God had declared in His word (:6). There is no 'light within', as the Proverbs frequently declare, the way that seems right to man is often not (Prov. 14:12; 16:25; 21:2).

17:10, 11 Micah asked the young Levite, who was "unto him as one of his sons", to "be unto me a father and a priest" (note the paradox – the son is as a father), resulting in others likewise asking him to "be unto us a father and a priest" (18:19). The

said to him, Live with me and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver per year, a suit of clothing and your food. So the Levite agreed.¹¹ The young Levite was content to dwell with the man and became unto him as one of his sons.¹² Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, living in his house.¹³ Then Micah said, Now know I that Yahweh will do good to me, since I have a Levite as my priest.

CHAPTER 18 Jun. 16

The Danites Invade Laish

In those days there was no king in Israel, and at that time the tribe of the Danites looked for a place to live in, because up until then they had not come into their inheritance among the tribes of Israel.² The children of Dan sent five men of their family, men of valour, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and

to search it, and they said to them, Go, explore the land! They came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.³ When they were near the house of Micah they recognised the voice of the young Levite, so they went in there and said to him, Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? Why are you here?⁴ He said to them, This is what Micah has done with me, and he has hired me to be his priest.⁵ They said to him, Please enquire of God to find out whether our journey will be successful.⁶ The priest said to them, Go in peace. Your way has the approval of Yahweh.⁷ Then the five men departed and came to Laish. They saw that the people there lived in security like the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, and they were prosperous, lacking nothing. Also they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone else.⁸ The men returned to

point is, no matter how unqualified a person may be for the job, they may be pressed into being leaders because that's what nominally religious people so desperately need. There's a desire in most people for religious leadership rather than forging a direct relationship with God through personal response to His word and accepting His system of mediation between Him and us, which in our day is through His Son.

18:2 Again we see the quasi spirituality of the people at this time; this sending out of spies was framed in the language of Joshua sending out spies and then taking the land. They likewise say that the land is "good" (:9) just as the faithful spies said; and their description of the land as lacking nothing good (:10) is quoting Moses' words about the land in Dt. 8:9. But these Danites hadn't taken the land assigned to them by Joshua (:1). Mixing the flesh and the spirit is the way to total destruction; unless we are completely devoted to God's ways we will fail.

18:6 The men ask him to enquire of "God" but he immediately replies that "Yahweh" is blessing their plans. He didn't know the true God in practice but he used all the right language. There are other examples of men assuming all too quickly that they are speaking on God's behalf (2 Sam. 7:3; 1 Kings 22:15-17). We aren't to assume that we instinctively, intuitively know what God's will is, but to base our view upon His revealed word.

their brothers to Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brothers asked them, What did you find? ⁹ They said, Come on, let us go up against them, because we have seen the land, and it is very good. Do you doubt? Don't hesitate; go in to take possession of the land. ¹⁰ When you get there, you will find an unsuspecting people, and the land is large. God has given it to you, a place where there is no lack of anything that is in the earth. ¹¹ Six hundred armed men of the family of the Danites set out from there, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol. ¹² They went up and encamped in Kiriath Jearim in Judah. That is why they called that place The Camp of Dan, to this day; it is behind Kiriath Jearim. ¹³ They went from there to the hill country of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

The Levite Joins the Danites

¹⁴ Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their brothers, Do you know that there is in these houses an ephod and household gods, an engraved image and a molten image? Now therefore consider what you have to do. ¹⁵ They turned in there and came to the house of the young Levite, to the house of Micah, and asked him how he was. ¹⁶ The six hundred armed men of Dan stood by the entrance of the

gate. ¹⁷ The five men who had gone to spy out the land went in there and took the engraved image, the ephod, the household gods and the molten image; and the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred armed men. ¹⁸ When these men went into Micah's house and fetched the engraved image, the ephod, the household gods and the molten image, the priest said to them, What are you doing? ¹⁹ They said to him, Keep quiet, put your hand on your mouth and go with us, and be unto us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel? ²⁰ The priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, the household gods and the engraved image, and went with the people. ²¹ So they turned and departed, putting the little ones, the livestock and the goods in front of them. ²² When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together and overtook the Danites. ²³ They shouted after the Danites, who turned round and said to Micah, What is the matter with you that you come with such a company? ²⁴ He said, You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what else do I have? How then can

18:19 – see on 17:10,11.

18:24 *What else do I have* – This man's false religion meant everything to him; he was very religious, but didn't know the true God. Sincerity of devotion won't save us if we are devoted to the wrong understanding of God; those like Cornelius who sincerely seek the true God will find Him, but religious devotion of itself isn't serving God in spirit and truth as He requires (Jn. 4:24).

you say to me, ‘What is the matter with you?’²⁵ The Danites said to him, Don’t argue with us, or angry fellows might attack you, and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household.²⁶ The Danites went on their way, and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.²⁷ They took what Micah had made and his priest and came to Laish, to a people unsuspecting and secure, and attacked them with the sword, and they burnt the city with fire.²⁸ There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone else; it was in the valley that lies by Beth Rehob. They built the city and lived there.²⁹ They called the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel, but the name of the city before was Laish.³⁰ The Danites set up for themselves the engraved image, and Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of Moses and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the time of the captivity of the land.³¹ So they set up for themselves Micah’s engraved image which he had made, using it all the time that God’s house was in Shiloh.

CHAPTER 19 Jun. 17

A Levite and His Concubine

In those days, when there was no king in Israel, there was a Levite living on the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim, who took a concubine out of Bethlehem Judah.² His concubine was unfaithful to him, and went away from him to her father’s

house to Bethlehem Judah, and was there for four months.³ Her husband went after her to persuade her to return. He had his servant with him and a couple of donkeys, and she brought him into her father’s house. When her father saw him, he was pleased to meet him.⁴ His father-in-law, the girl’s father, persuaded him to stay, and he stayed with him three days, eating and drinking and sleeping there.⁵ On the fourth day they arose early in the morning, and he got ready to depart, and the girl’s father said to his son-in-law, Strengthen yourself with something to eat and then go on your way.⁶ So they sat down, ate and drank together, and then the girl’s father said to the man, Please stay another night and enjoy yourself.⁷ When the man got up to go, his father-in-law urged him to stay, so he stayed there again.⁸ On the fifth day he got up early to leave, and the girl’s father said, Please refresh yourself and stay until the afternoon; and they ate together.⁹ When the man, his concubine and his servant got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl’s father, said to him, Look now, it’s nearly evening; please stay all night. Stay here and enjoy yourself, and tomorrow set off early and go home.¹⁰ But the man wouldn’t stay that night; he got up and departed, and went towards Jebus (that is Jerusalem) with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine.¹¹ When they were near Jebus, the light was almost gone, and the servant said to his master, Please come and let us go into this city of the

Jebusites, and stay the night there. ¹² His master said to him, We won't go into the city of a foreigner whose people are not Israelites; we will go on to Gibeah. ¹³ He said to his servant, Come and let us get to one of these places; we will spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah. ¹⁴ So they went on and towards evening they were near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. ¹⁵ They stopped there to spend the night in Gibeah. They went in and sat down in the street, because no-one took them into his house for the night. ¹⁶ In the evening there came an old man from his work in the field. He was from the hill country of Ephraim and he lived in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites. ¹⁷ When he saw the traveller in the street the old man said, Where are you going? Where have you come from? ¹⁸ He said to him, We are on our way from Bethlehem Judah to the far side of the hill country of Ephraim. I am from there and I have been in Bethlehem Judah. I am going to the house of Yahweh, and no-one has taken me into his house. ¹⁹ Yet we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine also for me and for the maidservant and for the young man who is with us. We don't need anything. ²⁰ The old man said, Peace to

you! But I will provide for you; don't stay all night in the street. ²¹ So he brought him into his house and gave the donkeys fodder, and they washed their feet and ate and drank. ²² As they were enjoying themselves the wicked men of the city surrounded the house, beating on the door; they said to the owner of the house, the old man, Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may have sex with him! ²³ The owner of the house went out to them and said to them, No my brothers, please don't act so wickedly; since this man is my guest don't do this disgraceful thing. ²⁴ Look, here is my virgin daughter and his concubine. I will bring them out now and you can use them and do with them what seems good unto you, but don't do any such disgusting thing to this man. ²⁵ But the men wouldn't listen to him, so the man took his concubine and brought her out to them and they raped her and abused her all night until the morning, and when the day began to dawn they let her go. ²⁶ Then the woman went back and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, and lay there until it was light. ²⁷ Her master got up in the morning and opened the door and went out to continue on his way, and there was his concubine fallen down at the

19:12 This man was likely an alcoholic (note he got drunk four days in a row, and took wine with him, :19), a polygamist and hard hearted and brutal toward his woman (he told her when unconscious and gang-raped to just get up and carry on the journey, :28). Yet he still had a religious conscience, and thought that separation from the Gentile world was important; we note that he emphasized the externality of his religious devotions in :18. But separation from the flesh must begin internally; it's no good to be separate from the world and yet live the life of the flesh in our private lives.

door of the house with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ He said to her, Get up, and let us be going! but there was no answer. Then he put her up on the donkey and set off for home. ²⁹ When he had come into his house, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, and divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent them throughout all the regions of Israel. ³⁰ All who saw it said, Such a deed has never been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt until this day! Consider it! Decide what should be done.

CHAPTER 20 Jun. 18

The Israelites Attack the Benjamites

Then all the Israelites went out, and the congregation assembled as one man, from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead, to Yahweh at Mizpah. ² The leaders of the

people from all the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand armed soldiers. ³ Now the Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah. The Israelites said, Tell us how this wicked thing happened. ⁴ The Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered, I came to Gibeah in Benjamin, I and my concubine, to stay the night. ⁵ The men of Gibeah came after me and surrounded the house at night. They intended to kill me, and they raped my concubine and she is dead. ⁶ I took my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel because they have committed this disgraceful and abominable act in Israel. ⁷ Now you Israelites, all of you, give your advice and counsel. ⁸ All the people arose as one man saying, None of us will go to his tent, neither will any of us go home.

19:30 This was done so that all who received the parts of that broken body would “consider” and be motivated in response. It was designed to elicit the declaration of their hearts, and above all to provoke to concrete action. Splitting up a body and sharing it with all Israel was clearly a type of the breaking of bread, where in symbol, the same happens. Consider some background, all of which points forward to the Lord’s sufferings: The person whose body was divided up was from Bethlehem, and of the tribe of Judah (:1); They were ‘slain’ by permission of a priest; They were dragged to death by a wicked Jewish mob; They were “brought forth” to the people just as the Lord Jesus was to the crowd (:25); “Do... what seems good unto you” (:24) is very much Pilate language; A man sought to dissuade the crowd from their purpose – again, as Pilate. There should be a like effect upon us as we receive the emblems of the Lord’s body – the inner thoughts of our hearts are elicited, and we are provoked to action.

20:1 *As one man* – Repeated in :8,11. In the same way as disparate parties became united in killing Christ, so self-righteous anger against brethren who are scapegoated can produce an apparent unity (Lk. 23:12; Acts 4:26). But the parties soon go back to their anger with each other once the group they have set up as their common enemy is either destroyed or the situation moves on.

⁹ This is what we will do to Gibeah: we will go up against it by lot, ¹⁰ and we will take ten men of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred out of every thousand and a thousand out of ten thousand, to get food for the army so that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin they can punish them for the disgusting thing they have done in Israel. ¹¹ So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man. ¹² The tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin saying, What is this disgusting crime that has been committed among you? ¹³ Now surrender the wicked men of Gibeah so that we may put them to death and put away evil from Israel. But Benjamin would not listen to their brothers the Israelites. ¹⁴ The Benjamites gathered together out of their cities to Gibeah to go out to fight against the Israelites. ¹⁵ The Benjamites numbered twenty six thousand swordsmen out of the cities, besides the seven hundred chosen men of Gibeah. ¹⁶ Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling

stones at a hair's breadth and not miss. ¹⁷ The men of Israel apart from Benjamin were four hundred thousand swordsmen, all warriors. ¹⁸ The Israelites went up to Bethel and asked counsel of God. They said, Who shall go up for us first to battle against the children of Benjamin? Yahweh said, Judah first. ¹⁹ The next morning the Israelites got up and encamped against Gibeah. ²⁰ The men of Israel went out to fight against Benjamin and took up battle positions against them at Gibeah. ²¹ The Benjamites came out of Gibeah and destroyed twenty-two thousand Israelites on that day. ²² The men of Israel encouraged one another and took up their positions again in the place where they had stationed themselves on the first day. ²³ They went up and wept before Yahweh until evening, and they asked Yahweh, Shall we go up to fight again against the Benjamites, our brothers? Yahweh said, Go up against them. ²⁴ The Israelites went against the Benjamites the second day. ²⁵ Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day, and destroyed another eighteen thousand Israelite men, all

20:16 We read of men being able to sling stones and not miss “a hair's breadth” – an idiom which of course isn't literally true. The Bible uses such inexact language at times in that it uses human terms; which explains why the New Testament speaks of ‘demons’ as if they exist whereas elsewhere it shows clearly that they have no real existence.

20:23 Both sides were in the wrong. But God as it were lead the idolatrous and hypocritical Israelites further down the downward spiral. We learn from this that division amongst God's people is in a sense sent from Him in the sense that He confirms divisive brethren in their position they wish to adopt, and even uses it to destroy communities which displease Him. Even with Gentile nations, His preferred manner of destroying their armies was to turn their swords against themselves.

armed with swords. ²⁶ Then the Israelites, all the people, went up to Bethel and wept and sat there before Yahweh and fasted that day until evening. They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to Yahweh. ²⁷ The Israelites asked Yahweh (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸ and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron ministered before it), Shall we yet again go out to fight against Benjamin our brother, or not? Yahweh said, Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver him into your hand. ²⁹ Israel set ambushes all around Gibeah. ³⁰ They went up against the Benjamites on the third day and set themselves in position against Gibeah as before. ³¹ The Benjamites went out against them and were drawn away from the city. They began to fight the Israelites as before, on the highways on the way to Bethel and Gibeah, and in the field, killing about thirty men of Israel. ³² The Benjamites said, We are defeating them as before. But the Israelites said, Let's retreat and draw them away from the city to the highways.

The Benjamites Defeated

³³ All the men of Israel arose up from their camp and set themselves in position at Baal Tamar, and the ambush charged from Maareh Geba. ³⁴ Ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel attacked Gibeah and the battle was severe, but the Benjamites didn't know that disaster was upon them. ³⁵ Yahweh defeated Benjamin before Israel, and the Israelites de-

stroyed twenty five thousand one hundred armed Benjamites that day. ³⁶ Then the Benjamites saw that they were defeated, for the men of Israel had given way to Benjamin, trusting in the ambush which they had set against Gibeah. ³⁷ The men in the ambush rushed into Gibeah, spread out and put all the city to the sword. ³⁸ Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the ambush was that they should send up a great cloud of smoke out of the city. ³⁹ Then the men of Israel would turn in the battle. Benjamin began to attack and killed about thirty of the men of Israel, for they said, Surely they are being defeated as before. ⁴⁰ But when the smoke began to go up out of the city, the Benjamites looked behind them and saw the whole city going up in smoke. ⁴¹ Then the men of Israel turned on them and the men of Benjamin were terrified, seeing that disaster had come on them. ⁴² So they fled before the men of Israel towards the wilderness, but they could not escape the battle, and the Israelites who came out of the cities destroyed them there. ⁴³ They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them and ran them down as far as Gibeah toward the east. ⁴⁴ Eighteen thousand valiant men of Benjamin fell. ⁴⁵ They turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and the Israelites killed five thousand of them along the way and chased them to Gidom, killing two thousand more. ⁴⁶ So that day twenty-five thousand valiant fighters of Benjamin were killed. ⁴⁷ But six hundred men turned

and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and stayed there four months. ⁴⁸ The men of Israel went back to Benjamin and put to the sword everything in the towns, including the livestock, and anything they found. All the towns which they found they set on fire.

CHAPTER 21 Jun. 19

Finding Wives for the Benjamites

Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah: Not one of us will give his daughter to a Benjamite as wife. ² The people came to Bethel where they sat until evening before God, raising their voices and weeping bitterly. ³ They said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, why has this happened to Israel, that there should be today one tribe missing from Israel? ⁴ Next day the people rose early and built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. ⁵ They asked, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who didn't come up to the assembly before Yahweh? For they had taken a solemn oath that anyone who

didn't come up to Yahweh to Mizpah should surely be put to death. ⁶ The Israelites grieved for Benjamin their brother. There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. ⁷ How shall we provide wives for those who remain, since we have sworn by Yahweh that we will not give them our daughters as wives? ⁸ They asked, Which of the tribes of Israel didn't come up to Yahweh to Mizpah? They found that none from the camp from Jabesh Gilead came to the assembly. ⁹ For when the people were counted, none of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were there. ¹⁰ The congregation sent twelve thousand valiant fighting men and commanded them: Go and put the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead to the sword, including the women and children. ¹¹ This is what you are to do: kill every male and every woman who is not a virgin. ¹² They found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known man by lying with him, and they brought them to the camp at

21:2 This repentance of people who had many other weaknesses in their lives is similar to the situation in 17:1-4. It shows there is a religious conscience in people, no matter how far they stray from God. We should bear this in mind when we become discouraged in our preaching by the thought that 'nobody's interested'. People are, passively.

21:4 Peace offerings were offered in times of Israel's sadness and defeat (see too 20:26). In our traumas of life, we need to remember that the only thing that matters is our peace with God, the joyful fact that we have nothing separating us. As Israel made their peace offerings at those times, so we too should consider the possibility of breaking bread, perhaps alone, as we meet the desperate traumas of our lives.

21:5 Israel made oaths before Yahweh which they didn't keep and yet God worked through their failure in order to preserve His people... we see here how God works through human self-righteousness, failure and hypocrisy, in order to do His work and save people. We likewise shouldn't totally turn away from those guilty of such things but try to patiently work through them still to God's glory.

Shiloh in the land of Canaan. ¹³ The whole congregation sent an offer of peace to the Benjamites who were in the rock of Rimmon. ¹⁴ So then Benjamin returned and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive from Jabesh Gilead, but they weren't enough for them. ¹⁵ The people grieved for Benjamin because Yahweh had made a gap in the tribes of Israel. ¹⁶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we provide wives for those who remain, since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? ¹⁷ They said, There must be an inheritance for the surviving Benjamites so that a tribe will not be blotted out from Israel. ¹⁸ We can't give them wives from our daughters since the Israelites have taken this oath saying, 'Cursed be he who gives a wife to Benjamin'. ¹⁹ They said, Look, there is an annual feast of Yahweh in Shiloh, which is on the north of Bethel, east of the highway

from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah. ²⁰ They instructed the Benjamites: Go and lie in wait in the vineyards ²¹ and watch. When the daughters of Shiloh come out to join in the dances, then rush out of the vineyards and each of you catch a wife from the girls of Shiloh and go to the land of Benjamin. ²² When their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, 'Allow them to do this because we didn't get wives for them in the war. You didn't give them to them, so you are not guilty'. ²³ So that is what the Benjamites did. They took wives for each of them from the girls who danced, and carried them off. They returned to their inheritance, rebuilt the cities and lived in them. ²⁴ Then the Israelites departed each to his tribe and family. ²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel; each man did that which was right in his own eyes.

21:24 *Each man did that which was right in his own eyes* – It was right that there was no human king in Israel, because God was their king. This statement may therefore not be a criticism, but rather an observation – that in the absence of a human king, the people were to make their own personal decisions about what was right and wrong, just as we should. The sad thing was that Israel turned away from God's word and therefore lost a correct sense of right and wrong.

RUTH

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 20

The Family Background of Ruth

In the days when the judges judged, there was a famine in the land. A man of Bethlehem Judah went with his wife and two sons to live in the country of Moab. ² The name of the man was Elimelech; his wife's, Naomi; his two sons', Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah. They came into the country of Moab, and stayed there. ³ Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. ⁴ The sons took wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth. They lived there about ten years. ⁵ Mahlon and Chilion both died, and the woman was bereaved of her two children and of her husband. ⁶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, to return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab how that Yahweh had visited His people in giving them bread. ⁷ She left the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law went with her. They began the journey to the land of Judah. ⁸ Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to your mother's house, Yahweh deal kindly with you,

as you have dealt with the dead, and with me. ⁹ Yahweh grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice, and wept. ¹⁰ They said to her, No, but we will return with you to your people. ¹¹ Naomi said, Go back, my daughters. Why do you want to go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? ¹² Go back, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, 'I have hope', if I should even have a husband tonight, and should also bear sons; ¹³ would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from having husbands? No, my daughters, for it grieves me much for your sakes, for the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me.

Ruth Returns with Naomi to Judah

¹⁴ They lifted up their voices, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell, but Ruth stayed with her. ¹⁵ She said, Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people, and to her god. Follow your sister-in-law. ¹⁶ Ruth said, Don't entreat me to leave you, and to return from following after you, for

1:5 The simple message is that marriage out of the faith and leaving God's people – no matter how apostate they are – and going into the world, simply doesn't bring blessing.

1:8, 9 Naomi uses the term "Yahweh" freely to her Gentile relatives; she was quite open about her faith, even though the Moabites had their own gods.

1:16 In Jn. 20:18, the risen Jesus stresses to the disciples that their Father is His Father, and their God is His God. He appears to be alluding to Ruth 1:16 LXX where

where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God; ¹⁷ where you die, will I die, and there will I be buried. Yahweh do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part you and me. ¹⁸ When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she stopped speaking to her. ¹⁹ So those two travelled to Bethlehem. When they had come to Bethlehem, it happened that all the city was agitated about them, and they asked, Is this Naomi? ²⁰ She said to them, Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara; for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went out full, and Yahweh has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since Yahweh has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me? ²² So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who re-

turned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 20

Ruth Meets Boaz

Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find grace. She said to her, Go, my daughter. ³ She went, and came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers: and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. ⁴ Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, Yahweh be with you! They answered him, Yahweh bless you! ⁵ Then Boaz said to his servant who was set over

Ruth is urged to remain behind in Moab [cp. Mary urging Jesus?], but she says she will come with her mother in law, even though she is of a different people, and "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God". This allusion would therefore be saying: 'OK I am of a different nature / people to you now, but that doesn't essentially affect our *relationship*; I so love you, I will always stick with you wherever, and my God is your God'.

1:17 To swear by a god meant that the swearer had accepted that god as theirs. The fact Ruth swears by Yahweh means that she had accepted Yahweh as her God; thanks to the quiet witness of her mother in law. Ruth came to really love the God of Israel. She willingly decided to forego re-marriage after her husband died for the wonder of the fact she had been allowed in to the commonwealth of Israel. As it happened, this *is* a story with a happy ending. But she was prepared for it not to be. Humanly speaking, Naomi's life had been a disaster. If Ruth was looking for a God which gave His devotees present blessing, then it wasn't Yahweh; for all she had seen of Him was in the life of Naomi and her family. That woman had lost all her men, and thus become a nobody in the eyes of society. Naomi wasn't seeking any present benefit from her God; it must've been the relationship with God right now which Naomi had, His grace to her in spiritual terms, and the hope of the future Kingdom, which so attracted her. And the attraction must've been in the example of Naomi, rather than in the pages of a book.

the reapers, Whose young woman is this? ⁶ The servant who was set over the reapers answered, It is the Moabite woman who came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab. ⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves'. So she came, and has continued even from the morning until now, although she stayed a little in the house. ⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, Listen, my daughter: Don't go to glean in another field, and don't go away from here, but stay here close to my maidens. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they reap, and go after them. Haven't I commanded the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go to the vessels, and drink from that which the young men have drawn. ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found grace in your sight, that you should take knowledge of me, since I am a foreigner? ¹¹ Boaz answered her, I have come to know all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband; and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a

people that you didn't know before. ¹² May Yahweh repay your work, and a full reward be given you from Yahweh, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. ¹³ Then she said, Let me find grace in your sight, my lord, because you have comforted me, and because you have spoken to the heart of your handmaid, although I am not as one of your handmaids. ¹⁴ At meal time Boaz said to her, Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your morsel in the wine. She sat beside the reapers, and they reached her parched grain, and she ate, and was satisfied, and left some of it. ¹⁵ When she had risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and don't reproach her. ¹⁶ Also pull out some for her from the bundles, and leave it; let her glean, and don't rebuke her. ¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening; and she beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ She carried it, and went into the city where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned and she brought out and gave to her that which she had left after she herself had enough to eat. ¹⁹ Her mother-

2:12 See on 3:7.

A full reward – 2 Jn. 8 quotes this in saying that the hard mental effort to know Christ and believe in Him will be given a 'full reward'. Here a 'full reward' is given to Ruth for working hard all day gleaning in the fields. It may be that this allusion was because "the elect lady" addressed by John was in fact a proselyte widow, like Ruth. But the point is, we have to *labour*, as much as one might work hard gleaning in the field all day, in order to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

2:14 Offering bread and wine was a sign of fellowship and acceptance. The fact we are invited to do this by the Lord Jesus is a sign that He eagerly accepts us and seeks fellowship with us.

in-law said to her, Where have you gleaned today? Where have you worked? Blessed be he who took notice of you! She showed her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz. ²⁰ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of Yahweh, Who has not left off His grace to the living and to the dead. Naomi said to her, The man is a close relative to us, one of our near kinsmen. ²¹ Ruth the Moabitess said, Yes, he said to me, 'You shall stay close to my young men, until they have ended all my harvest'. ²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maidens, and that they not meet you in any other field. ²³ So she stayed close to the maidens of Boaz, to glean to the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and she lived with her mother-in-law.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 21

Naomi's Bold Plan for Ruth and Boaz

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you, that it may be well

with you? ² Now isn't Boaz our kinsman, with whose maidens you were? Behold, he winnows barley tonight in the threshing floor. ³ Therefore wash yourself, anoint yourself, get dressed up, and go down to the threshing floor, but don't make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ It shall be, when he lies down, that you shall note the place where he shall lie, and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lay down; then he will tell you what you shall do. ⁵ She said to her, All that you say I will do. ⁶ She went down to the threshing floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law told her. ⁷ When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. She came softly, uncovered his feet, and laid herself down. ⁸ It happened at midnight, that the man was startled and turned himself; and noticed a woman lay at his feet. ⁹ He said, Who are you? She answered, I am Ruth your handmaid. Therefore spread your skirt over your handmaid; for you are a near kinsman. ¹⁰ He said, Blessed are you by Yahweh, my daughter. You have shown

2:20 *Near kinsman* – Yahweh is repeatedly described in Isaiah as Israel's *go'el*, redeemer (Is. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8). The redeemer could redeem a close relative from slavery or repurchase property lost during hard times (Lev. 25:25,26,47-55). This is how close God becomes to us in Christ. Boaz was therefore manifesting God to Ruth by marrying her, in the same way as in Christian marriage the husband manifests Christ's saving work to the wife (Eph. 5:23).

3:7 Ruth is a wonderful example of a spiritually ambitious person. It was unheard of in those times for a woman to propose to a man; yet by coming to him, uncovering his feet and laying under his mantle, she was stating that she wished to see him as a manifestation of God to her (:7,9 = 2:12). She went after him, following him (:10); the poor, landless Gentile aspired to be a part of a wealthy Jewish family, in order to fulfil the spirit of the Law. And she attained this.

more grace in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as you didn't go after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ Now, my daughter, don't be afraid; I will do to you all that you say; for all my people in this city know that you are a worthy woman. ¹² Now it is true that I am a near kinsman; however there is a kinsman nearer than I. ¹³ Stay this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform for you the part of a kinsman, so be it; let him do the kinsman's part. But if he will not do the part of a kinsman for you, then will I do the part of a kinsman for you, as Yahweh lives. Lie down until the morning.

Ruth Returns to Naomi

¹⁴ She lay at his feet until the morning. She rose up in the dark; for he said, Let it not be known that a woman came to the threshing floor. ¹⁵ He said, Bring the mantle that is on you, and hold it. She held it; and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her; and he went into the city. ¹⁶ When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, How did it go, my daughter? She told her all that the man had done to her. ¹⁷ She said,

He gave me these six measures of barley; for he said, 'Don't go empty to your mother-in-law'. ¹⁸ Then she said, Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will end; for the man will not rest, until he has finished the thing this day.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 21

Boaz Redeems Naomi's Land and Ruth

Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there. When the near kinsman of whom Boaz spoke came by he said to him, Come over here, friend, and sit down! He turned aside, and sat down. ² He took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit down here. They sat down. ³ He said to the near kinsman: Naomi, who has come back out of the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's. ⁴ I thought to disclose it to you saying, 'Buy it in the presence of those who sit here, and of the elders of my people'. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then let me know. You have first right to redeem it; and I am next in line. He said, I will redeem it. ⁵ Then Boaz said, On the day you buy the

3:16-18 It is hard to find women-only scenes in contemporary literature written during Biblical times. The women are presented in terms of the men with whom they inter-relate. Yet Elizabeth and Mary are recorded as having a conversation with no male present (Lk. 1:39-45); and there are other such passages here in Ruth (1:6-2:2; 3:16-18; 4:14-17). In all these passages, the reader is invited to share the woman's perspective. It can hardly be said that the Bible is somehow anti-women, in fact God's acceptance of both male and female and deep recognition of the value of the human person, whether man or woman, marks it out as quite different from human literature of the time.

4:5 A man *had* to redeem the property of a dead relative in some cases by marrying his late brother's wife; but this would have resulted in polygamy (Boaz surely had other

field from the hand of Naomi, you must buy it also from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance. ⁶ The near kinsman said, I can't redeem it for myself, otherwise I will spoil my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption for yourself; for I can't redeem it. ⁷ Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man took off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour; and this was the way of affirmation in Israel. ⁸ So the near kinsman said to Boaz, Buy it for yourself. He took off his shoe. ⁹ Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, You are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. ¹⁰ Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I have purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of

the dead on his inheritance, that the name of the dead not be cut off from among his brothers, and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses this day. ¹¹ All the people who were in the gate and the elders said, We are witnesses. May Yahweh make the woman who has come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, who built the house of Israel; and treat you worthily in Ephrathah, and bring you fame in Bethlehem. ¹² Let your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, of the seed which Yahweh shall give you of this young woman.

Boaz Marries Ruth

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in to her, and Yahweh gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi, Blessed be Yahweh, who has not left you this day without a near kinsman; and let his name

wives), thus creating a situation whereby one principle had to be broken (in this case, of one man : one woman as ordained in Eden), in order to keep another principle (to raise up children in love to your deceased brother). God has made spiritual life not always so black and white – in order that our personal ethical debates, our prayerfulness and reflection upon God's word, will result in our taking whatever decisions we do from a good motivation, rather than out of mere submission to a law we have no understanding of.

4:6 *Otherwise I will spoil my own inheritance* – He was concerned that if he had children by another woman apart from those he already had, then his land which he would leave them as an inheritance would have to be split up between his existing children, and those children he would have by Ruth. It's clear from 2:3 that the fields were split up into strips, each strip belonging to different people. The best thing was to have one large field, rather than strips here and there. This nameless relative didn't want to spoil or break up his inheritance, he wanted to preserve it intact. He thought only of himself, not his brother. This man died and even his name wasn't preserved; yet Boaz who did care for his brother and was prepared to spoil or split up his physical inheritance received as it were an eternal inheritance, in that through Ruth he became the ancestor of Jesus (4:21).

be famous in Israel. ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life, and sustain you in your old age, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him. ¹⁶ Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it. ¹⁷ The neighbouring women gave him a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi! And they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. ¹⁸ Now this is the

history of the generations of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ and Hezron became the father of Ram, and Ram became the father of Amminadab, ²⁰ and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon became the father of Salmon, ²¹ and Salmon became the father of Boaz, and Boaz became the father of Obed, ²² and Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David.

4:15 Hezekiah had lamented that he would die without a seed (Is. 38:12), and so did those who had also become (in their minds?) eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom (Is. 56:3-8). There was that human desire for a seed, a “house” to perpetuate their name. But they are promised a name in God’s house (family) in the Kingdom, better than of sons and daughters in this life (Is. 56:5). This alludes here, where Ruth is described as being better than sons to Naomi. In other words, the Ruth: Naomi relationship, featuring as it did a willingness to deny marriage to unbelievers for the sake of the God of Israel, is a type of *our* relationship with God.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 22

Hannah Prays for a Son

Now there was a man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children. ³ This man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and to sacrifice to Yahweh of Armies in Shiloh. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests to Yahweh, were there. ⁴ When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he gave to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters portions, ⁵ but to Hannah he gave a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but Yahweh had shut up her womb. ⁶ Her rival provoked her severely, to make her fret because Yahweh had shut up her womb. ⁷ This went on year after year when she went up to the house of Yahweh; she provoked her, therefore she wept and didn't eat. ⁸ Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why don't you eat? Why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons? ⁹ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh. Now Eli

the priest was sitting on his seat by the doorpost of Yahweh's temple.

¹⁰ She was in bitterness of soul and prayed to Yahweh and wept bitterly.

¹¹ She vowed a vow and said, Yahweh of Armies, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid and remember me and not forget Your handmaid, but will give to Your handmaid a boy, then I will give him to Yahweh all the days of his life, and no razor shall come on his head. ¹² As she continued praying before Yahweh, Eli saw her mouth. ¹³ Now Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴ Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put away your wine from you. ¹⁵ Hannah answered, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before Yahweh. ¹⁶ Don't count your handmaid a wicked woman, for I have been speaking out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation. ¹⁷ Then Eli answered, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him. ¹⁸ She said, Let your handmaid find grace in your sight. So the woman went her way and ate, and her face wasn't sad any more.

1:18 After praying for a child, Hannah went her way "and her face wasn't sad any more" because she truly believed she would soon become pregnant. She's a great example to us of believing and feeling that what we have prayed for, we have actually received (Mk. 11:24).

The Birth of Samuel

¹⁹ They rose up in the morning early and worshipped before Yahweh and returned home to Ramah, and Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and Yahweh remembered her. ²⁰ When the time had come, Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of Yahweh. ²¹ The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to Yahweh the yearly sacrifice and his vow. ²² But Hannah didn't go up, for she said to her husband, Not until the child is weaned, then I will bring him that he may appear before Yahweh and stay there forever. ²³ Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what seems good to you. Wait until you have weaned him, only may Yahweh establish His word. So the woman waited and nursed her son until she weaned him.

Samuel Is Dedicated to Yahweh

²⁴ When she had weaned him she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of meal and a bottle of wine, and brought him to Yahweh's sanctuary in Shiloh. The

child was young. ²⁵ They killed the bull and brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ She said, Oh my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to Yahweh. ²⁷ For this child I prayed, and Yahweh has given me my petition which I asked of Him. ²⁸ Therefore I have given him to Yahweh. As long as he lives he is given to Yahweh. Eli worshipped Yahweh there.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 23***The Prayer of Hannah***

Hannah prayed, and said: My heart exults in Yahweh! My horn is exalted in Yahweh. My mouth boasts over my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation. ² There is none as holy as Yahweh, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. ³ Talk no more so exceedingly proudly. Don't let hardness come out of your mouth, for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, though actions be not weighed. ⁴ The bows of the mighty men are broken, those who stumbled are armed with strength. ⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread. Those

1:19 Hannah's prayer of thanks is clearly the basis for Mary's prayer; and Hannah had requested a child, and received it. As Hannah described herself as "Your handmaid" (1 Sam. 1:18), so did Mary too (Lk. 1:38). God remembered His mercy in making Mary conceive (Lk. 1:54), just as God had remembered Hannah in answering her prayer (:19). And just as Hannah "rose up" and went to Ramah, so Mary "rose up" and went to Judea (Lk. 1:39). There is reason to think that Hannah too desired to bear Messiah. The lesson is that examples of prayer influence others.

2:3 Hannah had reflected upon God's omniscience; and on this basis she tells Peninah not to be proud and use hard words against her, exactly because of this. That He sees and knows all things should humble us and affect our speech.

Yahweh is a God of knowledge, though actions be not weighed – Although actions are not judged immediately and publically ("weighed"), they surely will be – because, quite simply, God knows.

who were hungry are satisfied. Yes, the barren has borne seven; she who has many children languishes. ⁶ Yahweh kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷ Yahweh makes poor and makes rich. He brings low and He also lifts up. ⁸ He raises up the poor out of the dust. He lifts up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's; He has set the world upon them. ⁹ He will keep the feet of His holy ones, but the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness; for no man shall prevail by strength. ¹⁰ Those who strive with Yahweh shall be broken to pieces. He will thunder against them in the sky. Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed. ¹¹ Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the child served Yahweh before Eli the priest.

The Wicked Sons of Eli

¹² Now the sons of Eli were men of Belial; they didn't know Yahweh. ¹³ The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴ He thrust it into the pan, kettle, cauldron or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest took for him-

self. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵ Moreover, before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man who sacrificed, Give meat to roast for the priest, for he will not accept boiled meat from you, but raw. ¹⁶ If the man said to him, Let the fat be burned first, and then take as much as you want; he would say, No, give it to me now, and if you don't, I will take it by force. ¹⁷ The sin of the young men was very great before Yahweh, for they despised the offering of Yahweh. ¹⁸ But Samuel ministered before Yahweh, being a child, clothed with a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Moreover his mother made him a little robe and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife and said, Yahweh give you children by this woman for the petition which was asked of Yahweh. They went to their own home. ²¹ Yahweh visited Hannah and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. The child Samuel grew before Yahweh. ²² Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons did to all Israel, how they lay with the women who served at the door of the Tent of Meeting. ²³ He said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil deeds from all the people. ²⁴ No my sons, it is

2:6 Clearly *sheol* refers to the grave and not any place of eternal condemnation in fire.

2:12 *Men of Belial* – The idea is 'sinful men'. In the Old Testament, sin was personified as 'Belial', so we shouldn't be surprised if it's personified as 'the enemy' or 'satan' in the New Testament.

no good report that I hear; you make Yahweh's people disobey. ²⁵ If one man sins against another, God will judge him; but if a man sins against Yahweh, who shall entreat for him? However, they didn't listen to their father, because Yahweh intended to kill them. ²⁶ The child Samuel grew and increased in favour with Yahweh and with men.

Prophecy against Eli's House

²⁷ A man of God came to Eli and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, 'Did I not reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt, in bondage to Pharaoh's house? ²⁸ Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? Did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? ²⁹ Why then do you despise

My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded for My dwelling, and honour your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' ³⁰ Therefore Yahweh the God of Israel says, 'I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before Me forever'. But now Yahweh says, 'Far be it from Me. Those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me shall be despised. ³¹ The days are coming when I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house so that there shall not be an old man in your house. ³² In distress you would look with envy upon the wealth which I would have given Israel, but there shall not be an old man in your house forever. ³³ Any man of yours whom I shall not cut off from My altar, will only blind your eyes with tears and grieve your heart; all the

2:24 *You make Yahweh's people disobey* – We can spiritually *destroy* our brother, for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:15); we can undo the work of the cross for a brother who would otherwise be saved by it. We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Kings 16:19). There is an urgent imperative here, to really watch our behaviour; e.g. to not drink alcohol in the presence of a brother whose conscience is weak.

2:25 *They didn't listen to their father, because Yahweh intended to kill them* – God has an ability to confirm men in the path to destruction they choose to tread. The very experience of sin confirms sinners in that way: "The way of the wicked seduces them" (Prov. 12:26). The spiritual effect of God upon men over and above their own strength is indicated by this example (cp. Josh. 11:20; Jud. 14:4; 2 Chron. 10:15).

2:30 God is unashamed about the fact that He can change His stated purposes about people in response to human behaviour; the fact God does this is simply an indication of the extent to which He is sensitive to our actions and decisions.

2:32 *The wealth which I would have given Israel* – Some prophecies simply won't come true because they refer to what God had potentially prepared for His people, but they disallow Him from giving them what He had intended. This is an example. Knowing this, women like Hannah clearly hoped and prayed that their sons would be Messiah (2:10 = Ps. 89:24); for they perceived that God's purpose was open to such a thing.

increase of your house shall die in the prime of life. ³⁴ This will be the sign to you which will come on your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall both die. ³⁵ I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall minister before My anointed one forever. ³⁶ Each one who is left in your house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, and shall say, ‘Please put me into one of the priests’ offices, that I may eat a morsel of bread’.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 24

Samuel Called by the Lord

The child Samuel ministered to Yahweh before Eli. The word of Yahweh was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. ² At that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see), ³ and the lamp of God hadn’t yet gone out, and Samuel had laid down in Yahweh’s sanctuary where the ark of God was, ⁴ Yahweh called Samuel, and he said Here I am. ⁵ He ran

to Eli, and said, Here I am, for you called me. He said, I didn’t call; lie down again. He went and lay down. ⁶ Yahweh called again, Samuel! Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, Here I am; for you called me. He answered, I didn’t call my son; lie down again. ⁷ Now Samuel didn’t yet know Yahweh, neither was the word of Yahweh yet revealed to him. ⁸ Yahweh called Samuel again the third time. He arose and went to Eli and said, Here I am; for you called me. Eli perceived that Yahweh had called the child. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, Go, lie down, and if He calls you, say, ‘Speak, Yahweh, for Your servant hears’. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Yahweh came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel! Samuel! Then Samuel said, Speak; for Your servant hears. ¹¹ Yahweh said to Samuel, Behold, I will do something in Israel which will make both the ears of everyone who hears it tingle. ¹² In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which

3:13 Eli *did* rebuke his sons; but in God’s eyes he didn’t (cp. 2:24). He said words for the sake of saying words, but in his heart he didn’t mean them. He honoured his sons above God, to make himself “fat with the best of all the offerings”. The description of Eli as being fat surely reflects his guilt (2:29; 4:18). And yet he appeared on the surface to run his family life on a spiritual footing. Eli is presented as a kindly old man who had a heart for God but was too soft on his children; but God’s judgment of him is much harsher, teaching us the serious consequence of sins of omission, and of allowing abuse to continue when it is in our power to stop it. Because Eli wouldn’t restrain the abuse, he was seen as committing those very things which he failed to rebuke. Likewise the man who wouldn’t discipline his wayward ox was to be treated as if he had committed the crime the ox did, and therefore must die if the ox killed a man (Ex. 21:29).

he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he didn't rebuke them. ¹⁴ Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli, that the guilt of Eli's house shall not be removed with sacrifice nor offering forever. ¹⁵ Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of Yahweh. Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. ¹⁶ Then Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son! He said, Here I am. ¹⁷ He said, What was it that He said to you? Please don't hide it from me. May God deal with you severely if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you. ¹⁸ Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. He said, It is Yahweh. Let Him do what seems good to Him. ¹⁹ Samuel grew, and Yahweh was with him, and he let none of His words fall to the ground. ²⁰ All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Yahweh. ²¹ Yahweh appeared again in Shiloh, for Yahweh revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 25

The Ark Captured

Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle and encamped beside Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. ² The Philistines put themselves in position against Israel; when they

joined battle Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand Israelite soldiers. ³ When the people had returned to the camp the elders of Israel said, Why has Yahweh struck us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of Shiloh that it may go with us and save us out of the hand of our enemies. ⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh and they brought from there the ark of the covenant of Yahweh of Armies, who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. ⁵ When the ark of the covenant of Yahweh came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded. ⁶ When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout they said, What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean? When they understood that the ark of Yahweh had come into the camp ⁷ they were afraid, for they said, God has come into the camp. They said, Woe to us! Nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ Woe to us! Who can deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. ⁹ Be strong, and behave like men, you Philistines, so that you will not be servants to the Hebrews as they have

3:18 When Samuel told Eli of the prophetic vision which he had received, Eli commented: "It is Yahweh". He meant 'It is the word of the Lord'; but he saw God as effectively His word. "The word", the "word of the Kingdom", "the Gospel", "the word of God" are all parallel expressions throughout the Gospels. Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to Him.

been to you. Strengthen yourselves like men and fight! ¹⁰ The Philistines fought and Israel was defeated and they fled every man to his tent and there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand Israelite foot soldiers were killed. ¹¹ The ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed.

Eli's Death

¹² A man of Benjamin ran out of the army that day and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and earth on his head. ¹³ When he came, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and reported what had happened, all the city cried out. ¹⁴ When Eli heard the noise of the crying he said, What does this noise mean? The man hurried and told Eli. ¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were bad so that he could not see. ¹⁶ The man said to Eli, I am the one who came out of the army, and I fled today from the battle. He said, What happened, my son? ¹⁷ The man who

brought the news answered, Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Your two sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead, and the ark of God has been captured. ¹⁸ When he made mention of the ark of God, Eli fell off his seat backward by the side of the gate and his neck broke and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had judged Israel for forty years. ¹⁹ His daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant, near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labour and gave birth, but was overcome by her pains. ²⁰ As she was dying the women attending her said, Don't be afraid, for you have given birth to a son. But she didn't answer, neither did she pay any attention. ²¹ She named the child Ichabod saying, The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² She said, The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.

4:10 God wished to demonstrate by this defeat that mere religious tokenism wouldn't save anyone. Israel's tokenistic use of the ark, a mere wooden box, is similar to the way some use the crucifix and icons today. It is the essence behind the symbol rather than the symbol itself which we must understand and believe in. See on 5:9.

4:13 *His heart trembled for the ark of God* – The record emphasizes Eli's love for the ark; even after the shock of hearing that his sons had been killed, it was only when he heard that the ark had been taken that he had a stroke and died (:18). Likewise his daughter in law died with mourning for the ark on her lips (:22). But this love of the external things of one's religion (see on :10) wasn't the same as true spirituality. For all Eli's love of the things associated with the true God, he was severely condemned for not having the glory of God and care for His people at heart (see on 3:13). It's not difficult to love the external trappings of our religion – the church hall, the social events, the regular activities, the general ambience. But this isn't the same as true spirituality.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 26***The Ark Goes to Ashdod, Gath and Ekron***

Now the Philistines had taken the ark of God, and they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ² They took the ark of God into the house of Dagon and set it beside Dagon. ³ When the people of Ashdod arose early the next day, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh. They took Dagon and set him back in his place. ⁴ When they arose early the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were broken off, lying on the threshold. Only Dagon's torso was intact. ⁵ Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor anyone who comes into Dagon's house will tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod, to this day. ⁶ But the hand of Yahweh was heavy on the people of Ashdod and those nearby, and He destroyed them, afflicting them with tumours. ⁷ When the men of Ashdod saw what was happening they said, The ark of the God of Israel must not stay with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god. ⁸ They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the

Philistines together and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? They answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried over to Gath. They carried the ark of the God of Israel there. ⁹ But after they had carried it there, the hand of Yahweh was against the city, causing panic, and He struck the men of the city, small and great, and tumours broke out upon them. ¹⁰ So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. As the ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people! ¹¹ They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and they said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place so that it does not kill us and our people. For there was a deadly panic throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. ¹² The men who didn't die were struck with the tumours, and the cry of the city went up to Heaven.

CHAPTER 6 Jun. 26***The Philistines Return the Ark to Israel***

The ark of Yahweh was in the country of the Philistines for

5:9 God didn't give Israel victory because they had the ark with them in battle, and yet He kills many Philistines because they have the ark with them. So strong was His desire to demonstrate that religious tokenism will not bring blessing, in fact the very opposite – it is the path to death (see on 4:10 and 4:13).

5:12 God has a sensitive heart even for the sufferings of unbelievers. He so hates to see any of His creation suffering. Those believers who fear God's final rejection should remember this; that He has a hugely sensitive heart. Note that as 'ascending to Heaven' is hyperbole and not literal (see too 2 Chron. 28:9; Ezra 9:6; Ps. 107:26), so likewise the language of 'falling from heaven' in verses like Is. 14:12-14 must also not be read literally.

seven months. ² The Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, asking, What shall we do with the ark of Yahweh? Show us how we should send it back to its place.

³ They said, If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, don't send it empty; by all means return Him a trespass offering, then you will be healed and you will know why His hand has not been removed from you. ⁴ Then they said, What should the trespass offering be, which we should send to Him? They said,

Five golden tumours and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague struck you all and your lords.

⁵ Therefore you must make images of your tumours and your mice that are destroying the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lift His hand from you, your gods and your land. ⁶ Why do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had done wonders among them, didn't they send the people away and they departed? ⁷ Now therefore prepare a new cart, and get two milk cows which have never been yoked; tie the cows to the cart and bring their calves home from them. ⁸ Put the ark of Yahweh on the cart and put the jewels of gold, which you are sending Him for a trespass offering, in a chest beside it- and send it away. ⁹ If it goes up to

its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, then He has done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that struck us; it was a chance that happened to us. ¹⁰ The men did so, and took two milk cows, tied them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. ¹¹ They put the ark of Yahweh on the cart, and the chest with the mice of gold and the images of their tumours.

The Ark Arrives at Beth-Shemesh

¹² The cows went straight towards Beth Shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth Shemesh. ¹³ The people of Beth Shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. ¹⁴ The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh and stood there beside a great stone. The people split the wood of the cart and offered up the cows for a burnt offering to Yahweh. ¹⁵ The Levites took down the ark of Yahweh and the chest with the jewels of gold and put them on the great stone, and the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices to Yahweh that day. ¹⁶ When the five lords of the Philistines had seen this, they returned to Ekron the

6:9 *He has done us this great evil* – God is repeatedly described as the source of both good and “evil” in the sense of disaster; God is all powerful, and it isn't the case that all good comes from Him and all “evil” from some supposed ‘Satan’ figure. God creates both good and “evil” (Is. 45:5-7).

same day. ¹⁷ These are the golden tumours which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering to Yahweh: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath and one for Ekron. ¹⁸ The number of golden mice was according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, fortified cities and country villages. The great stone on which they put the ark of Yahweh remains to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. ¹⁹ But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh because they had looked into the ark of Yahweh. He killed seventy of the men, and the people mourned, because Yahweh had struck the people with a great slaughter. ²⁰ The men of Beth Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God? To whom shall He go from us? ²¹ They sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath Jearim saying, The Philistines have brought back the ark of Yahweh; come down and take it up to your place.

CHAPTER 7 Jun. 27

The Ark Goes from Beth-Shemesh to Kiriath Jearim

The men of Kiriath Jearim came and fetched up the ark of Yahweh and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of Yahweh. ² The ark stayed for a long time in Kiriath Jearim, twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after Yahweh. ³ Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you do return to Yahweh with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to Yahweh, and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. ⁴ Then the people of Israel removed the Baals and Ashtaroth and served Yahweh only. ⁵ Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray for you to Yahweh. ⁶ They gathered together to Mizpah and drew water, poured it out before Yahweh and fasted on that day. They said there, We have sinned against Yahweh.

6:19 The men of Beth-Shemesh were smitten because they looked into the ark, probably because they wanted to find more jewels which the Philistines might have placed there (:15). In the face and presence of the things of the supreme glory of Yahweh of Israel, they scavenged around in a spirit of petty materialism – just as men gambled for the clothes of Jesus at the foot of His cross; they trampled upon the supreme holiness of God in their crazed fascination with wealth. And people are doing this all around us.

7:6 The pouring out of water before God symbolized the state of their hearts in repentance before God. Repentance is literally a re-thinking, something internal, a pouring out of self before God. Water poured on the ground can never again be gathered up where it was before; some permanent change happens every time we experience an episode of true repentance. Water being poured on the ground became a Hebraism for death (2 Sam. 14:14); in repentance, we recognize that we have sinned and ought to die for what we have done, but in the continued life given us by God's grace we will seek to live for Him.

Samuel judged the people of Israel in Mizpah.

The Philistines Defeated at Mizpah

⁷ When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. When the Israelites heard it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. ⁸ The Israelites said to Samuel, Don't cease to cry to Yahweh our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines! ⁹ Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to Yahweh, and Samuel cried to Yahweh for Israel, and Yahweh answered him. ¹⁰ As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to fight against Israel, but on that day Yahweh thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and confused them; and they were struck down before Israel. ¹¹ The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and killed them, all the way to Beth Kar. ¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called it Ebenezer, saying, Yahweh helped us until now. ¹³ So

the Philistines were subdued and they came no more within the border of Israel. The hand of Yahweh was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. ¹⁴ The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel recovered its border out of the hand of the Philistines. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

The Circuit of Samuel the Judge

¹⁵ Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶ He went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all those places. ¹⁷ He always returned to Ramah where his home was, and there he judged Israel. He built there an altar to Yahweh.

CHAPTER 8 Jun. 27

Israel Demands a King

When Samuel was old he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second Abi-jah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ His sons didn't walk in his ways, but turned aside after money, tak-

7:9 As the Philistines closed in upon Israel, Samuel was busy offering up the burnt offering, symbolizing Israel's plea to God for help, with all the intensity of the suckling lamb crying to its mother – when the natural reaction would have been to think 'Enough of that, come on, do something practical now...'. We see here the supreme priority of prayer and the urgent intensity of powerful prayer.

8:3 Samuel failed as a father in the same way as his mentor Eli did, although he wasn't condemned for it as Eli was. The lesson is that even in later life, we are influenced by the examples we saw in the spiritual mentors of our youth. The power of influence is far greater than we imagine; we have more responsibility for our actions and examples than we think. Nobody lives life to and for themselves, because every life has such a powerful effect upon others (Rom. 14:7 and context).

ing bribes and perverting justice. ⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel to Ramah, ⁵ and they said to him, Look, you are old and your sons don't walk in your ways; now appoint a king to judge us like all the nations. ⁶ But this displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us.

Yahweh Advises Samuel to Appoint a King

Samuel prayed to Yahweh. ⁷ Yahweh said to Samuel, Listen to the people in all that they tell you; they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them. ⁸ As they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, in forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they also do to you. ⁹ Now therefore listen to

their voice, but protest solemnly to them and show them what the king who shall reign over them will do.

Samuel's Warning to Israel

¹⁰ Samuel told all the words of Yahweh to the people who asked for a king. ¹¹ He said, This is what the king who shall reign over you will do: he will take your sons and appoint them to serve with his chariots and to be his horsemen, and they will run before his chariots; ¹² he will appoint them to be captains of thousands and captains of fifties; he will assign some to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and to make his weapons of war and the equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves,

8:7, 8 Here is an example of the mutuality between God and man: 'They didn't reject you, they rejected Me, but they rejected you, in that you are with Me'.

8:8 Israel sinned not only by worshipping idols but by thereby omitting to worship God as He required. God is highly sensitive to human sin; sins of commission often lead to and involve sins of omission, which are equally significant to God.

8:11, 12 Israel were told *three times* that Saul would have many chariots. If they were spiritually aware, they would have realized that by multiplying horses and chariots, he was going to be a King who ruled in studied disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Dt. 17:16-21). They were given the spiritual potential to grasp this. But they were already hardened in their rebellion, and this potential spiritual help went unheeded (although God still gave it to them potentially, even at a time when it seemed pointless. He is so *ever* willing to coax His people back!).

8:14 When God offered Israel a king, He did so with a series of warnings that this king would treat them just like the prophesied invasion of condemnation described in Dt. 28; he would take their sons, seed, vineyards etc. in just the same way. The links are unmistakable (8:14 = Dt. 28:30,33; 8:11,14 = Dt. 28:41; 8:15 = Dt. 28:38; 8:17 = Dt. 28:43). Through these allusions, Yahweh was saying to Israel: Do you want the condemnation for disobedience? And they answered 'Yes!'. And yet, in His grace, Yahweh still worked through the system of human kingship to bring about His purpose of salvation with Israel. Thus through our unfaithful actions now we will be witnesses against ourselves at the final judgment (Mt. 23:31); indeed, in that the judgment proc-

even their best, and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage to give to his officers and his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male and female servants and your best young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his servants. ¹⁸ You will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen, but Yahweh will not answer you in that day. ¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel; they said, No; but we will have a king over us, ²⁰ so that we may be like all the other nations, and so that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles. ²¹ Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them before Yahweh. ²² Yahweh said to Samuel, Listen to them and give them a king. Samuel said to the men of Israel, Every man is to go back to his town.

CHAPTER 9 Jun. 28

Saul Chosen As King

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Bec-

orath, son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of valour. ² He had a son whose name was Saul, an impressive young man; there was not among the people of Israel a more impressive person than he. From his shoulders and upward he was taller than any of the people. ³ The donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. Kish said to Saul, Take now one of the servants with you and go to look for the donkeys. ⁴ He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and the land of Shalishah, but they didn't find them. Then they went through the land of Shaalim and they weren't there; he went throughout the land of the Benjamites, but they didn't find them. ⁵ When they reached the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, Come, let us return, lest my father stop caring about the donkeys and be anxious for us. ⁶ The servant said, Look now, in this city there is a man of God, and he is a man who is held in honour. All that he says comes true. Now, let us go there; perhaps he can tell us which way to go. ⁷ Then Saul said to his servant, But if we go, what shall we bring

ess is now ongoing, we *are right now* witnesses against ourselves when we sin. And we are not only witnesses, but also the judge who pronounces the verdict of condemnation: for the sinner is condemned *of himself* (Tit. 3:11). In this lies the illogicality of sin and the blindness of man to the implications of his actions before God.

8:22 God was Israel's King and they were His Kingdom. To reject Him as king was therefore to count themselves as not His Kingdom. And yet God still tried to work with them through the system of human kingship. Likewise, He didn't want a physical temple; but they wanted one, and so He came and dwelt in it and worked through it, but it wasn't His ideal intention. God thus makes concession to human weaknesses, so eager is He to remain at work with us; and yet our use of those concessions often makes spirituality harder rather than easier. We should also learn to allow others some concessions to their human weaknesses – for God certainly does so with us.

the man? For the food is finished from our bags and there is no gift to bring to the man of God. What do we have? ⁸ The servant replied, I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God to tell us our way. ⁹ (In earlier times in Israel when a man went to inquire of God he would say, Come and let us go to the seer, for he who is now called a prophet was before called a seer). ¹⁰ Then Saul said to his servant, Good. Let us go. So they went to the city where the man of God was. ¹¹ As they went up the hill to the city they found young girls going out to draw water and they asked them, Is the seer here? ¹² They answered, He is. Look, he is ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come today into the city because the people have a sacrifice today in the high place. ¹³ As soon as you have come into the city you will immediately find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not eat until he

comes, because it is he blesses the sacrifice. Afterwards, those who are invited eat. Now therefore go up, for at this time you should find him.

Saul Meets Samuel

¹⁴ They went up to the city. As they came into the city, Samuel came out toward them, to go up to the high place. ¹⁵ Now Yahweh had revealed to Samuel a day before Saul came, saying, ¹⁶ Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you must anoint him to be prince over My people Israel, and he will save My people out of the hand of the Philistines, for I have looked on My people, because their cry has come to Me. ¹⁷ When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He will have authority over My people. ¹⁸ Then Saul came near to Samuel in the gate and said, Please tell me where the seer's house is. ¹⁹ Samuel answered Saul, I

9:15, 25 What we hear in the ear, that we must preach on the housetops (Mt. 10:27). This is built on these verses, where God speaks in Samuel's ear, and then he speaks that word to Saul on the housetop. Jesus is saying that in essence, we are all in Samuel's position; we hear the word of this world's salvation, the word about "the Kingdom" as it was for Saul, and that very fact is in itself the imperative to overcome our natural reservations and share it with those for whom it is intended – even if, as with Saul, we may consider them unlikely and unspiritual hearers.

9:16 Their request for a human king was, as God Himself mightily demonstrated to them, a rejection of Him, and He grieved because of it. And yet when God gave them a King, He expresses His decision in quite a different tone – as if Saul would save them from the Philistines in response to the people's request to God. God speaks as if the gift of Saul was akin to the provision of Moses, to save poor Israel from their unwarranted persecution. Actually, Saul was slain by the Philistines – in His foreknowledge, the Almighty knew all about Saul. But in His pure grace, He doesn't reflect this in the way He speaks at this time. Another view would be that Saul could have saved Israel from the Philistines, that potential scenario had been enabled by God, but like so many people, he failed to live up to the potential God had created for him.

am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today. In the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart. ²⁰ As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, don't worry about them; they have been found. To whom has all the desire in Israel turned? Is it not to you and all your father's house? ²¹ Saul answered, Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me like this? ²² Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the guest room, and made them sit in the best place among the guests about thirty people. ²³ Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you, telling you to set it aside. ²⁴ The cook took up the thigh and what was on it and set it before Saul. Samuel said, Here is what has been kept for you! Eat it because it has been kept for you for this occasion since I said, 'I have invited guests'. So Saul ate with Samuel that day. ²⁵ When they had come down from the high place into the city, he talked with Saul on the housetop. ²⁶ They arose early, at daybreak, and Samuel called to Saul on the housetop, Get up, that I may send you away. Saul arose, and they went outside together. ²⁷ As they were going down to the outskirts of the city Samuel said to Saul, Tell the servant to go on ahead of us (and he did so), but you stay here first, so that I may tell you the message of God.

CHAPTER 10 Jun. 29

Samuel Anoints Saul

Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, Hasn't Yahweh anointed you to be prince over His inheritance? ² When you have departed from me today you will find two men by Rachel's tomb, in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will tell you, 'The donkeys which you went to seek have been found, and your father has stopped caring about the donkeys, and is anxious for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?'. ³ Then you will go on from there and you will come to the oak of Tabor. Three men will meet you there, going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread and another carrying a bottle of wine. ⁴ They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them. ⁵ After that you will come to the hill of God, where the garrison of the Philistines is, and when you come near to the city you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, a tambourine, a pipe and a harp being played before them. They will be prophesying, ⁶ and the Spirit of Yahweh will come mightily on you, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into another person. ⁷ When these signs have happened, then do as occasion demands, for God is with you. ⁸ Go down before me to Gilgal and I will come down to you, to offer burnt offerings and to make sacrifices of peace offerings. Wait

seven days until I come to you and show you what you must do.

Saul among the Prophets

⁹ When Saul had turned to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart, and all those signs happened that day.

¹⁰ When they came to the hill a band of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came mightily on him and he prophesied among them. ¹¹ When all who knew him before saw that he prophesied with the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? ¹² A man who lived there answered, Who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb: Is Saul also among the prophets? ¹³ When he had stopped prophesying, he came to the high place. ¹⁴ Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, Where did you go? He said, To seek the donkeys. When we saw that they were not to be found we came to Samuel.

¹⁵ Saul's uncle said, Please tell me

what Samuel said to you. ¹⁶ Saul said to his uncle, He told us plainly that the donkeys were found. But concerning the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel spoke, he didn't tell him.

Saul's Kingship Announced

¹⁷ Samuel called the people together to Yahweh to Mizpah, ¹⁸ and he said to the people of Israel, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you, ¹⁹ but you have this day rejected your God, who Himself saves you out of all your calamities and your distresses. You have said to Him, 'No! Set a king over us'. Now therefore present yourselves before Yahweh by your tribes and by your thousands. ²⁰ So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel together, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. ²¹ He brought the tribe of Benjamin forward by their families,

10:9 *God gave him another heart* – God is able to work directly on the human mind, giving us mindsets and attitudes which are more spiritual than we would otherwise have. He can make us “another person” (:7). But despite this will and ability of God to do this, Saul was ultimately untransformed, because he simply preferred the flesh.

10:19-21 It was God's wish that Israel would not have a human king; hence His sorrow when they did. Yet in the Law, God foresaw that they would want a human king, and so He gave commandments concerning how he should behave (Dt. 17:14,15). God foresaw their weaknesses and somehow provided for them, as He does with us. These passages speak of how Israel would choose to set a King over themselves, and would do so. Yet God worked through this system of human kings; hence the Queen of Sheba speaks of how *God* had set Solomon over Israel as King, and how he was king on God's behalf (2 Chron. 9:8). Israel set a king over themselves; but God worked with this, so that in a sense *He* set the King over them. However, by opting to make use of God's concessions to human weakness, real spirituality became harder to achieve. Thus it was harder to accept Yahweh as King if they had a human king demanding their allegiance.

and the family of the Matrites was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken, but when they sought him he could not be found. ²² Therefore they asked of Yahweh further, Did the man come here? Yahweh answered, He has hidden himself among the baggage. ²³ They ran and fetched him, and when he stood among the people he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. ²⁴ Samuel said to all the people, You see the one whom Yahweh has chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? All the people shouted, Long live the king! ²⁵ Then Samuel told the people the regulations of the kingdom, wrote them in a book and laid it up before Yahweh. Samuel sent all the people away to their homes. ²⁶ Saul also went to his house to Gibeah and with him the valiant men whose hearts God had touched. ²⁷ But some worthless fellows said, How can this

man save us? They despised him and brought him no present. But he was as though he had been deaf.

CHAPTER 11 Jun. 30

Saul Rescues the City of Jabesh

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, Make a treaty with us and we will serve you. ² Nahash the Ammonite said to them, On this condition I will make it with you, that each of you has his right eye put out, bringing disgrace on all Israel. ³ The elders of Jabesh said to him, Give us seven days so that we can send messengers to all the borders of Israel, and then, if there is no one to save us, we will come out to you. ⁴ Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these words to the people, and they all wept aloud. ⁵ Just then Saul came, following the oxen out of the field, and he said,

10:27 *As though he had been deaf* – Much later, David describes himself as responding to criticism like this: “I as a deaf man, heard not” (Ps. 38:13). Yet he was alluding to how Saul, when likewise criticized by wicked men, “was as though he had been deaf” to their words. David learnt the secret of seeing the positive in our weak brethren, even in our persecutors, and he didn’t let all that was wrong with Saul interfere with this. He saw the good in Saul, he remembered that one good example he showed – and it empowered him to follow it. This not only develops and reflects humility, but it helps us cope with ongoing abusive situations without completely losing any sense of the value and significance of every human person – including the person of our abusers.

11:5 The call of God comes to us right in the midst of ordinary, mundane life. Gideon was called whilst in the middle of threshing wheat in a time of famine (Jud. 6:1), Saul whilst he was out looking for lost cattle (1 Sam. 9:10) and again whilst he was coming home from work one evening (1 Sam. 11:5); David whilst he was looking after the sheep; Samuel whilst he was asleep; Amos whilst he was leading the flocks to water (Am. 7:14); and see too 1 Kings 11:29; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:1–13, 18. Christ likewise called men, arresting them with His radical call in the very midst of daily life, at the most inconvenient moment, even the most humanly inappropriate moment – such as

What is wrong with the people that they weep? They told him what the men of Jabesh had said. ⁶ The Spirit of God came mightily on Saul when he heard those words, and his anger was kindled greatly. ⁷ He took a yoke of oxen, cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, Whoever doesn't come forth after Saul and after Samuel, this is what shall be done to his oxen. The dread of Yahweh fell on the people, and they came out as one man. ⁸ Saul numbered them in Bezek and there were three hundred thousand men of Israel and thirty thousand of Judah. ⁹ They said to the messengers who came, Thus you shall tell the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance'. The messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, and they were glad. ¹⁰ Therefore the men of Jabesh said to the Ammonites, Tomorrow we will come out to you and you can do to us what seems good to you. ¹¹ The next day Saul put the people into three companies, and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and slaughtered the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who remained were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

Saul's Kingship Confirmed

¹² The people said to Samuel, Who was it who said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?'. Bring those men out so that we can put them to death! ¹³ But Saul said, No-one is to be put to death today, for today Yahweh has worked deliverance in Israel. ¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, Come, let us go to Gilgal and reaffirm the kingship there. ¹⁵ All the people went to Gilgal and there they made Saul king before Yahweh in Gilgal, and there they offered sacrifices of peace offerings before Yahweh, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

CHAPTER 12 Jun. 30

Samuel's Farewell

Samuel said to all Israel, I have listened to all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. ² Now, the king is your leader; I am old and grey-headed and my sons are with you, and I have been your leader from my youth to this day. ³ Here I am. Testify against me before Yahweh and before His anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Of whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you. ⁴ They

being on the way to your father's funeral, or in the very act of casting a net into the sea.

11:11 Saul attacked in three groups because he was trying to imitate Gideon, whom he had as his spiritual hero: 1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 13:2 = Jud. 7:8; 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 13:6 = Gideon offering before fighting Midian; 14:5,20 = Jud. 7:22; 14:24 = imitating Gideon and his men going without food; 14:28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5; 11:7 = Gideon killing his father's oxen. But merely replicating the outward actions of a faithful person doesn't of itself mean we are spiritually minded nor finally acceptable to God.

said, You have not defrauded us or oppressed us, neither have you taken anything from any man. ⁵ He said to them, Yahweh is witness against you and His anointed is witness this day that you have not found anything in my hand. They said, He is witness. ⁶ Samuel said to the people, It is Yahweh who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. ⁷ Now therefore stand still, that I may plead with you before Yahweh concerning all the righteous acts of Yahweh, which He did to you and to your fathers. ⁸ When Jacob had come into Egypt and your fathers cried to Yahweh, then Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. ⁹ But they forgot Yahweh their God, and He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. ¹⁰ They cried to Yahweh and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken Yahweh and have served the Baals and Ashtaroth; but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies

and we will serve You'. ¹¹ Yahweh sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. ¹² When you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to reign over us', when Yahweh your God was your king. ¹³ Now therefore, see the king whom you have chosen and whom you have asked for; Yahweh has set a king over you. ¹⁴ If you will fear Yahweh and serve Him, listen to His voice and not rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then it will be well with both you and the king who reigns over you. ¹⁵ But if you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh but rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then the hand of Yahweh will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Storm As a Sign from Yahweh

¹⁶ Now therefore stand still and see this great thing which Yahweh will do before your eyes. ¹⁷ Isn't it wheat harvest today? I will call to Yahweh to send thunder and rain, and you shall know and see that

12:14 *With both you and the king* – If all Israel had been obedient, then Saul would have been too. If a majority are spiritually minded, this can at times and in some ways influence a potentially weaker minority; even though the reverse is more often true. And yet Saul made the people "follow him trembling" because they weren't spiritually stronger than him (13:7).

12:14, 15 Israel requested a human king. God was Israel's king, and therefore their desire was effectively a rejection of God and Israel's special relationship with Him. And yet God gave them a human king. If they had a human king, it was harder for them to be God's Kingdom, to personally realize that God was their King, that He was the one to whom they owed all allegiance and duty. And yet God gave them a human king, because this was the path they had chosen; and by so doing He in one sense pushed them down the downward spiral of disobedience because they had chosen this themselves.

your wickedness is great which you have done in the eyes of Yahweh, in asking for a king. ¹⁸ So Samuel called to Yahweh, and Yahweh sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared Yahweh and Samuel. ¹⁹ All the people said to Samuel, Pray for your servants to Yahweh your God that we do not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king. ²⁰ Samuel said to the people, Don't be afraid. You have indeed done all this evil, yet don't turn aside from following Yahweh, but serve Yahweh with all your heart. ²¹ Don't turn aside to go after vain things which can't profit or save you, for they are vain. ²² Yahweh will not forsake His people, for the sake of His great name, because it has pleased Yahweh to make you His own people. ²³ As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh in ceasing to pray for you; I will instruct you in the good and the right way. ²⁴ Only fear Yahweh and serve Him in truth with all your heart; consider what great things He has done for you. ²⁵ But if you still do wickedly you will be consumed, both you and your king.

CHAPTER 13 Jul. 1

Saul Rebuked by Samuel

Saul reigned a year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel ² Saul chose three thousand men of

Israel, of which two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the Mount of Bethel, and one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin, and the rest of the people he sent back to their tents. ³ Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear! ⁴ All Israel heard that Saul had attacked the garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were gathered together to Saul in Gilgal. ⁵ The Philistines assembled themselves to fight with Israel: thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen and people as numerous as the sand which is on the seashore, and they came up and encamped in Michmash, east of Beth Aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in great peril and the people were distressed, they hid themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, coverts and in pits. ⁷ Now some of the Hebrews had gone over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead, but Saul was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. ⁸ He waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel, but Samuel didn't come to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him. ⁹ Saul said, Bring here the burnt offering to me, and the peace offerings. He offered

12:20, 21 If we don't serve God whole-heartedly, we will serve the idols of this present age. There's no third road.

12:23 It is an actual sin – albeit a sin of omission – to cease to pray for our brethren.

13:9 Are we going to be like those Israelites who offered a peace offering, when actually they were not at peace with God at all (see too 2 Kings 16:13; Prov. 7:14; Am.

the burnt offering. ¹⁰ As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, to greet him. ¹¹ Samuel said, What have you done? Saul said, When I saw that the people were scattered from me and that you didn't come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines assembled at Michmash, ¹² I thought 'Now the Philistines will come down on me to Gilgal, and I haven't entreated the favour of Yahweh'. I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt offering. ¹³ Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of Yahweh your God which He commanded you; for now Yahweh would have established your kingdom in Israel forever. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not continue. Yahweh has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and Yahweh has appointed him to be prince over His people, because you have not kept what Yahweh commanded you. ¹⁵ Samuel arose and went from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.

Israel without Weapons

¹⁶ Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. ¹⁷ Raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned towards Ophrah in the land of Shual; ¹⁸ another company turned towards Beth Horon, and another company turned towards the border land overlooking the valley of Zeboim facing the wilderness. ¹⁹ Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears. ²⁰ All the Israelites went down to the Philistines to have their ploughshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened. ²¹ The price was two thirds of a shekel to sharpen a mattock and a ploughshare, and one third for the forks and axes, and to set the goads. ²² So on the day of battle no soldier had either sword or spear among the people who were with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and Jonathan his son had swords and spears. ²³ The garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

5:22)? This is a thought worth bearing in mind as we approach the breaking of bread service.

13:13 *Yahweh would have established your kingdom in Israel forever* – God sets up amazing potentials for people, and yet they fail to achieve them. It must be so tragic for God, seeing all the wasted potentials of humanity. And yet this would explain His enthusiasm to confirm us in our attempts to rise up to the potentials He has enabled for us. God's punishment of Saul may appear severe, but Saul's actions obviously embodied a large amount of unspirituality which was beneath the surface.

13:14 *A man after His own heart* – The God whose ways are above our ways as far as Heaven is above earth can say that David was of the same mind as Himself. This shows the extent of God's humility, His enthusiasm to connect with man, and His eagerness to count our feeble spiritual mindedness for far more than it really is of itself.

CHAPTER 14 Jul. 2***The Philistines Attacked by Jonathan***

One day Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armour, Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison on the other side. But he didn't tell his father. ² Saul stayed on the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron; the people who were with him were about six hundred men. Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of Yahweh in Shiloh was there, wearing an ephod. The people didn't know that Jonathan had gone. ⁴ On each side of the pass by which Jonathan intended to go over to the Philistines' garrison there was a rocky crag; one was called Bozez and the other Seneh. ⁵ The one crag was on the north in front of Michmash and the other on the south in front of Geba. ⁶ Jonathan

said to the young man who carried his armour, Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised people. Perhaps Yahweh will work for us, for nothing can hinder Yahweh from saving, by many or by few. ⁷ His armour bearer said to him, Do all that you have in mind; I am with you according to your heart. ⁸ Then Jonathan said, We will cross over to them and let them see us. ⁹ If they say 'Wait until we come to you!', then we will stay where we are and will not go up to them. ¹⁰ But if they say 'Come up to us!', then we will go up, for Yahweh has delivered them into our hand. This will be the sign to us. ¹¹ So they revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, and the Philistines said, Look, the Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in! ¹² The men of the garrison shouted to Jonathan and his armour bearer, Come up to us and we will show you something! Jonathan

14:6 Perhaps David was in fact "the young man who carried his armour". Saul also calls him "young man" in 17:58. There was evidently an intense spiritual and physical rapport between Jonathan and his armour bearer which was similar to that described between Jonathan and David. "I am with you according to your heart" (:7) has firm connection with David and Jonathan being described as having their souls knit together in 18:1. The record of David's battle with the Philistines in 2 Sam. 5:17-24 has certain similarities with the exploits of 14:8-11; as if, years later, David replicated his early adventure of faith. David already had a reputation in Israel for being "a mighty man of valour, a man of war" (16:18), even before the Goliath incident. This would be understandable if he had gone with Jonathan in chapter 14. His becoming *Saul's* armour bearer (16:21) would then be seen as a logical promotion from being Jonathan's armour bearer. David came to lead Jonathan, rather than the other way around. And yet Jonathan accepted this, recognizing his own weakness and David's spiritual superiority to him, without any jealousy. In this we see a wonderful humility. See on 18:3.

14:10 It is open to debate whether we should set up signs for God to fulfil. As we mature spiritually, it should become clearer and more intuitive to us from His word what we should do and how we should decide issues, without the agonies of indecision and dilemma.

an said to his armour bearer, Come up after me, for Yahweh has delivered them into the hand of Israel. ¹³ Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet and his armour bearer followed, and the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour bearer followed and killed behind him. ¹⁴ That first slaughter by Jonathan and his armour bearer killed about twenty men in an area of about half an acre.

The Philistines Defeated by Israel

¹⁵ Then panic struck the whole Philistine army, those in the camp, in the field, and among all the outposts and raiding parties, and the ground shook. There was panic. ¹⁶ Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin saw that the army had melted away and scattered. ¹⁷ Then Saul said to the men with him, Count now and see who is missing from us. When they had counted, Jonathan and his armour bearer were not there. ¹⁸ Saul said to Ahijah, Bring the ark of God here. For the ark of God was with the Israelites at that time. ¹⁹ While Saul was talking to the priest the tumult in the camp of the Philistines went on and increased, and Saul said to the priest, Withdraw your hand! ²⁰ Saul and all the men with him were gathered together and came to the battle, and found that every man's sword was against his fellow; a very great

confusion. ²¹ Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines previously and had gone with them into the camp, turned to join the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. ²² Also all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines had fled, followed hard after them in the battle. ²³ So Yahweh saved Israel that day, and the battle moved beyond Beth Aven.

Jonathan Eats Some Honey

²⁴ The men of Israel were in distress that day because Saul had bound the people with an oath saying, Cursed is the man who eats any food before evening, and I have been avenged of my enemies. So none of the people ate any food. ²⁵ All the army came into the forest, and there was honey on the ground. ²⁶ When they had come to the forest the honey was oozing out, but no-one tasted any because the people feared the oath. ²⁷ But Jonathan hadn't heard when his father commanded the people with the oath, so he dipped the end of his rod into the honeycomb and ate some, and his eyes brightened. ²⁸ Then one of the people said, Your father bound the people with an oath saying, 'Cursed is the man who eats food this day'. The people were exhausted. ²⁹ Then Jonathan

14:20 *Every man's sword was against his fellow* – This was God's preferred method of destroying Israel's enemies in so many of the victories He gave them. Division within a community is therefore a sign of God's judgment of it; and those who justify and encourage division are therefore living out a position of condemnation.

14:33 Pointless following of legalistic obedience often leads people into sin because of their basic humanity.

said, My father has troubled the land. Please look how my eyes have been brightened because I tasted a little of this honey.³⁰ How much better it would have been if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies? Would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater?³¹ They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. The people were exhausted,³² and they pounced on the spoil, and took sheep, cattle and calves and killed them on the ground and ate them with the blood.³³ Then they told Saul, Look, the people are sinning against Yahweh, eating meat with the blood. He said, You have broken faith. Roll a large stone here at once!³⁴ Saul said, Go out among the people and tell them, ‘Each man bring to me here his ox and sheep; kill them here and eat; don’t sin against Yahweh by eating meat with the blood’. So each of them brought his ox with him that night, and killed them there.³⁵ Saul built an altar to Yahweh. This was the first altar that he built to Yahweh.³⁶ Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning, and let us not leave any of them alive. They said, Do whatever seems good to you. But the priest

said, Let us enquire of God.³⁷ Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel? But He didn’t answer him that day.

Saul Condemns Jonathan

³⁸ Saul said, Come here, all you chiefs of the people and let us find out which of us has sinned today.³⁹ For as Yahweh lives, Who saves Israel, even if it is Jonathan my son, he must die. But there was not a man among all the people who answered him.⁴⁰ Then he said to all Israel, You stand on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. The people said to Saul, Do what seems good to you.⁴¹ Therefore Saul said to Yahweh, the God of Israel, Show me the right answer. Jonathan and Saul were chosen, but the people escaped.⁴² Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. Jonathan was selected.⁴³ Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what you have done! Jonathan told him, I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand, and now must I die?⁴⁴ Saul said, God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan.⁴⁵ But the people said to Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation

14:37 In the same way as answered prayer reflects God’s pleasure, so prayer which God doesn’t respond to at all is one indicator of His displeasure (e.g. Saul’s experience in 1 Sam. 14:37). This isn’t to say that when we don’t receive the answers we expect, then God hasn’t responded. There’s a difference between God *responding* to prayer and God *answering* prayer as we expect Him to answer.

14:39 *Even if it is Jonathan my son* – It would seem that Saul was purposefully manipulating circumstance in order to kill his own son. This is how far jealousy blinds eyes, breaks families and relationships and obsesses people beyond reason.

in Israel? Far from it! As Yahweh lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day! So the people rescued Jonathan so that he didn't die. ⁴⁶ Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own land. ⁴⁷ After Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah and the Philistines; wherever he turned he defeated them. ⁴⁸ He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them.

The Family of Saul

⁴⁹ Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi and Malchishua, and the names of his two daughters were Merab the firstborn and Michal the younger, ⁵⁰ and the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. The captain of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. ⁵¹ Kish was the father of Saul and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. ⁵² There was severe war against the Philistines all the days of Saul, and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he took him into his service.

CHAPTER 15 Jul. 3

Saul Defeats the Amalekites

Samuel said to Saul, Yahweh sent me to anoint you to be king

over His people Israel. Now therefore, listen to the words of Yahweh.

² Thus says Yahweh of Armies, 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel, opposing them when they came up out of Egypt.

³ Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have; don't spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and nursing baby, ox and sheep, camel and donkey'. ⁴ Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. ⁵ Saul went to the city of Amalek and laid wait in the valley. ⁶ Saul said to the Kenites, Go away from among the Amalekites so that I don't destroy you with them, for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. ⁷ Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah to Shur east of Egypt. ⁸ He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people. ⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, cattle, fat calves and lambs and all that was good, and wouldn't utterly destroy them; everything that was bad and worthless they destroyed utterly.

Saul Rejected as King

¹⁰ Then the word of Yahweh came to Samuel saying, ¹¹ It grieves Me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he

15:6 Guilt by association isn't a Biblical idea; in fact the very opposite is taught, and we should be careful not to practice this.

15:11 God tells Samuel of His rejection of Saul, and Samuel cries to Him all night.

has turned back from following Me and has not obeyed My commandments. Samuel was troubled and he cried out to Yahweh all night. ¹² Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, and he was told: Saul came to Carmel and he set up a monument for himself, then went down to Gilgal. ¹³ Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Yahweh bless you! I have obeyed the commandment of Yahweh. ¹⁴ Samuel said, Then what is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What does this lowing of cattle mean? ¹⁵ Saul said, They have brought them from the Amale-

kites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to Yahweh your God. We have utterly destroyed the rest. ¹⁶ Then Samuel said to Saul, Stop! I will tell you what Yahweh said to me last night. He said to him, Tell me. ¹⁷ Samuel said, When you were once little in your own sight, weren't you made the head of the tribes of Israel? Yahweh anointed you king over Israel, ¹⁸ and Yahweh sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy those sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are destroyed'. ¹⁹ Why then didn't you

The implication is that Samuel was pleading with God to consider another future with Saul (see too :35; 16:1). Having stated His intentions, God is open to persuasion before He carries them out; that gap period is intended to inspire intense prayer and dialogue with God on our part.

15:17 Notice the links between Saul and Paul. "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:11) was directly matched by 'Is Saul of Tarsus also among the Christians?'. The way Paul was let down through a window to escape persecution (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33) was surely to remind him of what King Saul had done to David (see on 19:12). They were both Benjamites, and perhaps his parents saw him as following in Saul's footsteps. And it seems Paul was aware of this. The implication is that Paul changed his name from Saul to Paul ('the little one'), consciously alluding to this statement that when Saul was little (Heb. 'the littlest one') in his own sight, God anointed Saul and made him the *rosh*, the chief, over Israel. Maybe Paul's parents intended him to be the *rosh* over Israel; and it seems he would have made it had he not been converted. Paul saw how he had persecuted Christ, as Saul had David. He saw the self-will within him as it was in Saul. Yet he went on to see how pride had destroyed a man who could have achieved so much for God. And he determined that he would learn the lesson from Saul's failure; so he changed his name to Paul, the little one. What influence his sustained meditation on one Old Testament verse had upon him! It affected some basic decisions in his life; e.g. the decision to change his name. There was a time when Saul felt he was 'the littlest one' (as demonstrated in 9:21; 10:22). Paul alludes to it when he says he is less than the *least* of all saints, *least* of the apostles, chief of sinners (1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15). He earnestly resolved to be like Saul was at the beginning. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19) is surely a reference back to Saul's disobedience (:22). What Bible characters are we trying to consciously learn from? For the Bible is largely history, and the range of characters and situations recorded are chosen so that we can always find some Biblical precedent and guidance for whatever situation we are in (Rom. 15:4).

obey the voice of Yahweh, but took the spoils and did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh? ²⁰ Saul said to Samuel, But I have obeyed the voice of Yahweh, and have gone on the mission which Yahweh gave me and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. ²¹ But the people took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of the devoted things, to sacrifice to Yahweh your God in Gilgal. ²² Samuel said, Has Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, He has also rejected you from being king. ²⁴ Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned; I have transgressed the commandment of Yahweh and your words because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin and come back with me so that I may worship Yahweh. ²⁶ Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of Yahweh, and Yahweh has rejected you

from being king over Israel. ²⁷ As Samuel turned to go away, Saul grabbed the skirt of his robe and it tore. ²⁸ Samuel said to him, Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you. ²⁹ The Strength of Israel will not lie nor change His mind, for He is not a man that He should change His mind. ³⁰ Then he said, I have sinned, yet please honour me now before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me so that I may worship Yahweh your God. ³¹ So Samuel went back with Saul and Saul worshipped Yahweh. ³² Then Samuel said, Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites! Agag came to him confidently, thinking, Surely the bitterness of death is past. ³³ Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so your mother will be childless among women! Samuel cut Agag in pieces before Yahweh in Gilgal. ³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵ Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death, yet Samuel mourned for Saul, and Yahweh grieved that He had made Saul king over Israel.

15:23 *Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, He has also rejected you* – Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to Him; as we treat God's word, so He will treat us.

15:35 *Samuel mourned for Saul* – Any condemnation of the wicked by God or occasional separation from them which we are asked to make must be the result of much sorrow (see too Lev. 10:6; 1 Cor. 5:2; Phil. 3:17-19). The idea of 'block disfellowship' – the cutting off of whole groups of believers because of their association with some more questionable ones – hardly enables 'mourning' and pleading with individuals as is required.

CHAPTER 16 Jul. 4***David Anointed by Samuel***

Yahweh said to Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided a king for Myself from among his sons. ² Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hears it he will kill me. Yahweh said, Take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh. ³ Call Jesse to the sacrifice and I will show you what you must do. You are to anoint for Me the one whom I name to you. ⁴ Samuel did what Yahweh said and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Do you come peaceably? ⁵ He said, Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. He consecrated Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. ⁶ When they had come he looked at Eliab and said, Surely Yahweh's anointed is before Him. ⁷ But Yahweh said to Samuel, Don't look at his appearance or height, because I have rejected him. I do not look at the things man looks at; man looks at the outward appearance but Yahweh looks at the heart.

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, Neither has Yahweh chosen this one. ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. He said, Neither has Yahweh chosen this one. ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. Samuel said to Jesse, Yahweh has not chosen these. ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, Are all your children here? He said, There is still the youngest; he is keeping the sheep. Samuel said to Jesse, Send and get him, for we will not sit down until he comes here. ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with a beautiful face and handsome appearance. Yahweh said, Arise, anoint him, for this is the one. ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of Yahweh came mightily on David from that day on. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

David Plays the Harp for Saul

¹⁴ Now the spirit of Yahweh had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled him. ¹⁵ Saul's servants said to him, See now, an evil spirit from God troubles you. ¹⁶ Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is a skilful player on

16:14 The "spirit" often refers to an attitude of mind (e.g. Dt. 2:30; Prov. 25:28; Is. 54:6; 61:3; Ez. 18:31; Mk.14:38; Lk. 2:40; 2 Cor. 2:13; 12:18; Eph. 4:23). The "evil spirit" refers to Saul's state of mind here; just as a "holy spirit" refers to a sanctified state of mind. The idea that 'evil spirits' refer to invisible cosmic beings isn't Biblical; they would hardly flee just because of how a man plays a harp. Notice that here the "evil spirit" was "from Yahweh" – this is emphasized (:14,15,16; 18:10); this attitude of the mind was sent by God, not a super-human evil being acting in radical opposition to God.

the harp. When the evil spirit from God comes on you, he can play and you will feel better. ¹⁷ Saul said to his servants, Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me. ¹⁸ Then one of the young men said, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skilful in playing, a mighty man of valour, a man of war, who speaks well and is good-looking, and Yahweh is with him. ¹⁹ Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, Send me David your son, who is with the sheep. ²⁰ Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a bottle of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. ²¹ David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul loved him greatly and he became his armour bearer. ²² Saul sent to Jesse saying, Please let David stay with me, for I am pleased with him. ²³ When the spirit from God was on Saul, David took the harp and played, and Saul was refreshed and felt better and the evil spirit departed from him.

CHAPTER 17 Jul. 5

Goliath Challenges Israel

Now the Philistines gathered their armies to battle and assembled at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and they encamped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephesdammim. ² Saul and the men of Israel assembled and

encamped in the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. ³ The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them. ⁴ A champion went out of the camp of the Philistines named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. ⁵ He had a helmet of bronze on his head and he wore a bronze coat of mail which weighed five thousand shekels. ⁶ He had bronze shin armour on his legs and a javelin of bronze between his shoulders. ⁷ The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam and his iron spear's head weighed six hundred shekels, and his shield bearer went before him. ⁸ He stood and shouted to the armies of Israel, Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight and kill me, then we will be your servants, but if I overcome him and kill him, then you will be our servants, and serve us. ¹⁰ The Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day! Give me a man and let us fight one another! ¹¹ When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine they were dismayed, and terrified.

17:9 This conflict is prophetic of Christ's victory over sin on the cross (see on :54). The way that Israel failed to find a man to fight until David arose is exactly the language of the prophecies which speak of our inability to find a single man who could overcome sin, until Christ did so on the cross (Is. 41:28; 50:2; 59:16). There was a very real possibility that Christ like David could have failed [for He was man, not God Himself] – with the same disastrous consequences.

David Visits the Army of Israel

¹² Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse. He had eight sons and was considered an old man in the days of Saul. ¹³ The three eldest sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. Their names were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab and the third Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest; and the three eldest followed Saul. ¹⁵ Now David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem. ¹⁶ The Philistine drew near morning and evening and took his stand for forty days. ¹⁷ Jesse said to David his son, Now take an ephah of parched grain and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers; ¹⁸ and take these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand. See how your brothers are doing and bring back news. ¹⁹ Saul and David's brothers and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. ²⁰ David rose up early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper and took the gifts, and went as Jesse had commanded him; he came to the camp as the army was going forth to the battle, shouting the

war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines put the battle in array, army against army. ²² David left his things with the keeper of supplies and ran to the army and came and greeted his brothers.

David Accepts Goliath's Challenge

²³ As he talked with them Goliath came up, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, out of the ranks of the Philistines. He shouted the same words, and David heard them. ²⁴ All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were terrified. ²⁵ The men of Israel said, Have you seen this man who keeps coming up? He comes up to defy Israel. The king has promised to give great riches to the man who kills him, and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel. ²⁶ David said to the men who stood by him, What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? ²⁷ The people repeated to him what they had said: This is indeed what is promised to the man who kills him. ²⁸ Eliab his

17:16 The faithful Israelite would have thought of the sacrifices being offered morning and evening, and would've reflected that they were powerless to give victory (cp. Heb. 10:4).

17:26 *What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine...?* – David asks this having just heard what would be done for the man who killed Goliath (:25); and then he asks it again (:30). The implication is that the offer of Saul's daughter he found motivating. As Saul's servant, from a poor family, he likely would've looked on at her from a distance, regretting that she was unreachable (18:23); and she was in love with him (18:20). Jonathan, her brother, was perhaps already his good friend (see on 14:6). Perhaps this looks forward to how Christ was motivated in His battle with sin by the thought of thereby winning us, His bride.

eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the presumption of your heart; you have only come down to see the battle. ²⁹ David said, What have I done now? Can I not speak? ³⁰ He turned away from him toward someone else and said the same, and the people answered him as before. ³¹ When the words of David were heard, they repeated them to Saul and he sent for him. ³² David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of this Philistine. Your servant will go and fight him. ³³ Saul said to David, You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight him; you are only a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth. ³⁴ David said, Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and rescued it out of its mouth. When it turned on me I caught it by its beard and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant killed both the lion and the bear.

This uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ David said, Yahweh who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. Saul said to David, Go; and Yahweh be with you. ³⁸ Saul dressed David in his own clothes. He put a bronze helmet on his head and put a coat of mail on him. ³⁹ David strapped his sword onto his tunic and he tried to move, but he was not used to it. David said to Saul, I can't go with these; I am not used to them. So David took them off. ⁴⁰ He took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag. His sling was in his hand as he drew near to the Philistine.

David Kills Goliath

⁴¹ The Philistine advanced and came near to David with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² When he looked at David he despised him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome. ⁴³ The Philistine said to David, Am I a dog that you come at me with

17:32 *Let no man's heart fail* – Just before Christ destroyed the power of sin on the cross, He assured us in similar words (Jn. 14:1,27).

17:35 *I went out after it and struck it, and rescued it out of its mouth* – This shows an unusual level of commitment to the sheep, after the pattern of the unusual shepherd in Christ's parable who risks His life in fighting a wild animal to save a sheep – no normal shepherd would do this. David not only prefigured Christ as the ultimately "good shepherd", but shows the value he attached to all God's creation.

17:40 *Five smooth stones* – He took five not because he thought he might miss a few times but because Goliath had four sons whom he likely intended to kill at the same time (2 Sam. 21:18-22; 1 Chron. 20:4-8). This was indeed spiritual ambition. But those four sons were killed later, by David's men; just as we are left with some aspects of Christ's victory against sin to follow up on ourselves.

sticks? The Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ He said to David, Come here and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the animals of the field. ⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, You come against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of Yahweh of Armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ Today Yahweh will deliver you into my hand. I will strike you down and cut off your head. I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines today to the birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all those here may know that Yahweh doesn't save with sword and spear, for the battle is Yahweh's and He will give you into our hand. ⁴⁸ When the Philistine came closer to attack David, David ran quickly towards the Philistine army. ⁴⁹ He put his hand into his bag, took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he fell on his face to the ground. ⁵⁰ So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him without a

sword in his hand. ⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine, took hold of his sword, drew it out of its scabbard and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² The men of Israel and Judah arose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gate of Ekron. The wounded of the Philistines fell down all the way to Shaaraim, Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ The Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camp. ⁵⁴ David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armour in his own tent. ⁵⁵ When Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the captain of the army, Abner, whose son is this youth? Abner said, As your soul lives, O king, I don't know. ⁵⁶ The king said, Find out whose son the young man is! ⁵⁷ As David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him to Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. ⁵⁸ Saul said to him, Whose son are you, young man? David answered, I am the son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite.

17:46 *I will strike you down and cut off your head* – David was completely confident in faith, and had worked out what he would do after the initial victory – he would cut off Goliath's head. Christ likewise was confident of victory on the cross and His parables and teachings assumed that victory ahead of time.

That all the earth may know that there is a God – The spirit of Christ's words just before He went out to kill the power of sin on Golgotha (Jn. 14:31; 17:23).

17:49 *His forehead* – This is twice emphasized; pointing forward to how Christ's victory over sin was ultimately in the mind.

17:54 'Golgotha' meaning 'The place of the skull' may well be the place near Jerusalem where David buried Goliath's skull. The whole incident opens up as a prototype of Christ's victory over sin on the cross, with Goliath presented as a "man of sin".

CHAPTER 18 Jul. 6***David and Jonathan***

When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan became bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ² Saul took him that day and would not let him go home to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴ Jonathan stripped himself of the robe he was wearing and gave it to David with his tunic and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

David's Successes in Battle

⁵ David went out wherever Saul sent him and behaved himself wisely, and Saul set him over the men of war, which pleased all the people and Saul's servants. ⁶ When David and

the men returned from the slaughter of the Philistine the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tambourines, with joy, and with instruments of music. ⁷ The women sang one to another as they played, Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. ⁸ Saul was very angry; this song displeased him and he said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands and to me they have ascribed only thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom? ⁹ Saul eyed David from that day and onward.

Jealous Saul Seeks to Kill David

¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came mightily on Saul, and he prophesied in his house. David played his harp, as he did day by

18:3 Our notes on chapter 17 have shown that David's killing of Goliath was typical of Christ's killing of sin on the cross. His victory there enabled the new covenant to come into operation with those who believe in Him; and so Jonathan becomes representative of us, and the covenant he enters with David looks ahead to the new covenant. Jonathan as the king's son and commander of the army was the one who ought to have fought Goliath; but he didn't (see on 14:6). Instead of being filled with envy, he humbled himself, stripped himself and gave his all to David, as we should to Christ, motivated by the wonder of His victory.

18:5 To achieve this state of mind must have required a lot of conscious thought and self-analysis by David. We get the sense that David pitted his wisdom against Saul's anger and bitter persecution; David's wisdom and prospering is repeatedly mentioned in tandem with Saul's anger against him (:5,11,14,15,30). These words are referring back to Dt. 29:9, which promised that those who kept the words of the covenant would prosper. David's charmed life and prospering despite all manner of plotting against him was due to his single-minded devotion to the Law; to those very chapters which tired Bible readers tend to skip over as boring and not motivating. Yet David found something immensely inspiring and practical about the Law. The word made him wiser than his foes (Ps. 119:98) – and there is reason to think that Ps. 119, which is all about how much David loved God's word, was written by David at the time of his persecution by Saul.

18:10 *An evil spirit from God* – See on 16:14.

day. Saul had his spear in his hand¹¹ and he threw the spear saying, I will pin David to the wall! David escaped from his presence twice.¹² Saul was afraid of David because Yahweh was with him but had departed from Saul.¹³ Therefore Saul sent David away from him and made him his captain over a thousand, and David went out and came in before the people.¹⁴ David behaved himself wisely in all he did, and Yahweh was with him.¹⁵ When Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he stood in awe of him.¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them.¹⁷ Saul said to David, here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight Yahweh's battles. Saul thought, Don't let my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.¹⁸ David said to Saul, Who am I, and what is my clan or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?¹⁹ But when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholahite as his wife.²⁰ Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David, and when they told Saul he was pleased.²¹ Saul said, I will give her to him so that she can be a snare to him, and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Therefore Saul said to David, You shall this day have a second opportunity to be my son-in-law.²² Saul commanded his servants, Speak to David secretly and say, 'Look, the king is pleased

with you, and all his servants love you; now therefore be the king's son-in-law'.²³ Saul's servants told David this. David said, Does it seem to you a light thing to be the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man, and little known?²⁴ The servants of Saul told him what David said.²⁵ Saul said, Tell David, 'The king desires no dowry except one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged on the king's enemies'. Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.²⁶ When his servants told David this, he was pleased to be the king's son-in-law. Before the allotted time²⁷ David arose and went with his men and killed two hundred of the Philistine men, and David brought their foreskins, and gave them in full number to the king so that he might be the king's son-in-law. Saul gave him Michal his daughter as his wife.²⁸ Saul saw and knew that Yahweh was with David, and Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him.²⁹ Saul was yet the more afraid of David, and Saul was David's enemy continually.³⁰ Then the princes of the Philistines went forth and whenever they did so, David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was highly esteemed.

CHAPTER 19 Jul. 7

Jonathan Speaks for David

Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David.² Jonathan told David, Saul my father seeks to kill

you. Now therefore, please take extra care of yourself in the morning; hide in a secret place and stay there.

³ I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are and I will talk with my father about you, and if I find out anything, I will tell you. ⁴ Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, Don't let the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you and he has worked well for you; ⁵ he put his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and Yahweh worked a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?

⁶ Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: As Yahweh lives, he shall not be put to death. ⁷ Jonathan called David and told him all this. Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

David's Successes Enrage Saul

⁸ There was war again. David went out and fought the Philistines and killed them with a great slaughter, and they fled before him. ⁹ An evil spirit from Yahweh came on Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing his harp. ¹⁰ Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and the spear went into the wall. David fled, and escaped that night. ¹¹ Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. Michal, David's wife, told him, If you don't save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed. ¹² So Michal let David down through the window. He fled and escaped. ¹³ Michal took an idol and laid it in the bed, put a pillow of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with the clothes. ¹⁴ When Saul sent messengers to take David she said,

19:5 Saul wanting to slay "innocent blood" = Mt. 27:4; his persecution of David "without a cause" was exactly what the Jews did to Christ (Jn. 15:25). We see clearly David as a type of Christ and Saul as representative of the Jewish opposition to Him.

19:12 There are many connections between Saul and Paul; and Paul noticed them and was motivated by them (see on 15:17). The way Paul was let down through a window to escape persecution (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33) was not of his own choice; God set up that situation to make him realize that he should not be as Saul, his namesake. And so, led by God in this, he purposefully changed his name from Saul to Paul, 'the little one', recalling how when Saul was "little" in his own sight, he was acceptable to God (15:17). We too are to look for the similarities between our lives and those of Biblical characters, and act accordingly; and God will work in our lives to make the similarities, differences and lessons the more apparent to us.

19:13 *An idol* – Although both Michal and David were in love with each other when they married and they were both members of God's people, indeed Michal's brother Jonathan was a very faithful believer, Michal was clearly not devoted to Yahweh as she should've been – for she had a large idol in the house. Ultimately the marriage didn't work out. Being in love and both being nominally believers isn't enough to make a marriage work as God intends; there must be on both sides a genuine love of God.

He is sick. ¹⁵ Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed so that I can kill him. ¹⁶ When the messengers came in, there was just the idol in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head. ¹⁷ Saul said to Michal, Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped? Michal answered Saul, He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I kill you?'. ¹⁸ Now David fled and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. He and Samuel went and lived in Naioth. ¹⁹ Saul was told, David is at Naioth in Ramah! ²⁰ Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as head over them, the spirit of God came on the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied. ²¹ When Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. Saul sent messengers again the third time and they also prophesied. ²² Then he went himself to Ramah, and came to the great well that is in Secu, and he asked, Where are Samuel and David? Someone said, They are at Naioth in Ramah. ²³ So he went towards Naioth in Ramah. Then the spirit of God came on him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ He stripped off his clothes and he also prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. There-

fore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

CHAPTER 20 Jul. 8

Jonathan Helps David

David fled from Naioth in Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, What have I done? What is my iniquity? What is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life? ² He said to him, Far from it; you shall not die. Look, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me, so why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so. ³ But David took an oath and said, Your father knows well that I have found favour in your eyes, so he says, 'Don't let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved'; but truly as Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death. ⁴ Then Jonathan said to David, Whatever your soul desires, I will do it for you. ⁵ David said to Jonathan, Look, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to dine with the king; but let me go so that I can hide myself in the field until the third day at evening. ⁶ If your father misses me at all then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem, his city, for it is the yearly sacrifice there for all the family'. ⁷ If he says, 'Very well', your servant will have peace; but if he is angry, then know that evil is determined by him. ⁸ Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant

20:8 *Your servant* – David was respected by Jonathan as his spiritual superior because of David's victory over Goliath (see on 18:3), but despite that, David considers himself Jonathan's servant, in the spirit of servant leadership which characterizes Jesus.

of Yahweh. But if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself; why should you bring me to your father? ⁹ Jonathan said, Never! If I should know that evil were determined against you by my father, wouldn't I tell you? ¹⁰ Then David said to Jonathan, Who will tell me if your father answers you roughly? ¹¹ Jonathan said to David, Come, let us go out into the field. They both went out into the field. ¹² Jonathan said to David, By Yahweh, the God of Israel, when I have sounded out my father, by this time tomorrow or the third day, if he is favourable toward you I will send and tell you. ¹³ Yahweh deal with me severely, if my father intends evil against you and I don't disclose it to you so that I can send you away safely. May Yahweh be with you, as He has been with my father. ¹⁴ But while I live, show me the grace of Yahweh so that I will not be killed. ¹⁵ Also, do not cut off your kindness from my house forever, not even when Yahweh has cut off all the enemies of David from the surface of the earth.

Jonathan and David's Covenant

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Yahweh

will require it at the hand of David's enemies. ¹⁷ Jonathan made David swear again, for the love that he had for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul. ¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to him, Tomorrow is the new moon and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ When you have waited three days, go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself when this started, and stay by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it as though I shot at a mark. ²¹ Then I will send the boy saying, 'Go, find the arrows!'. If I tell the boy 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them', then come, for you are safe, as Yahweh lives. ²² But if I say this to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you', then go your way, for Yahweh has sent you away. ²³ Concerning the matter which you and I have spoken of, behold, Yahweh is between you and me forever. ²⁴ So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon had come, the king sat down to eat. ²⁵ The king sat on his seat by the wall as usual and Jonathan sat opposite and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. ²⁶ Nevertheless Saul

20:16 *Yahweh will require it* – This affects the question of whether there will be a specific 'going through' of many (all?) our deeds at the day of judgment, or at least, all the sinful deeds of the condemned. Actions in this life will be "required" by God (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8) – at judgment day, when an explanation for our behaviour will be "required". The Hebrew word translated "require" in the above passages has the sense of to search / enquire – which suggests a process of discussion during the judgment process. Likewise God will "require" the flock at the hand of the pastors (Ez. 34:10; Heb. 13:17). There must be answerability before God for human actions; in this life and / or at the day of judgment when Christ returns. The apparent silence of God in this life can lead us to think that there are things we can 'get away with'; but ultimately there will be accountability before God.

didn't say anything that day, for he thought, Something has happened to him. He is not clean. Surely he is not clean. ²⁷ On the next day after the new moon, the second day, David's place was empty again. Saul said to Jonathan his son, Why didn't the son of Jesse come to eat, either yesterday or today? ²⁸ Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹ He said, 'Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city. My brother has commanded me to be there. Now, if I have found favour in your eyes, please let me go away and see my brothers'. That is why he has not come to the king's table.

Saul Turns against David Again

³⁰ Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, You son of a perverse rebellious woman, don't I know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the confusion of your mother's nakedness? ³¹ As long as

the son of Jesse lives on the earth you will not be established, nor your kingdom. Therefore now send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die! ³² Jonathan answered Saul his father, Why should he be put to death? What has he done? ³³ Saul cast his spear at him to strike him. By this Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. ³⁴ So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully. ³⁵ In the morning Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little boy went with him. ³⁶ He said to his boy, Run, find now the arrows which I shoot. As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. ³⁷ When the boy had come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy, Isn't the arrow beyond you? ³⁸ Jonathan called after the boy, Go quickly! Hurry! Don't delay!

20:27 The Jews asked about Jesus "Where is he?" at a feast time (Jn. 7:11); just as Saul did about David.

20:30 *To the confusion of your mother's nakedness* – The Hebrew idiom is hard to interpret, but it could suggest that Saul was falsely accusing Jonathan of having a homosexual relationship with David. If you feel you have been slandered by gossip in the church, remember that almost every servant of God has been through this at the hands of those they counted as their brethren: Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Paul, and above all Jesus Himself

20:31–34 Jonathan represents us all in our relationship with Christ (see on 18:3). He lived in an environment which was bitterly opposed to David; yet he stuck up for him, at the risk of embarrassment and opposition, and certain damage to his own prospects; as we should in this wicked world. As Saul cast a javelin at David, so he did at Jonathan; as we should fellowship the sufferings of David's greater son. Saul's hate of David resulted in Jonathan being "grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully". Is this not our response to our world in their ceaseless blasphemy of Christ?

Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. ³⁹ But the boy didn't know anything. Only Jonathan and David knew the matter. ⁴⁰ Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy, and said to him, Go, take them to the city. ⁴¹ As soon as the boy had gone David got up from the south side of the stone, fell on his face to the ground and bowed himself three times. They kissed one another and wept one with another, and David wept the most. ⁴² Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, because we have both sworn in the name of Yahweh, saying, 'Yahweh shall be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed, forever'. David arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

CHAPTER 21 Jul. 9

David and the Priest of Nob

Then David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech came to meet David trembling and said to him, Why are you alone and no-one with you? ² David said to Ahimelech the priest, The king has charged me with a task and has said to me 'Let no-one know anything about it or what I have commanded you'. I have told the young men to go to a meeting place. ³ Now therefore what do you have to hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever

there is here. ⁴ The priest answered David, There is no common bread here, but there is holy bread, if the young men have kept themselves from women. ⁵ David answered the priest, Truly, women have been kept from us for about three days. When I go on an expedition the bodies of the young men are holy; they are even for an ordinary journey; how much more so today? ⁶ So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there apart from the Bread of the Presence that had been taken from before Yahweh, to be replaced by fresh hot bread. ⁷ Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before Yahweh; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the best of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul.

⁸ David said to Ahimelech, Don't you have here a spear or sword? I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me because the king's business required haste. ⁹ The priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you killed in the valley of Elah is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it; there is no other except that here. David said, There is none like that. Give it to me.

David Flees to Gath

¹⁰ David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish

21:9 David's eager taking of the sword of Goliath contrasts sadly with his earlier rejection of such weapons in order to slay Goliath (17:39). David later reflects how he knew that his faithless taking of that sword and the showbread would lead to the death of Abiathar's family (1 Sam. 22:22). But still he did it. David was ultimately a righteous man, but if we were to draw a graph of his level of faith, with time along the bottom and his level of faith on the side – it would be a jagged graph. Just like our lives.

the king of Gath. ¹¹ The servants of Achish said to him, Isn't this David the king of the land? Didn't they sing one to another about him in dances saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?'. ¹² David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. ¹³ He changed his behaviour before them and pretended to be mad, scrambled on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down onto his beard. ¹⁴ Then Achish said to his servants, Look, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? ¹⁵ Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?

CHAPTER 22 Jul. 9

David Escapes to the Cave at

Adullam

David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of

Adullam. When his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. ² Everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt and everyone who was discontented gathered themselves to him and he became their captain. About four hundred men were with him. ³ David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab, and he said to the king of Moab, Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you, until I know what God will do for me. ⁴ He brought them before the king of Moab and they lived with him all the while that David was in the stronghold. ⁵ The prophet Gad said to David, Don't stay in the stronghold. Depart, and go into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and went into the forest of Hereth.

The Priests of Nob Killed by Saul

⁶ Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered. Now Saul was

21:13, 15 Going down South to Achish of Gath and playing the mad man has sad connections with the patriarchs going down to Egypt in times of weak faith. This was a weak period of David's life; see on :9.

22:2 David at this time could be likened to Christ in our period of history, still awaiting being enthroned and given the Kingdom promised to Him. Those who followed David at this time would then represent us who follow Christ today, when society generally doesn't accept Him. Those who came to Him were initially spiritually weak, but they developed during their time in the wilderness with Him. It was those who were loyal to him in the wilderness who later became the rulers in his Kingdom, as we will in Christ's Kingdom when it is established on earth (Rev. 5:8). Those who came to David were initially driven to him by their hard experiences in this world, rather than attracted to him for purely spiritual motives; and so it is with many of those who come to Christ. Our motives for doing so change and mature over time.

22:5 *Go into the land of Judah* – David's whole experience with Saul was arranged by a loving Father. The sensible thing would have been for David to get out of Saul's way and lay quiet – and this is what he tried to do, by going to Moab. But then God tells him to go back into Judah. This was political suicide; it's similar to how Christ returned to Judea in a similar situation (Jn. 11:7,8). It made no human sense to expose himself to Saul again. And then God tells David to go and fight with the Philistines in

sitting in Gibeah under the tamarisk tree in Ramah with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. ⁷ Saul said to them, Listen now, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse give each of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds? ⁸ Is that why all of you have conspired against me so that there is no-one who tells me when my son makes a treaty with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or tells me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as he does today? ⁹ Then Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, said: I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. ¹⁰ He inquired of Yahweh for him, gave him food, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. ¹¹ Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub and all his father's house, the priests who were in Nob; and they all came to the king. ¹² Saul said, Listen now, you son of Ahitub. He answered, Here I am, my lord. ¹³ Saul said to him, Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait,

as he does today? ¹⁴ Then Ahimelech answered the king, Who among all your servants is as faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and is taken into your council, and is honourable in your house? ¹⁵ Is this the first time I have inquired of God for him? Be it far from me! Don't let the king accuse his servant or any of the house of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of all this. ¹⁶ The king said, You shall surely die Ahimelech, you and all your father's house. ¹⁷ The king said to the guards who stood around him, Turn and kill the priests of Yahweh because they have sided with David, and because they knew that he fled, and didn't tell me. But the servants of the king wouldn't put forth their hand to strike the priests of Yahweh. ¹⁸ The king said to Doeg, You turn and attack the priests! Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five people who wore a linen ephod. ¹⁹ He struck Nob, the city of the priests, with the edge of the sword, men, women, children and nursing babies, and cattle, donkeys and sheep. ²⁰ One of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David. ²¹ Abiathar told David that Saul had killed Yahweh's priests. ²² David said to Abiathar, I knew on that day, when

order to rescue the people of Keilah (23:2). Yet the men of Keilah weren't allies worth having – even they were prepared to betray David to Saul, and by this action he made the Philistines hate him yet more, so refuge amongst them was no longer possible. Again and again, God led David into situations that were politically suicidal, that only made things worse for him... because He wanted David to trust in Him alone. And so it happens in our lives. Time and again.

22:22 David had great sensitivity and this led to an almost telepathic ability to enter

Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of all the people of your father's house. ²³ Stay with me, don't be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you will be safe.

CHAPTER 23 Jul. 10

Keilah Saved by David

David was told, The Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors. ² Therefore David inquired of Yahweh, Shall I go and attack these Philistines? Yahweh said to David, Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah. ³ David's men said to him, Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then, if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? ⁴ Then David inquired of Yahweh yet again. Yahweh answered him, Get up and go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand. ⁵ David and his men went to Keilah and fought against the Philistines and carried off their livestock and killed them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. ⁶ When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, he brought an ephod with him.

Saul Continues to Pursue David

⁷ Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah and he said, God has delivered him into my hand, for he is trapped by going into a town that has gates and bars. ⁸ Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. ⁹ David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him, so he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here. ¹⁰ Then David said, O Yahweh the God of Israel, Your servant has definitely heard that Saul intends to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. ¹¹ Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? Yahweh, the God of Israel, I beg you, tell Your servant. Yahweh said, He will come down. ¹² Then David said, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? Yahweh said, They will deliver you. ¹³ Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and left Keilah, and went wherever they could go. Saul heard that David had escaped from Keilah so he gave up going there. ¹⁴ David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds and in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God didn't deliver him into his hand.

into other's problems; it became legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which endeared him to his people (see too 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 18:13) – and there is a powerful similarity here with Christ, whose sensitivity was greater than anyone's. His ability to know things may have been partly due to direct Divine guidance, but sometimes it may've been simply due to His acute sensitivity to people and human situations. We can take comfort that He is the same today as He was yesterday, and is highly sensitive to all our circumstances.

23:2 See on 22:5. This situation is typical of Christ's in Jn. 11:7,8.

¹⁵ David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life when he was in the wilderness of Ziph, in the forest.

¹⁶ Jonathan, Saul's son, went to David into the forests and strengthened his hand in God. ¹⁷ He said to him, Don't be afraid, for the hand of Saul my father will not find you; you will be king over Israel and I shall be next to you. Saul my father well knows that.

¹⁸ They both made a covenant before Yahweh, and David stayed in the forests but Jonathan went home.

¹⁹ Then the Ziphites came to Saul in Gibeah saying, Isn't David hiding among us in the strongholds in the forest, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of the desert? ²⁰ Now therefore, O king, come down when you are ready; our part will be to de-

liver him into the king's hand. ²¹ Saul said, Yahweh bless you, for you have had compassion on me. ²² Please go and make sure and find out where his haunt is and who has seen him there, for they tell me that he is very crafty.

²³ So find out all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information, and I will go with you. If he is in the area I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah. ²⁴ They set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul, but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah on the south of the desert. ²⁵ Saul and his men went to seek him. When David was told, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David

23:15 *To seek his life* – Psalm 54 was written when David received the news that the Ziphites had betrayed him. The reference to oppressors 'seeking after my soul / life' (Ps. 54:3) uses the same Hebrew words as here, where Saul seeks for David's life at Ziph. That Psalm gives an insight into the mind of David; how he perceived himself, how he understood God. He was obviously in a desperate situation – he'd been betrayed, and Saul appeared certain now to corner him and kill him. He asks God of course to save him; he doesn't just resign himself to what looked like an impossible situation. He had the vision to believe that God *can* do miracles. He asks God to 'judge' him, to 'plead my cause' (Ps. 54:1 Heb.). There he was, just having received the news... and he prays, and composes a Psalm, right there and then. Composing poetry in the heat of the moment was his way of calming down and focusing his faith. That's not to say, of course, that he didn't later refine Psalm 54 and 'write it up' as it were.

23:16, 17 Only occasionally could Jonathan and David meet, brief moments of intense fellowship away from the rest of the world, strengthening each other's hand in God, re-confirming their covenant together (18:3; 20:8,16; 23:18). No wonder their good-byes were so hard (20:41). Not surprisingly, they looked forward to the promised day of David's Kingdom. Our communion meetings with Christ (see on 18:3) during our wilderness journey must surely mirror those meetings.

23:21 *Yahweh bless you, for you have had compassion on me* – Saul made the common mistake of assuming that anyone on his side and against his perceived enemies was therefore also on God's side. But our enemies' enemy isn't therefore necessarily a good person or Godly. This logic leads to all manner of damaged relationships between individuals and groups.

into the wilderness of Maon. ²⁶ Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other, and David hurried to get away for fear of Saul, for Saul and his men surrounded David and his men to take them. ²⁷ But a messenger came to Saul saying, Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land! ²⁸ So Saul returned from pursuing David and went against the Philistines. Therefore they called that place Sela Hammahlekoth. ²⁹ David went from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

CHAPTER 24 Jul. 11

Saul's Life Spared by David

When Saul had returned from pursuing the Philistines he

was told, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi. ² Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men on the rocks of the wild goats. ³ He came to the sheep pens by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were hiding in the innermost parts of the cave. ⁴ The men of David said to him, Look, the day of which Yahweh said to you, 'I will deliver your enemy into your hand and you can do to him whatever you wish'. Then David got up and cut off a corner of Saul's robe secretly. ⁵ Afterwards David's conscience smote him, because he had cut off a piece of Saul's robe. ⁶ He said to his men, Yahweh forbid that I should do such

23:26 *Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other* – David was going up one side of the cone shaped mountain, getting higher and higher, whilst Saul was chasing him, never catching up with him, but going around the other side. The dust from David's group would've been visible to Saul's army. It was clear that soon David would reach the summit – and there would be no way out, apart from upwards to Heaven. He was in a no way out situation, just as God sometimes puts us into. But amazingly, God stopped Saul in his tracks, just as He sometimes saves us from such humanly hopeless situations, so that we will walk humbly and gratefully before Him the rest of our days. See on 29:4.

23:27 The way Saul returns from pursuing David because of a rumour of invasion is so similar to Rabshakeh's retreat from Jerusalem after rumours of incursions (Is. 37:9,10). There is much repetition within the Biblical narratives. Individuals tend to go through very similar experiences, and often the same words are used in the descriptions of the experience or their response to it. Some of these similarities are so specific and humanly unlikely to be replicated that one can only conclude that there was a higher power over-ruling their situations. It may be that the Angels work in human lives according to some kind of Divine pattern, and this accounts for the sense of repetition and *déjà vu*. But it may also be because it is God's intention that we meditate upon the lives of previous servants to the point where we see their experiences coming through, in principle, in our own lives; and we are urged on to a like victory as they attained.

24:4, 5 David saw Saul for who he was, the anointed of God. Christ too taught *His* men to have respect for the Pharisees, who 'sat in Moses' seat', and therefore ought to be given reverence on that account (Mt. 23:2). David's extreme respect for Saul

a thing to my lord, Yahweh's anointed, to lift my hand against him, since he is Yahweh's anointed. ⁷ So David restrained his men with these words, and didn't allow them to attack Saul. Saul got up out of the cave and went on his way. ⁸ David also got up afterwards and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, My lord the king! When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and showed respect. ⁹ David said to Saul, Why do you listen when men say 'David is trying to harm you?'. ¹⁰ Look, today your eyes have seen how Yahweh had delivered you into my hand in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, I will not lift up my hand against my lord, for he is Yahweh's anointed. ¹¹ Moreover, my father, look, here is a piece of your robe in my hand;

by the fact that I cut it off and didn't kill you, you can know and see that I have no desire to hurt you and have not sinned against you, though you hunt me to take my life. ¹² May Yahweh judge between me and you, and may Yahweh avenge the wrong you have done me; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³ As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness, but my hand shall not be against you'. ¹⁴ Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? ¹⁵ May Yahweh therefore be the judge and give sentence between me and you; may He plead my cause and deliver me out of your hand. ¹⁶ When David had finished saying this to Saul, Saul said, Is this your voice, my son David? Saul wept aloud. ¹⁷ He said

is shown in the fact that Yahweh had explicitly told him that he would deliver Saul into David's hand, and David was free to do as he wished to him; but because of his genuine respect for Saul, David didn't take the liberty of killing him; he chose a higher level on which to relate to Saul. Indeed, he even felt guilty at cutting off the blue ribbon from Saul's coat, such was David's *respect* for Saul. All those baptized into Christ have been "anointed" in that we are "in Christ", 'the anointed one' (2 Cor. 1:21). We must truly respect others on account of their being in the body of Christ / God's people, as Saul was. Paul deeply loved Corinth and respected them for their status as men and women in Christ, in receipt of the Father's love and grace, even though they abused him. Therefore he like David could love his enemies within the ecclesia; for Saul was in the ecclesia of Israel as much as David was.

24:15 *Yahweh therefore be the judge and give sentence between me and you; may He plead my cause* – It's not as if God isn't watching what's going on now, and will only open the books and judge human behaviour when Christ returns. His judgment is in a sense ongoing; we live out our lives before His judgment presence, and the final day of judgment will be a public declaration of the verdicts which have already been announced; it will largely be for our benefit rather than God's. David mixes metaphors here – God is for him both the ultimate judge, and also his counsel for the defence. Paul does the same in Romans 8, concluding in awe that if God in Christ is both our judge and our personal advocate, the one on our side in the case, then nobody and nothing can be against us; our salvation is assured.

to David, You are more righteous than I, for you have been good to me, whereas I have done evil to you. ¹⁸ You have declared this day how you have been good to me, because when Yahweh had delivered me into your hand, you didn't kill me. ¹⁹ For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away unharmed? Therefore may Yahweh reward you with good for what you have done to me today. ²⁰ Now I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. ²¹ Swear now therefore to me by Yahweh, that you will not cut off my seed after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house. ²² David gave his oath to Saul. Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

CHAPTER 25 Jul. 12

Nabal Refuses to Help David

Samuel died, and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and they buried him at his home in Ramah. David went down to the wilderness of Paran. ² There was a man in Maon who had property in Carmel, and the man was very wealthy. He had three thousand

sheep and a thousand goats, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. ³ His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but the man was harsh and mean; he belonged to the family of Caleb. ⁴ David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. ⁵ David sent ten young men and said to them, Go up to Carmel and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. ⁶ Say to him, 'Long life to you! Peace to you and to your house and to all that you have. ⁷ I have heard that you are shearing your sheep. Your shepherds have been with us, and we didn't hurt them, nothing of theirs was missing all the while they were in Carmel. ⁸ Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find grace in your eyes, for we come at a good time. Please give whatever you can to your servants and to your son David'. ⁹ When David's young men came they said this to Nabal in the name of David, and waited. ¹⁰ Nabal answered David's servants, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants who break away from their masters these days. ¹¹ Shall I then take my bread, my water and my meat that I have

24:18 It seems God later gave Saul into David's hand when "a deep sleep from the Lord" fell upon Saul at the very time David intended to kill him (26:12). Saul himself realized that the Lord had delivered him into David's hand to kill him. God thus gave David the possibility to get revenge and freedom from persecution – and yet at the last minute, it seems, David chose an even higher level; of love and deep respect for this spiritually sick man.

25:3 *He belonged to the family of Caleb* – A reminder that a faithful believer doesn't always have faithful descendants. We each stand independently before God, and yet nurture can play a significant part in the final algorithm determining why some end up faithful and some don't.

killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I don't know where?

David Prepares to Punish Nabal

¹² So David's young men turned and went back and told him all this.

¹³ David said to his men, Every man put on his sword! Every man put on his sword and David also put on his. About four hundred men followed David and two hundred stayed by the baggage. ¹⁴ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife,

Look, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. ¹⁵ But the men were very good to us and we were not hurt, nothing was missing as long as we were with them in the fields.

¹⁶ They were a wall to us night and day all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. ¹⁷ Now therefore consider what you should do, for evil is determined against our master and against all his household; he is such a worthless fellow that one can't even speak to him. ¹⁸ Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread, two bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.

¹⁹ She said to her young men, Go on before me; I am following you. But she didn't tell her husband, Nabal.

²⁰ As she rode on her donkey and came down in a valley, and there were David and his men coming down towards her, and she met them.

²¹ Now David had said, Surely for nothing I have kept all this fellow's possessions in the wilderness, so that nothing was missing. He has returned me evil for good. ²² God deal with David severely, if I leave alive one man of his by the morning.

Abigail Intervenes

²³ When Abigail saw David she hurried and alighted from her donkey; she bowed down before David with her face to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said, On me, my lord, on me be the blame, and please let your handmaid speak in your ears. Hear the words of your handmaid.

²⁵ Please pay no attention, my lord, to this worthless fellow Nabal. As his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is his nature; but I, your handmaid, didn't see your young men whom you sent. ²⁶ Now therefore my lord, as Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, since Yahweh has withheld you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your

25:19 *Go on before me; I am following you* – Abigail was learning from Biblical precedent, just as we should; in this case, the example of Jacob trying to appease the approaching Esau and his men (cp. :20) by sending extravagant presents and then following behind them (Gen. 32:13-22). The similarity presents David as unspiritual Esau, and indeed this was a low point in David's spiritual life; see on :33. Her bowing with her face to the earth was exactly what Jacob did to Esau (:23 = Gen. 33:3). Her mind was clearly in that record, and she succeeded as we should in translating Biblical history into a practical template for our daily crises.

own hand, now therefore let your enemies and those who seek evil to my lord be like Nabal. ²⁷ Let this gift which your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸ Please forgive the sin of your handmaid, for Yahweh will certainly make for my lord a sure house, because my lord fights the battles of Yahweh. Let evil not be found in you all your days. ²⁹ Though men may rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, yet the life of my lord will be bound in the bundle of life with Yahweh your God. He will hurl out the lives of your enemies as though from the pocket of a sling. ³⁰ When Yahweh has done to my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you prince over

Israel, ³¹ then this will not be on your conscience, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. When Yahweh has dealt well with my lord, then remember your handmaid. ³² David said to Abigail, Blessed is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed is your discretion, and blessed are you for keeping me this day from the guilt of bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. ³⁴ For indeed, as Yahweh the God of Israel lives who has withheld me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely there wouldn't have been left to Nabal by the morning light so much as a single male. ³⁵ So David accepted from her what she had brought him and he said to

25:33 David thanks Abigail for persuading him not to 'shed blood' and "avenging myself with my own hand" – the very things he elsewhere condemns in his Psalms (e.g. Ps. 44:3). Often in the Psalms, David uses that Hebrew word translated "avenging myself" about how God and not man will revenge / save him against his enemies, for God saves / avenges the humble in spirit not by their strength and troops but by His. But in the anger of hot blood, David let go of all those fine ideas. In the heat of the moment we too can let go of all the far higher principles we know and love, and do the very things we detest when we see in others.

25:34 David sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him but they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail's grace and wisdom saved him from. And yet the same situation repeated in its essence when David sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed (2 Sam. 10:3). Again, David got angry – but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he did get into an impossible fight... from which by grace God delivered him. David failed to learn from his previous experience. David had just been tested by God in the matter of sparing the life of his enemy Saul – and he came through the test with flying colours (1 Sam. 24). But now, soon afterwards, he was tested again in the same area in the matter of Nabal – and he initially failed, intent as he was on taking the life of his enemy Nabal. Thus a circumstance can repeat over a matter in which we were previously successful – and we can still fail that test. God is ever seeking to teach us by repeating circumstances in our lives.

25:35 It seems that the thief on the cross had a deep Bible knowledge. It could be that when he asks to be remembered for good when the Lord Jesus returned in His

her, Go up in peace to your house. I have listened to your words and have granted your request. ³⁶ Abigail came to Nabal while he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. Nabal's heart was merry, for he was very drunk. Therefore she told him nothing until the morning. ³⁷ In the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him what had happened; and his heart failed and he became like a stone. ³⁸ About ten days after that, Yahweh struck Nabal so that he died.

Abigail Becomes David's Wife

³⁹ When David heard that Nabal was dead he said, Blessed is Yahweh, who has upheld my cause against Nabal, and has kept back His servant from doing wrong. Yahweh has returned the wrongdoing of Nabal on his own head. David sent and asked Abigail to become his wife. ⁴⁰ When his servants had come to Abigail to Carmel they said, David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife. ⁴¹ She arose, bowed herself with her face to the earth and said, Your handmaid is ready to be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of

my lord. ⁴² Abigail hurried and got onto a donkey, with five of her maids who followed her, and she went with the messengers of David and became his wife. ⁴³ David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they both became his wives. ⁴⁴ Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

CHAPTER 26 Jul. 13

David Spares Saul's Life Again

The Ziphites came to Saul to Gibeah saying, Isn't David hiding in the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert? ² Then Saul went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. ³ Saul encamped by the road on the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had come after him into the wilderness, ⁴ David sent out spies and found that Saul had certainly come to that place. ⁵ David set out and came to the place where Saul had encamped. He saw the place where Saul and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his army were ly-

Kingdom, he had in mind Abigail's words: that when David returned in glory in his Kingdom, "my Lord, then remember your handmaid" (:31). This was prefaced by her asking: "Forgive the sin of your handmaid" (:28). David's response was very similar to that of Jesus to the thief: "Go up in peace to your house. I have listened to your words and have granted your request". It would seem that the thief saw in David a type of Christ, and saw in Abigail's words exactly the attitude he had. And Christ accepted this. The faithful didn't just read the Bible as history but proactively saw the similarities with their situations and spoke and acted accordingly.

25:39 *Has kept back His servant from doing wrong* – God is able to work in our lives to stop us sinning over and above our own will; and we should ask Him to do so. We should also seek to be like Abigail, using wisdom and humility to stop others falling into sin.

ing; Saul lay among the wagons and the people were encamped around him. ⁶ Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? Abishai said, I will go down with you. ⁷ So David and Abishai came to the army by night and Saul lay sleeping among the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the soldiers lay around him. ⁸ Then Abishai said to David, God has delivered your enemy into your hand today. Now therefore please let me strike him to the ground with one stroke of my spear; I will not strike him a second time. ⁹ David said to Abishai, Don't destroy him, for who can put forth his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be guiltless? ¹⁰ David said, As Yahweh lives, Yahweh will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go into battle and perish. ¹¹ Yahweh forbid that I should put forth my hand against Yahweh's anointed; but now please get the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go. ¹² So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head

and they went away; and no-one saw it or knew about it, neither did anyone awake, for they were all asleep because a deep sleep from Yahweh had fallen on them. ¹³ Then David went over to the other side and stood on the top of the hill far off, a great space being between them, ¹⁴ and David called to the army and to Abner the son of Ner, Don't you answer, Abner? Then Abner answered, Who are you who calls to the king? ¹⁵ David said to Abner, Aren't you a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord, the king? Someone came to destroy the king your lord. ¹⁶ What you have done is not good. As Yahweh lives, you are worthy to die because you have not kept watch over your lord, Yahweh's anointed. Where are the king's spear and the jar of water that was at his head? ¹⁷ Saul knew David's voice and said, Is that your voice, my son David? David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. ¹⁸ Why does my lord pursue his servant? What have I done? What evil am I guilty of? ¹⁹ Now therefore, please let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If Yah-

26:12 See on 24:4,5,18.

26:19 So many of the Psalms contain references to the smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 all seem to have reference to this verse). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

They have said 'Go and serve other gods!' – Whether or not they said these very words, to exclude someone from the worshipping community [which can be done by anything from being too lazy to give them a ride to a meeting to formal excommunication] effectively invites people to go to "other gods". Many fail this test; others like David learn that in fact God is far wider than what they had previously thought (see on :20).

weh has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is men who have done it, may they be cursed by Yahweh, for they have driven me out so that I can't have a part in Yahweh's inheritance; they have said 'Go and serve other gods!'.²⁰ Now therefore, don't let my blood fall to the earth far from the presence of Yahweh, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains.

Saul's Repentance

²¹ Then Saul said, I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes today. I have played the fool, and have erred very seriously. ²² David answered, Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and get it. ²³ Yahweh will reward every man

for his righteousness and his faithfulness, because Yahweh delivered you into my hand today and I wouldn't put forth my hand against Yahweh's anointed. ²⁴ As your life was respected this day in my eyes, so let my life be respected in the eyes of Yahweh and let Him deliver me out of all oppression. ²⁵ Then Saul said to David, May you be blessed, my son David. You will do great things and will surely triumph. So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

CHAPTER 27 Jul. 13

David Goes to the Philistines

David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines, then Saul will give up looking for me any more in Israel and I will escape from him.

26:20 *Far from the presence of Yahweh* – David still held the wrong idea that a national god, in this case Yahweh of Israel, could only be served on his own territory and not outside of it. This explains why David so bitterly regretted that Saul had made it practically impossible for him to remain within the territory of Israel (:19). Yet David's later Psalms reflect his realization that Yahweh is the one and only God of all the planet, His presence is everywhere and He can therefore be worshipped anywhere on earth. Although David had a wrong understanding of God on this point, this didn't mean that he couldn't have faith in God nor please Him; and through reflection on the circumstances God sent him, David came to the truth about this matter.

26:21 *I have sinned* – The very words of Judas (Mt.27:4), again confirming David as a type of Christ and Saul as representative of the opposition to Christ.

26:24 Here we see established the principle that the grace we show others is related to the grace God will show us. David could have killed Saul, indeed God gave him the legitimate opportunity to do so, but he chose the higher level – of grace and forgiveness, despite Saul's lack of repentance at the time. Someone doesn't have to be groveling in repentance before we show grace to them.

27:1 *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul* is surely a collapse of faith, given that God had anointed him as king. And it led to the way in which David deceived Achish by pretending he was attacking Israelite towns, when in fact he was going out and attacking the Amalekite settlements, killing all men, women and children in them so that nobody was left alive to tell that it was David who had attacked them (:8-10).

² David and the six hundred men who were with him left and went to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. ³ David lived with Achish at Gath with his men, each one with his household, and David had with him his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife. ⁴ When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath he stopped searching for him. ⁵ David said to Achish, If I have found favour in your eyes, let me be given a place in one of the cities in the country to live in. Why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you? ⁶ Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day, therefore Ziklag belongs to the kings

of Judah to this day. ⁷ David lived in the country of the Philistines for a full year and four months. ⁸ David and his men went and made a raid on the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites; those were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times as far as Shur and Egypt. ⁹ David attacked the land and saved neither man nor woman alive; he took away the sheep, cattle, donkeys and camels and the clothing, then he returned to Achish. ¹⁰ When Achish said, Against whom have you made a raid today? David would say, Against the South of Judah, or against the South of the Jerahmeelites, or against the South of the Kenites. ¹¹ David saved

Innocent people were slain by David's sword for the 'political' reason that he had to keep Achish 'in the dark' about what he was really up to. And so in case a five year old say something incriminating later, David simply killed the little boy. Indeed, when Achish later says that David would be best not to go with him to fight Saul, David hypocritically insists that he has been a loyal and upright servant of Achish (29:8). This was hardly an example of the "integrity" and "uprightness" which David glorifies in his Psalms, and which he insisted he was full of (Ps. 25:21). Indeed he claims that his integrity is the basis of his acceptance by God (Ps. 26:1). It's recorded that in this ethnic cleansing which David performed, he took the spoil of those settlements for himself (:9). Indeed when he destroyed Ziklag, he took away their herds "and said, This is David's spoil" (30:20). The pressure of circumstance can so easily lead us to slip into periods of life where we betray the principles we enthusiastically proclaim in worship, as David at this time lived quite contrary to the spirit of his own Psalms.

27:4 Searching – It's emphasized that Saul "sought" David in order to kill Him (19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8), and likewise the Gospels stress that the Jews "sought" to kill Christ (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8).

27:8 From ancient times – The Hebrew word *olahm*, often translated 'for ever', clearly doesn't always mean literal future infinity – although in *some* places it can have that sense. It's actually used in places to describe *the past*; events of a long time ago, but not events that happened an 'infinitely long time' ago. It describes up to the time of the Exodus (also in Is. 51:9; 63:9); and elsewhere the time of a previous generation (Dt. 32:7; Job 22:15); to the time just before the exile of Judah (Is. 58:12; 61:4; Mic. 7:14; Mal. 3:4); to the time just before the flood (Gen. 6:4). Descriptions of the Law of Moses and other things as being *olahm*, eternal, must be understood in this more limited sense of a long time, an age, but not necessarily literal eternity.

neither man nor woman alive to bring them to Gath, thinking, They might inform about us, saying, ‘David has done this. This was what he did all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines’. ¹² Achish believed David, saying, He has made his people Israel abhor him so much that he will be my servant forever.

CHAPTER 28 Jul. 14

The Philistines Fight against Israel

In those days the Philistines gathered their armies together to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, You must certainly go out with me in the army, you and your men. ² David said to Achish, Then you will know what your servant can do. Achish said to David, Therefore I will make you my bodyguard for life. ³ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. Saul had put away out of the land those who had familiar spirits and the wizards. ⁴ The Philistines gathered together and encamped in Shunem, and Saul gathered all Israel and they encamped in Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the army of

the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ When Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh didn’t answer him, neither by dreams nor by Urim nor by prophets.

The Witch of Endor

⁷ Then Saul said to his servants, Find me a woman who has a familiar spirit so that I can go to inquire of her. His servants said to him, There is a woman who has a familiar spirit at Endor. ⁸ Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothing, and went with two men to the woman by night. He said, Please consult a familiar spirit for me and bring me up the one I name. ⁹ The woman said to him, Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who have familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land. Why then have you set a trap for me, to cause me to die? ¹⁰ Saul swore to her by Yahweh, As Yahweh lives, you will not be punished for this. ¹¹ Then the woman said, Whom shall I bring up to you? He said, Bring Samuel up for me. ¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice, and said to

28:6 *When Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh didn’t answer him* – But in God’s final analysis of Saul, He says that He killed Saul because Saul sinned against God’s word by *not* enquiring of God, but of a witch (1 Chron. 10:13,14). But Saul *did* enquire of God (see too the same Hebrew word in 14:27), but God didn’t answer him. Although Saul prayed to God and enquired of His word on the surface, in his heart, he did nothing of the sort; and therefore his prayer and enquiry was reckoned never to have happened. And we must ask how much of our prayer and Bible study is seen by God as being only spoken and read on a surface level. This was exactly the problem of natural Israel (Hos. 7:14; 11:7).

28:11, 12 Death is total unconsciousness (Job 3:17; Ecc. 9:5,10). Notice that Samuel came “up” out of the earth as in a resurrection, not down from heaven, where we would expect him to be if common ideas are correct (:14,15). Samuel appeared as an old man, not a “soul” (:14). The woman surely guessed she was talking to Saul – he

Saul, Why have you deceived me? You are Saul! ¹³ The king said to her, Don't be afraid. What do you see? The woman said to Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth. ¹⁴ He said to her, What does he look like? She said, An old man is coming up. He is wearing a mantle. Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and showed respect. ¹⁵ Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up? Saul answered, I am very distressed, for the Philistines make war against me and God has departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you so that you can tell me what I should do. ¹⁶ Samuel said, Why do you ask me, since Yahweh has departed from you and has become your adversary? ¹⁷ Yahweh has done to you as He spoke by me. Yahweh has torn the

kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbour, to David. ¹⁸ Because you didn't obey Yahweh and didn't execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, therefore Yahweh has done this to you today. ¹⁹ Yahweh will deliver Israel and you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Yahweh will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. ²⁰ Then Saul fell immediately his full length on the earth and was terrified because of the words of Samuel. There was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all that day and all that night. ²¹ The woman came to Saul, and seeing that he was very troubled she said to him, Look, your handmaid has obeyed you and I have put my life in my hands and have done what you told me. ²² Now please listen to your handmaid and let me give you some food so that

was the tallest of the Israelites (10:23), and was well known to everyone as the king; hence she could accept his assurance of immunity from prosecution (:10). She was used to running fake séances (because nobody truly communicates with the dead), and so she pretends she has some insight to know she's talking to Saul even though it was obvious (:12), and then describes Samuel in the kind of terms Saul would've expected – an old man wearing a prophets' mantle (:14), just as Saul would've last remembered Samuel. However, Samuel then appears for real, temporarily resurrected by God according to the principle of Prov. 26:5, that God answers fools according to their foolish requests. Perhaps her scream of :12 was in genuine shock at seeing Samuel appear for real. This would explain why the woman stops speaking to Saul and Samuel talks directly to Saul – not through the woman as a medium between them, as was usual for such a séance.

28:19 Saul, Jonathan and Samuel all went to the same place at death. Righteous Abraham was “gathered to his people” (or ancestors), on death; they were idolaters (Gen. 25:8; Josh. 24:2). The division between sheep and goats will be when Christ returns, at the resurrection and judgment seat (Mt. 13:48; 25:33) – not at the moment of death. At death we return to dust like the animals, good and bad all go to the same place – but the difference is that those responsible to God will be resurrected and judged, and the faithful will then live eternally in God's Kingdom on earth.

you may eat and have the strength to go on your way. ²³ But he refused and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, urged him, so he listened to them. He got up from the earth and sat on the bed. ²⁴ The woman had a fattened calf in the house. She hurried and killed it, and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread with it. ²⁵ She brought it before Saul and his servants and they ate. Then they got up, and went away that night.

CHAPTER 29 Jul. 15

David Sent Back to Ziklag by Achish

The Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek, and the Israelites encamped by the spring in Jezreel. ² The lords of the Philistines marched on in units of hundreds and thousands, and David and his men marched in the rear with Achish. ³ Then the lords of the Philistines said, What about these Hebrews? Achish said, Isn't this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or rather these years, and I have so far found no fault in him? ⁴ But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him and said to him, Send the man back to the place you have

appointed for him. He must not go down with us to battle, in case he turns against us during the fighting. How better could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord than with the heads of these men? ⁵ Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?' ⁶ So Achish called David and said to him, As Yahweh lives, you have been upright and your conduct with me in the army has been good in my sight; I have not found evil in you since the day you came to me till this day. But the lords don't approve of you. ⁷ Therefore now return and go in peace; do not displease the lords of the Philistines. ⁸ David said to Achish, But what have I done? What have you found against your servant all the time I have been with you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king? ⁹ Achish answered David, I know that you have been pleasing to me, as an angel of God, nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He must not go up with us to the battle'. ¹⁰ Now get up early in the morning with the servants of your lord who have come with you, and depart as soon as it is light. ¹¹ So David got up early, he and his men,

29:4 David was in an impossible situation; he had not been attacking Israelites as he had previously claimed to the Philistines; he had a strong conscience against killing Saul; yet he had given the impression he was willing to zealously fight against and kill his own Israelite people; it seemed there was no way out. And then, God's gracious hand acted. Some of the Philistine army leaders objected to David's presence on the battlefield – at the very last minute! God leads us into apparently dead end, no way out situations – and then delivers us out of them by His grace, in ways we had never considered. See on 23:26.

to depart in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

CHAPTER 30 Jul. 15

The Amalekites Destroyed by David

When David and his men had come to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid on the South and on Ziklag, and had attacked Ziklag and burned it, ² and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They didn't kill any, but carried them off and went their way. ³ When David and his men came to the city they found it had been burned, and their wives, their sons and their daughters taken captive. ⁴ Then David and his men wept aloud until they had no more power to weep. ⁵ David's two wives were taken captive: Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail who had been the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. ⁶ David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because they were grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But

David strengthened himself in Yahweh his God. ⁷ David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, Please bring me here the ephod. Abiathar brought the ephod to David ⁸ and David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them? He answered, Pursue, for you will certainly overtake them and recover all. ⁹ So David and the six hundred men who were with him went to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind had stayed. ¹⁰ But David pursued the Amalekites with four hundred men; two hundred had stayed behind because they were so exhausted that they couldn't go over the brook Besor. ¹¹ They found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him food and he ate, and they gave him water to drink. ¹² They gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, he revived, for he had eaten no food nor drunk any water for three days and three nights. ¹³ David asked him, To whom do you belong?

30:6 Yet David was innocent. Grief leads to a strong desire to blame someone for the loss, and that desire can lead to friends and brethren turning upon each other. Indeed, much harmful behaviour arises from the basic human need to find a scapegoat, someone or something upon which to place guilt. One implication of our seriously accepting that Christ on the cross was a guilt offering, the fulfilment of the Mosaic scapegoat ritual, is that we will no longer experience such a need to scapegoat and lay guilt. For all guilt, however perceived and from whatever cause, has finally been carried away into the wilderness by His unique and far reaching sacrifice there.

30:7 There are several references to the ephod and to "Urim" and "Thummim" in the historical records. The ephod was the priest's waistcoat upon which the breastplate was hung. It seems that Urim and Thummim were the names of two stones kept within the ephod. From the questions answered by them, it would seem they were capable of giving binary answers to questions, presumably through flashing in a certain sequence – if God chose to work through them in response to prayers for answers about yes / no choices.

Where are you from? He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me because three days ago I fell sick.¹⁴ We made a raid on the South of the Cherethites and on the territory which belongs to Judah and on the South of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire.¹⁵ David said to him, Will you lead me down to this raiding party? He said, Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me up into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to them.¹⁶ When he had led him down, there they were, spread around over all the ground, eating, drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and out of the land of Judah.¹⁷ David fought them from twilight to the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled.¹⁸ David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives.¹⁹ There was nothing missing, small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken. David brought back every-

thing.²⁰ He took all the flocks and herds, which they drove before the other livestock, and he said, This is David's spoil.²¹ David came to the two hundred men who had been so exhausted that they could not follow David, who had been left behind at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and the people who were with him. When David came near them he greeted them.²² But all the wicked men and troublemakers among David's followers said, Because they didn't go with us we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, just each man's wife and children; then he can take them away and depart.²³ David said, You must not do that, my brothers, with what Yahweh has given us. He has preserved us and delivered the forces that came against us into our hand.²⁴ Who will listen to what you say? The share of the one who goes down to the battle shall be the same as the share of the one who stays with the baggage; they shall share alike.²⁵ From that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.²⁶ When David came to Ziklag he sent some of

30:22 Paul considered that Mark *had not gone with them* to the work (Acts 15:38). This is quoting the Septuagint of 1 Sam. 30:22, where "all the wicked men and troublemakers among David's followers said, Because they *didn't go with us* we will not give them any of the spoil". *Why* does the Spirit make this connection? Is it not suggesting that Paul, zealous soldier of David / Jesus as he was, was in those early days in some sense a sinful man, bent on achieving his own glory in preaching, and unwilling to share it with anyone who wasn't spiritually or physically strong enough to do it as he was (cp. the weaker followers of David)? If this is the case, then this is a far, far cry from the Paul who wrote his letters some years later, begging Timothy to come to encourage him. Paul like David developed spiritually over the course of his spiritual journey.

the spoil to the elders of Judah, his friends, saying, Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of Yahweh. ²⁷ He sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth of the South, Jattir, ²⁸ Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, ²⁹ Racal, the cities of the Jerahmeelites, the cities of the Kenites, ³⁰ Hormah, Borashan, Athach, ³¹ Hebron and to those in all the places where David himself and his men used to stay.

CHAPTER 31 Jul. 16

Saul's Suicide

Now the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. ³ The battle went badly against Saul, the archers overtook him and wounded him badly. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armour bearer, Draw

your sword and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through and abuse me! But his armour bearer would not, for he was respectful. Therefore Saul took his sword and fell on it. ⁵ When his armour bearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell on his sword and died with him. ⁶ So Saul died, and his three sons and his armour bearer and all his men, that same day together. ⁷ When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled, and the Philistines came and lived in them. ⁸ The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ They cut off his head, stripped off his armour and sent into the land of the Philistines all around to carry the news to the house of their idols

30:31 We wonder why God arranged for David to have the experiences of this chapter just before the death of Saul. The moment of Saul's death was of huge significance to David psychologically – it was the end of an era of persecution, the end of a love-hate relationship which must have emotionally and spiritually drained him, and the beginning of his own kingship. God is very sensitive to us, and He obviously knew that David needed these humbling experiences in order to prepare him for the news of Saul's death – e.g. he had to go through the experience of having his supporters turn against him to the point of almost literally killing him, falsely blaming him for a disaster (:6), in order to prepare him for widespread acclaim and desire to crown him king just days later.

31:4 *His armour bearer would not, for he was respectful* – David had been known throughout Israel for teaching by example that he would not harm the Lord's anointed, and that anybody who did so would have to give account (24:6; 26:9-11). Although Saul's armour bearer was likely one of his most loyal supporters in the campaign against David, David's spiritual reasoning and example had influenced him, so that in the heat of battle he acted accordingly. We learn from this that our examples are far more powerful than we may realize.

and to the people. ¹⁰ They put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. ¹¹ When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant men arose and travelled all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan, and they went to Jabesh and burnt them there. ¹³ They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

CHAPTER 1 Jul. 17

David Told about Saul's Death

It happened after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag; ² it happened on the third day, that behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes torn and dust upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and showed respect.

³ David said to him, Where do you come from? He said to him, I have escaped out of the camp of Israel.

⁴ David said to him, How did it go? Please tell me. He answered, The people have fled from the battle, and many of the people also have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. ⁵ David said to the young man who told him, How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead? ⁶ The young man who told him said, As I happened by chance on Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul was leaning on his spear; and behold, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him. ⁷ When he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Here I am'. ⁸ He said to me, 'Who are you?'. I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite'.

⁹ He said to me, 'Please stand beside

me, and kill me; for anguish has taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me'. ¹⁰ So I stood beside him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he had fallen. I took the crown that was on his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord.

David Mourns the Death of Saul and Jonathan

¹¹ Then David took hold on his clothes, and tore them; and likewise all the men who were with him. ¹² They mourned, wept and fasted until evening, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of Yahweh, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. ¹³ David said to the young man who told him, Where are you from? He answered, I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite. ¹⁴ David said to him, How were you not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy Yahweh's anointed? ¹⁵ David called one of the young men and said, Go near, and fall on him. He struck him, so that he died. ¹⁶ David said to him, Your blood be on your head; for your mouth has testified against you saying, 'I have slain Yahweh's anointed'.

1:16 *Your mouth has testified against you* – From their own mouth and words men will be judged (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 19:22). And yet perhaps even now, men are justified by their words before the court of Heaven – for 'justify' means to pronounce righteous, and this pronouncement / justification is therefore given even now. As the judgment seat of God is in a sense ongoing, our words are as it were our testimony at our own court case before God. At the last day, it could even be that the Lord cites the condem-

David's Lament

¹⁷ David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son ¹⁸ (and he commanded them to teach the children of Judah the song of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jashar): ¹⁹ Your glory, Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! ²⁰ Don't tell it in Gath. Don't publish it in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. ²¹ You

mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain on you, neither fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty was shamefully cast away, The shield of Saul was not anointed with oil. ²² From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, Jonathan's bow didn't turn back. Saul's sword didn't return empty. ²³ Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. In their death they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were

natory words of the rejected uttered during their lifetimes and leaves these as their condemnation (cp. 1 Kings 20:40).

1:17 We can all too easily pray for what we will later ask to be changed. David prayed for deliverance from "the evil man", Saul; he asked that Saul be slain and punished (Ps. 140:1,9,10). But when this prayer was answered, David wept with the amazing lamentation over Saul which we have here. It's a lesson to think carefully about what we're praying for, and imagine our response and situation if actually the prayer is answered. We need to pray as if every prayer *will* be answered, not just expressing our feelings and immediate desires, as it seems David did in his prayers against Saul.

1:18 David's lament over Saul was taught to the children of Judah; and the early chapters of 2 Samuel are full of examples of David's expression of love for Saul in every way he knew how. David's love for Saul was truly amazing. Saul was his enemy, he drove David to absolute despair, his senseless persecution of David was articulated in every way he could. In all this we see the prototype of the hatred of the Jews for Jesus. Yet when Saul was slain for his sins, David's love for him was overflowing, to the point that his people saw that this was no political theatricism (3:36,37). But it was not only at Saul's death that David had these feelings; after all, it's a lot easier to love someone when they're dead. Psalm 35 is David's commentary on his feelings for Saul: "They laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul (spiritually). But as for me, when they (Saul and his family, in the context) were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into my heart. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother (i.e. Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1:26): I bowed down heavily, as one that mourns for his mother" (Ps. 35:11-15). Bowing down heavily as a man weeps at his mother's graveside is a powerful image. A man's grief for his mother must surely be the finest picture David could have chosen. That sense of infinite regret that he didn't appreciate her more. David realized that he had reached the point where he knew that he really did truly love his enemies. He wept for Saul as a man weeps at his dear mother's graveside. And he did this for a man who was utterly worthless. And this is a poor, poor shadow of the Christ's love for Israel. And how much more does He love us, who at least try to make up for Israel's cruel indifference?

stronger than lions. ²⁴ You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet delicately, who put ornaments of gold on your clothing. ²⁵ How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places. ²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. ²⁷ How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

CHAPTER 2 Jul. 18

David Inquires of God

It happened after this, that David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? Yahweh said to him, Go up. David said, Where shall I go up? He said, To Hebron. ² So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. ³ David brought up his men who were with him, every man with his household. They lived in the cities of Hebron. ⁴ The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. They told David saying, The men of Jabesh Gilead were those who buried Saul. ⁵ David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead and said to them, Blessed are you by Yahweh, that you have shown this kindness to your lord, even to Saul, and have buried him. ⁶ Now may Yahweh show grace and

truth to you. I also will reward you for this kindness, because you have done this thing. ⁷ Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

Ishbosheth Made King of Israel

⁸ Now Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's army, had taken Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; ⁹ and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin and over all Israel. ¹⁰ Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. ¹¹ The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months. ¹² Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. ¹³ Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. ¹⁴ Abner said to Joab, Please let the young men arise and play before us! Joab said, Let them arise! ¹⁵ Then they arose and went over by number: twelve for Benjamin, and for Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. ¹⁶ They each caught his op-

2:5 The way of grace is sometimes counter instinctive and can be seen as political suicide.

2:16 This incident was surely to show the tragic wastage and pointless destruction

ponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: therefore that place was called Helkath Hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. ¹⁷ The battle was very severe that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Death of Asahel

¹⁸ The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai and Asahel: and Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. ¹⁹ Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he didn't turn to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. ²⁰ Then Abner looked behind him and said, Is it you, Asahel? He answered, It is I. ²¹ Abner said to him, Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and grab one of the young men, and take his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. ²² Abner said again to Asahel, Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab your brother? ²³ However he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner with the back end of the spear struck him in the body,

so that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place. It happened, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

²⁴ But Joab and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they had come to the hill of Ammah, that lies before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

²⁵ The children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner and became one band, and stood on the top of a hill. ²⁶ Then Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour forever? Don't you know that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, before you ask the people to return from following their brothers? ²⁷ Joab said, As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then in the morning the people would have gone away, rather than each following after his brother.

²⁸ So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. ²⁹ Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah; and they passed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and

caused by conflict between brethren. Perhaps both sides were being prompted by this incident to call off the entire armed conflict with each other, but they failed to respond to the providential hint.

2:19 *He didn't turn to the right hand nor to the left* – This phrase is typically used in the Bible to describe our faithful following of God in this way; he didn't turn aside to the right nor the left in following his brother (:21), another phrase usually used about faithful following after Yahweh. Asahel justified his persecution of his brother as a faithful following of God – and died because of it. The same mistake is often repeated in the church.

2:26, 27 Both sides in this conflict between brethren sensed it was wrong, and yet they still did it. Reconciliation between brethren should seek to appeal to this conscience which there often is – that conflict and division is wrong.

came to Mahanaim. ³⁰ Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel. ³¹ But the servants of David had struck of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty men died. ³² They took up Asahel, and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was in Bethlehem. Joab and his men went all night, and the day broke on them at Hebron.

CHAPTER 3 Jul. 19

The House of David Grows

Stronger

Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: and David grew stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. ² To David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; ³ his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; ⁴ the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; ⁵ the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

Abner Makes Peace with David

⁶ It happened that while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner made himself strong on behalf of the house of Saul. ⁷ Now Saul had a concu-

bine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Why have you gone in to my father's concubine? ⁸ Then was Abner very angry for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me this day with a fault concerning this woman! ⁹ God do so to Abner, and more also, if, as Yahweh has sworn to David, I don't do even so to him; ¹⁰ to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba. ¹¹ He could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him. ¹² Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf saying, Whose is the land? Make your alliance with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you, to bring all Israel around to you. ¹³ He said, Good; I will make a treaty with you; but one thing I require of you. That is, you shall not see my face, unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face. ¹⁴ David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, whom I pledged to be married to me for one hundred foreskins of the Philistines. ¹⁵ Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel the son of Laish. ¹⁶ Her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and

3:16 David's breaking up of this marriage for reasons of personal politics and pride seems totally wrong. This was not only a breach of Mosaic law, but displayed a sad

followed her to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, Go! Return! And he returned. ¹⁷ Abner had communication with the elders of Israel saying, In times past, you wished for David to be king over you. ¹⁸ Now then do it; for Yahweh has spoken of David saying, ‘By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies’. ¹⁹ Abner also spoke in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and to the whole house of Benjamin. ²⁰ So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. David made Abner and the men who were with him a feast. ²¹ Abner said to David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your soul desires. David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Joab Kills Abner

²² Behold, the servants of David and Joab came from an engagement, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace. ²³ When Joab and all the army who was with him had come, they told Joab saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he is gone in peace. ²⁴ Then Joab came to the king and said, What have

you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, and he is quite gone? ²⁵ You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you, and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you do. ²⁶ When Joab had come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David didn’t know it. ²⁷ When Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him quietly, and struck him there in the body, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. ²⁸ Afterwards, when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before Yahweh forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. ²⁹ Let it fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father’s house. Let there not fail from the house of Joab one who has an issue, or who is a leper, or who leans on a staff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread. ³⁰ So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. ³¹ David said to Joab, and to all the people who were with him, Tear your clothes, and clothe yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. King David followed the bier. ³² They buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. ³³ The king lamented for Abner and said, Should Abner

elevation of politics above others’ relationships and marriages. It may be significant that her renewed marriage with David wasn’t blessed with any children (6:23).

have died as a fool dies? ³⁴ Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put into fetters. As a man falls before the children of iniquity, so you fell. All the people wept again over him. ³⁵ All the people came to cause David to eat bread while it was yet day. David swore saying, God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or anything else, until the sun goes down. ³⁶ All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; as whatever the king did pleased all the people. ³⁷ So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to kill Abner the son of Ner. ³⁸ The king said to his servants, Don't you know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? ³⁹ I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me.

May Yahweh reward the evildoer according to his wickedness.

CHAPTER 4 Jul. 20

Ishbosheth Killed

When Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands became feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled. ² Saul's son had two men who were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin (for Beeroth also is reckoned to Benjamin: ³ and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and have lived as foreigners there until this day). ⁴ Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the news came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel; and

3:35 David is at great pains to demonstrate that he is against the pointless shedding of blood. But his earlier life had featured much pointless shedding of blood – e.g. he killed 200 Philistines when only 100 were required (1 Sam. 18:25,27), and thought nothing of killing the man who informed him of Saul's death (1:15; see too 4:12). He said that he was disallowed from building the temple because of how much blood he had shed (1 Chron. 22:8). His Psalms often call for the death of his enemies. We are left to reflect that perhaps now he was maturing, as we should over the course of our lives, to perceive the value and meaning of the human person. Or it could be that he was simply emphasizing that he really didn't seek the blood of Saul's family because he had truly forgiven him; or perhaps as a highly emotional person, he demonstrated both great sensitivity to the death of people and also great insensitivity; a very soft side and a very hard one, all within the same personality. Human nature is capable of very contradictory behaviour.

3:36,37 See on 1:18.

4:4 *His nurse took him up, and fled* – She failed to believe in David's grace; she assumed that he and his men would come and kill Jonathan's son, despite David's grace to Saul and demonstration of his loyalty to Jonathan. We too find it so hard to believe in grace, even when it is demonstrated by the cross. Grace is the hardest thing to believe in because it is so contrary to all we have experienced at the hands of people and all we see around us; it is Divine in origin and doesn't come naturally, so we so struggle to believe it – and, as in this case, catastrophes happen because of refusing to believe it which damage others permanently.

his nurse took him up, and fled: and it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth. ⁵ The sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, as he took his rest at noon. ⁶ They came there into the middle of the house, as if they would have fetched wheat; and they struck him in the body: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. ⁷ Now when they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him, and killed him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and went by the way of the Arabah all night. ⁸ They brought the head of Ishbosheth to David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold, the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life! Yahweh has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Rechab and Baanah Put to Death

⁹ David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of

Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, As Yahweh lives, who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity, ¹⁰ when someone told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead', thinking to have brought good news, I took hold of him, and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. ¹¹ How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? ¹² David commanded his young men, and they killed them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron.

CHAPTER 5 Jul. 20

David Anointed King of Israel

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David to Hebron, and spoke saying, Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. ² In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. Yahweh

4:8 *Yahweh has avenged* – This was true, but they were wrong to have taken the work of His vengeance and judgment into their own hands. Vengeance is God's, and by taking it for Him we are as it were playing God; we aren't to take vengeance exactly because vengeance is God's, not ours; and this is written in Scripture, Paul says (Rom. 12:19). Whilst Paul's allusion may be to Dt. 32:35, he may also be drawing his Old Testament teaching from this incident. If we would forbid ourselves to even think of taking vengeance, we and others would be saved so much hurt and trouble.

4:12 See on 3:35.

5:1 *We are your bone and your flesh* – This idiom is quoted in Eph. 5:30 about how we who are baptized into the body of Christ are as it were His bone and flesh. David again represents Christ, and his people represent we who are following Christ.

5:2 *You shall be shepherd of My people* – Yahweh was David's shepherd (Ps. 23:1), and David was to shepherd Israel. There is a wonderful mutuality in God's relationship with people.

said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of My people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel’.³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Yahweh; and they anointed David king over Israel.⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.⁵ In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.⁶ The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David saying, Unless you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in here; thinking, David can’t come in here.⁷ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David.⁸ David said on that day, Whoever strikes the Jebusites, let him get up to the watercourse, and strike the lame and the

blind, who are hated by David’s soul. Therefore they say, The blind and the lame can’t come into the house.⁹ David lived in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. David built around from Millo and inward.¹⁰ David grew greater and greater; for Yahweh, the God of Armies, was with him.

David Builds His House

¹¹ Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, carpenters and masons; and they built David a house.¹² David perceived that Yahweh had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel’s sake.¹³ David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron; and there were more sons and daughters born to David.¹⁴ These are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua,

5:6 *Unless you take away the blind and the lame* – The idea was that the blind and lame amongst the Jebusites would be enough to hold off David’s men.

5:8 *The blind and the lame can’t come into the house* – The lame and blind were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the temple. Christ purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God’s service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn’t work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can’t do the works, but depend upon grace. We are the lame and blind who have been invited to the Messianic banquet; and we are to reflect God’s calling of us, the desperate, in our calling of others – we too are to invite the lame and blind into our homes and thus into God’s Kingdom (Lk. 14:13,21). A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation and the sheer grace of our having been called into the Kingdom will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society.

Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ¹⁵ Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, ¹⁶ Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet. ¹⁷ When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the stronghold. ¹⁸ Now the Philistines had come and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁹ David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand? Yahweh said to David, Go up; for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into your hand.

Victory against the Philistines

²⁰ David came to Baal Perazim, and David struck them there; and he said, Yahweh has broken my enemies before me, like the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim. ²¹ They left their images there; and David and his men took them away. ²² The Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. ²³ When David inquired of Yahweh,

He said, You shall not go up. Circle around behind them, and attack them opposite the mulberry trees. ²⁴ It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall stir yourself up; for then Yahweh has gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines. ²⁵ David did so, as Yahweh commanded him, and struck the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gezer.

CHAPTER 6 Jul. 21

Uzzah and the Ark of God

David again gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ² David arose, and went with all the people who were with him, from Baale Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name, even the name of Yahweh of Armies who sits above the cherubim. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. ⁴ They brought it out of the house of

5:23, 24 David didn't get victory by the mulberry trees the same way each time. God changed the method; just as we too can't assume God will deliver us just because He has in the past.

5:24 *The sound of marching* – David was being taught that he on earth must follow the movement of the Angel cherubim marching above him; in Ezekiel's terms, we as the wheels of the cherubim on earth are to faithfully follow wherever they move above us.

6:2 The blood of atonement was always present on the top of the ark (the "mercy seat"), where the very presence of God was. This foretold the intense association of God Himself with the future sacrifice of His Son. In this sense, God was in Christ in His reconciliation of the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). As the Angel cherubim overshadowed the top of the ark, so the Angels were intensely aware of Christ's death; He could have called upon them to rescue Him out of it (Mt. 26:53), but He didn't – in order to achieve maximum identity with us for whom He died.

Abinadab which was in the hill, with the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. ⁵ David and all the house of Israel played before Yahweh with all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps, stringed instruments, tambourines, castanets and cymbals. ⁶ When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached for the ark of God and took hold of it; for the cattle stumbled. ⁷ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. ⁸ David was displeased, because Yahweh had broken forth on Uzzah; and he called that place Perez Uzzah, to this day. ⁹ David was afraid of Yahweh that

day; and he said, How can the ark of Yahweh come to me? ¹⁰ So David would not move the ark of Yahweh to be with him in the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of Yahweh remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months: and Yahweh blessed Obed-Edom, and all his house. ¹² It was told king David saying, Yahweh has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that pertains to him, because of the ark of God.

The Ark Brought to the City of David

David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom

6:5 The lesson is that all the fine worship in the world is meaningless unless it is underpinned by careful awareness of and obedience to God's word. The great worship procession ended very abruptly – to drive home this point. See commentary on 1 Chron. 13 for more about David's mistake and Uzzah's sin.

6:9 Elizabeth's words: "Who am I, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk. 1:43) are remarkably similar to the Septuagint of 2 Sam. 6:9, where David asks "How can the ark of Yahweh come to me?". As a result of this question of David's, the ark remained three months in the house of Obed-Edom (:11). And was this why Mary, seeing herself as the ark bearing the special Name and glory of Yahweh in Christ, remained for three months in the house of Elisabeth straight after hearing this same question asked (Lk. 1:56)? There are further links, between the gladness of Lk. 1:44 and the joy of :12; and the loud cry of Lk. 1:42 and that of :15. If one combines Lk. 1:31 and Jn. 1:14 we have the word of God becoming flesh and "tabernacling" among us in the womb and faith of Mary. The Angel's description of Holy Spirit 'overshadowing' Mary (Lk. 1:35) could have sent her mind back to how the Spirit-Cherubim and the cloud of Spirit glory overshadowed the ark (Ex. 25:20; 1 Chron. 28:18). The Septuagint uses the word for "overshadow" about the cloud of glory overshadowing the ark in the wilderness (Ex. 40:35; Num. 9:18,22). If these connections are valid, then Mary would have felt that within her, as the ark of God, was He who would be the covenant of the Lord, the stones of the word of God made flesh in a little boy. This was perception indeed, all achieved within the spiritual mind of an illiterate teenage country girl from a dumb village in Palestine. Depending how deeply we meditate upon God's word and perceive the relevance for us, such connections are easily possible in our minds too, and can guide us in our decisions and actions, just as they did in teaching Mary she should remain three months with Elisabeth.

into the city of David with joy. ¹³ It was so, that when those who bore the ark of Yahweh had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ David danced before Yahweh with all his might; and David was clothed in a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Yahweh with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. ¹⁶ It was so, as the ark of Yahweh came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window and saw king David leaping and dancing before Yahweh; and she despised him in her heart. ¹⁷ They brought in the ark of Yahweh, and set it in its place, in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh. ¹⁸ When David had made an end of offering the burnt offering and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of Armies. ¹⁹ He distributed

to all the people, even throughout the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to each one a portion of bread, dates and raisins. So all the people departed each one to his house. ²⁰ Then David returned to bless his household.

Michal Goes to Meet David

Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious the king of Israel was today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself! ²¹ David said to Michal, It was in the eyes of Yahweh, who chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me prince over the people of Yahweh, over Israel. Therefore will I celebrate in the eyes of Yahweh. ²² I will be yet more vile than this, and will be base in my own eyes. But of the handmaids of whom you have spoken, they shall honour me.

6:17-19 One of the most obvious similarities between the peace offering and the breaking of bread is that they both feature bread and wine, associated with a slain animal in the midst (see too Num. 15:9,10). Both require the eating of the sacrifice by the offerer. The peace offering and Passover (also typical of the memorial meeting) featured the offerer eating the sacrifice “before Yahweh”. This phrase “before Yahweh” is continually emphasized in the records of the peace offerings. At our memorial meetings we really are “before Yahweh” as we sit there. God came unto men when they offered acceptable peace offerings (Ex. 20:24), as Christ is made known to us through the breaking of bread (Lk. 24:35).

6:21 *Before your father* – This is a good example of “before” meaning ‘before’ in importance rather than time. God chose Saul well before He chose David. But God chose David before or *above* Saul in terms of importance and honour. This explains how in Jn. 8:58 Jesus was “before” Abraham in the sense that he was “before” him in terms of importance – but not in time, because He didn’t literally pre-exist.

6:20-22 *In the eyes of the handmaids... in the eyes of Yahweh... in my own eyes* – David is highly perceptive here. He’s saying that if this is how he feels in his *own* eyes, then this is how he is before the eyes of God, and therefore this is how he will

²³ Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

CHAPTER 7 Jul. 22

God's Promise to David

It happened, when the king lived in his house, and Yahweh had given him rest from all his enemies all around, ² that the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains. ³ Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for Yahweh is with you. ⁴ It happened the same night, that the word of Yahweh came to Nathan saying, ⁵ Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says Yahweh, Shall you build Me a house for Me to dwell in? ⁶ For I have not lived in a house since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have moved around in a tent and in a tabernacle. ⁷ In all places

in which I have walked with all the children of Israel, did I say a word to any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to be shepherd of My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'" ⁸ Now therefore you shall tell My servant David this, 'Thus says Yahweh of Armies, I took you from the sheep pen, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people, over Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you. I will make you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are in the earth. ¹⁰ I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as at the first, ¹¹ and as from the day that I commanded judges to be over

be before the eyes of Israel and the general public. David is saying: 'Who I am, my real self, is the one God sees, and I'm not going to hide it from the world; let them see me how I see myself and how God sees me'. In this incident, there was no gap between the 'real self' of David and the image he projected to the world. There was complete congruence between how he felt about himself, how God saw him, and how the watching world saw him. And this incident ought to be programmatic for our entire lives. This will ever keep us from worrying too much what others think of us, doing what is smart and acceptable and right in the eyes of men... rather we will think only of what is right in God's eyes.

7:3 *Do all that is in your heart* – As in 1 Kings 22:14-17, the prophet was tempted to assume that he knew God's word and therefore spoke too quickly, according to what they sensed a person wished to hear. We too should learn the lesson of needing to be sensitive to what is actually written in God's word.

7:5 It was God's clearly expressed wish that He should *not* live in a physical house (see too Acts 7:48; 17:24). Yet He accommodated Himself to human weakness in wanting a physical house in which to worship Him; He came and lived (in a sense) in just such a house. He makes concessions to human weakness because He so thirsts for relationship with us; but by making free use of those concessions we in fact make relationship with Him more difficult.

My people Israel. I will cause you to rest from all your enemies. Moreover Yahweh tells you that Yahweh will make you a house.¹² When your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who shall proceed out of your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.¹⁴ I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men;¹⁵ but My loving kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you.¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever'.¹⁷ According to all these

7:12 *I will set up your seed* – “Set up” in the Septuagint is the same word as “resurrect”, as if in some way the promise would be realized through Christ’s resurrection.

7:14 The “seed” or descendant is ultimately Jesus, the Son of God (Rev. 22:16; Rom. 1:3; Acts 13:23; Lk. 1:32,33). Jesus, the descendant, was to be a literal, bodily descendant of David, and yet have God as his Father. This could only be achieved by the virgin birth as described in the New Testament; Jesus’ mother was Mary, a descendant of David (Lk. 1:32), but he had no human father. God acted miraculously upon Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit in order to make her conceive Jesus (Lk. 1:35). The “virgin birth” was the only way in which this promise to David could be properly fulfilled. The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 frames Him as the product of 42 generations, divided into three groups of 14. The numerical value of ‘David’ is 14 [D = 4; w = 6; d = 4]. The emphasis is therefore on the fact that Jesus was so very intrinsically a descendant of David – and not, therefore, a pre-existent being. 2 Sam.7:14 and Ps. 89:27 predicted that a literal descendant of David would *become* God’s firstborn. He was clearly not in existence at the time those passages were written, and therefore not at the time of the Genesis creation either. Jesus became “the Son of God with power” by His resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). The “house” He would build is the spiritual dwelling of God in people (Is. 66:1,2). He is the foundation stone of God’s temple (1 Pet. 2:4-8), believers are like the temple stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

If he commits iniquity – This speaks of Christ’s possibility of sinning. This had to be true if His temptations were to be of any real meaning (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15,16); and clearly therefore Jesus is not God Himself (James 1:13-15). Punishment with rod and stripes was to be given if Messiah sinned; yet Christ was chastened with the rod of men “and with the stripes of the children of men”, i.e. Israel (Is. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24; Mic. 5:1), in His death on the cross. Although He didn’t sin, Christ received this punishment because of His deep and willing association with us there. We must confirm that connection He made between Him and us by confessing our sins and being baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3-5) so that He becomes our representative before God.

7:16 “I will establish the throne of his (Christ’s) kingdom forever... your (David’s) house and your kingdom... your throne shall be established forever” (:13,16 cf. Is. 9:6,7) shows that Christ’s kingdom will therefore be based on David’s kingdom of Israel; this means that the coming kingdom of God will be a re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:11). To fulfil this promise, Christ must reign on David’s “throne”, or place of rulership. This was literally in Jerusalem. Thus the

words, and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

David's Prayer to God

¹⁸ Then David the king went in and sat before Yahweh; and he said, Who am I, Lord Yahweh, and what is my house, that You have brought me thus far? ¹⁹ This was yet a small thing in Your eyes, Lord Yahweh; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come; this is not the way of men, Lord Yahweh! ²⁰ What more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, Lord Yahweh. ²¹ For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have worked all this greatness, to make Your servant know it. ²² Therefore You are great, Yahweh God. For there is none like You, neither is there any God besides

You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. ²³ What one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem to Himself for a people, and to make Himself a name, and to do great things for You, and awesome things for Your land, before Your people, whom You redeemed to yourself out of Egypt, from the nations and their gods? ²⁴ You established for Yourself Your people Israel to be a people to You for ever; and You, Yahweh, became their God. ²⁵ Now, Yahweh God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house, confirm it for ever, and do as You have spoken. ²⁶ Let Your name be magnified for ever, saying, 'Yahweh of Armies is God over Israel; and the house of Your servant David shall be

kingdom must be established here on earth at Christ's return in order to fulfil these promises.

Established for ever before you – “Before you” suggests that David would witness the establishment of Christ's eternal kingdom. This was therefore an indirect promise that he would be resurrected at Christ's return so that he could see with his own eyes the kingdom being set up world-wide, with Jesus reigning from Jerusalem.

7:18 David was humbled when he received the promises, just as we should be by realizing that we too really are in covenant relationship with God. “Who am I...?” was his response (2 Sam. 7:18). Like Jacob, he felt himself unworthy of all the “mercy and truth” shown him in the promises (Gen. 32:10).

7:18-20 The promises to David are described as the mercy of God (Is. 55:3; Ps. 89:33,34). God having a son is the sign of His love for us, and this must elicit a response in us. David himself marvelled that such mercy had been shown to him. Soon afterwards, we read of how David made a renewed attempt to show mercy to the house of Saul. Mephibosheth says that he is “your servant... what is your servant, that you should look upon such... as I am?” (9:8). Mephibosheth is using the very words which David used to God; David is showing mercy to Mephibosheth in the very way in which the promises of God to him were the “mercies” shown to David. Appreciating that the promises concern us personally, and that they reveal such loving grace from the Father, can only lead to a similar response in showing love and grace through entering into the lives and destinies of others.

established before You'. ²⁷ For You, Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant saying, 'I will build you a house'. Therefore Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer to You. ²⁸ Now, O Lord Yahweh, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant. ²⁹ Now therefore let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue for ever before You; for You, Lord Yahweh, have spoken it. Let the house of Your servant be blessed for ever with Your blessing.

CHAPTER 8 Jul. 23

God Gives David Many Victories

After this it happened that David struck the Philistines and subdued them: and David took the bridle of the mother city out of the hand of the Philistines. ² He struck Moab, and measured them with the line, making them to lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive. The Moabites became servants to David, and brought tribute. ³ David struck

also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his dominion at the River. ⁴ David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen and twenty thousand footmen: and David hamstrung all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for one hundred chariots. ⁵ When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck of the Syrians twenty two thousand men. ⁶ Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought tribute. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went. ⁷ David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ From Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass. ⁹ When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had struck all the army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰ then Toi sent Joram his son to king David, to greet him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and struck him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. Joram brought with him

8:4 *But reserved of them for one hundred chariots* – The king of Israel was not to have chariot horses (Dt. 17:16). David destroyed most of them, but kept a few for himself. This weakness which he allowed himself led to his son Solomon becoming obsessed with horses and chariots, trading with Egypt in order to get them, and turning away from God completely. Weaknesses which we may allow ourselves can lead to others taking them much further and losing their faith. David seems to have tried to 'get around' God's intention that the king of Israel trust in the heavenly cherubim horses and chariots of Angels rather than human ones; for he hamstrung the horses, so that they could only breed and not be used for work. But of course the next generation of horses were his. If we have a heart for God we won't seek to get around His laws or have a little of both – obedience to Him and also the ways of this world. Yet despite David's weakness in this matter, God still gave him victory and blessing (:5,6). We shouldn't turn away from other believers because we perceive in them some weakness; for God doesn't treat us nor any of His children like that.

vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:

Spoils of War Dedicated to God

¹¹ King David also dedicated these to Yahweh, with the silver and gold that he dedicated of all the nations which he subdued; ¹² of Syria, Moab, the children of Ammon, the Philistines and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. ¹³ David made himself a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians in the Valley of Salt, even eighteen thousand men. ¹⁴ He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went. ¹⁵ David reigned over all Israel; and David executed justice and righteousness to all his people. ¹⁶ Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁷ and Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were priests; and Seraiah was scribe; ¹⁸ and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers.

CHAPTER 9 Jul. 23

Jonathan's Son

David said, Is there yet any who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? ² There was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, Are you Ziba? He said, Your servant is he. ³ The king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him? Ziba said to the king, Jonathan has yet a son, who is lame of his feet. ⁴ The king said to him, Where is he? Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar. ⁵ Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. ⁶ Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, and fell on his face, and showed respect. David said, Mephibosheth. He answered, Behold, your servant! ⁷ David said to him, Don't be afraid; for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your father. You shall

8:13 *David made himself a name* – A name in Hebrew thought isn't merely a personal identification tag, it speaks of a person's achievements and character – hence the significance of God's Name (Ex. 34:4-6) being His character and personality. By baptism into the Name, all God's righteousness is counted to us.

8:17 Those who had faithfully followed David in his wilderness years, when he seemed a hopeless cause, were the ones who later became the rulers in his kingdom. We who follow Jesus now will be the rulers in His Kingdom (Rev. 5:10).

9:1 We too should consciously seek out opportunities to show grace, even to the relatives of our enemies. We have been shown kindness or grace from God (:3) and we should respond to this by reflecting it to others, thinking up ways to do so as God has done to us. The challenge is to ask ourselves when was the last time we thought up a way of showing grace to others.

eat bread at my table continually.
⁸ He bowed down, and said, What is your servant, that you should look on such a dead dog as I am?

David Shows Grace to Mephibosheth

⁹ Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, All that pertained to Saul and to all his house have I given to your master's son.
¹⁰ You shall till the land for him, you, and your sons, and your servants; and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have bread to eat: but Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.
¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your shall servant do. So Mephibosheth ate at the king's table, like

one of the king's sons.
¹² Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. All that lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth.
¹³ So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem; for he ate continually at the king's table. He was lame in both his feet.

CHAPTER 10 Jul. 24
The Ammonites Spurn David's Friendship

It happened after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place.
² David said, I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me. So David sent by his servants to comfort him concerning his father. David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.
³ But the princes of the children of Ammon

9:8 See on 7:18-20. To be invited to eat bread at someone's table was a sign of their grace and acceptance of you. We who are in Christ are openly and warmly invited to eat bread at the table of the King of the cosmos; and yet so many can't be bothered to accept the invitation, or feel unworthy to do so. We should note too that it's not for us to control which of His people Christ invites to His table; we are there as grateful guests, not as the host.

9:13 *He was lame* – Christ taught that He has invited the lame to *His* table and we should also invite them to the table of the Messianic banquet in His future Kingdom on earth (Lk. 14:13,21).

10:3 David had earlier sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him, and they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail's grace and wisdom saved him from (1 Sam. 25). And yet here the same situation repeated in its essence when he sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed. Again, David got angry – but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he got into an impossible fight... from which by grace God delivered him. David failed to learn from his previous experience; and God repeats situations in our lives too, that we might learn from them and develop. Note how suspicious people were in the societies of those days when they encountered David's grace (see too 3:24,25); and today too, we tend to disbelieve God's grace because we haven't encountered it very often from people.

said to Hanun their lord, Do you think that David honours your father, in that he has sent comforters to you? Hasn't David sent his servants to you to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it? ⁴ So Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. ⁵ When they told it to David, he sent to meet them; for the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return. ⁶ When the children of Ammon saw that they were become odious to David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, twenty thousand footmen, and the king of Maacah with one thousand men, and the men of Tob with twelve thousand men. ⁷ When David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the army of the mighty men. ⁸ The children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entrance of the gate: and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob, and the men of Tob and Maacah, were by themselves in the field.

The Syrians and Ammonites Defeated

⁹ Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians. ¹⁰ The rest of the people he committed into the hand of Abishai his brother; and he put them in array against the chil-

dren of Ammon. ¹¹ He said, If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the children of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. ¹² Be courageous, and let us be strong for our people, and for the cities of our God; and Yahweh do that which seems good to Him. ¹³ So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. ¹⁴ When the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians had fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered into the city. Then Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem. ¹⁵ When the Syrians saw that they were defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. ¹⁶ Hadadezer sent, and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the River: and they came to Helam, with Shobach the captain of the army of Hadadezer at their head. ¹⁷ It was told David; and he gathered all Israel together, and passed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. ¹⁸ The Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed of the Syrians seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen, and struck Shobach the captain of their army, so that he died there. ¹⁹ When all the kings who were servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

CHAPTER 11 Jul. 25***David and Bathsheba***

It happened, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. ² It happened at evening, that David arose

from off his bed, and walked on the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look on. ³ David sent and inquired after the woman. One said, Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? ⁴ David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in to him, and he lay with

11:1 *But David stayed at Jerusalem* – When it was the season for a king like himself to be out in battle. The lesson is that when we are doing nothing and not doing what we are intended to, then we are more prone to fall into sin. He appears to recognize his attitude problem in Ps. 30:6: “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be (spiritually) moved”. In the lead up to the sin, God had given him victory after victory – leading him to think that he must therefore be spiritually OK because of his many physical blessings (1 Chron. 18:6). His conscience had been blunted by the easy life.

11:2 *He saw a woman* – Christ had His eye on this passage when He spoke about him that “looks on a woman to lust after her” has committed adultery with her already (Mt. 5:28). James 1:14,15 speaks of the process of temptation and sin, in any matter, as looking lustfully upon a woman, with the inevitable result of actually committing the sin. In this he may be interpreting David's sin as an epitome of all failure. David is our example. Likewise the Lord's list of the 12 evil things that come out of the heart (Mk 7:15-23): fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, evil thoughts... all seem to describe the completeness of David's sin with Bathsheba. It incorporated all these things, and was not just a one time, lustful failure of the moment.

11:3 *Daughter of Eliam* – David and Uriah knew each other well; they had spent David's long wilderness years together, and lived next door to each other in Jerusalem (:13; 12:1). Bathsheba had been brought up by Uriah (12:3). She was the daughter of Eliam, who had been another of David's mighty men (23:34). Presumably he had been killed and Uriah adopted her, bringing her up from babyhood, mothering her by feeding her from his bowl and letting her sleep in his bosom. This may imply that his own wife died early, and that he brought her and his own children up alone, and then married her when she was older. A very special spiritual and emotional bond must have been forged between those who stuck with David as a down and out, and who later on shared in the glory of his kingdom. That Uriah had such easy access to David would have been unthinkable for an ordinary soldier whom David hardly knew. Nathan criticizes David for having “no pity” on Uriah, implying that David well knew the relationship between Uriah and Bathsheba. Moreover, David would have been a larger than life figure for his followers, and Bathsheba would have grown up with this image of David as the saving hero.

11:4 *David sent messengers* – The use of messengers is emphasized throughout the account (3,4,5,6,19,23,27); what David had done would soon become very public knowledge, and it would seem that Uriah himself understood.

her (for she was purified from her uncleanness); and she returned to her house. ⁵ The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am with child. ⁶ David sent to Joab, Send me Uriah the Hittite. Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah had come to him, David asked of him how Joab did, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered. ⁸ David said to Uriah, Go down to your house, and wash your feet. Uriah departed out of the king's house, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and didn't go down to his house. ¹⁰ When they had told David, saying, Uriah didn't go down to his house, David said to Uriah, Haven't you come from a journey? Why didn't you go down to your house? ¹¹ Uriah said to David, The ark, Israel, and Judah, are staying in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go into my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing!

Death of Uriah the Hittite

¹² David said to Uriah, Stay here to-

day also, and tomorrow I will let you depart. So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day, and the next day. ¹³ When David had called him, he ate and drink before him; and he made him drunk. At evening, he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but didn't go down to his house. ¹⁴ It happened in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ He wrote in the letter saying, Send Uriah to the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck, and die. ¹⁶ It happened, when Joab kept watch on the city, that he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew that valiant men were. ¹⁷ The men of the city went out, and fought with Joab. Some of the people fell, even of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. ¹⁸ Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; ¹⁹ and he commanded the messenger saying, When you have finished telling all the things concerning the war to the king, ²⁰ it shall be that, if the king's wrath arise, and he asks you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Didn't you know that they would shoot from the wall?' ²¹ who struck Abimelech the son of Jerub-

For she was purified from her uncleanness – Bathsheba's evening washing of herself which exposed her nakedness would have been in response to the principles of the Law. However, the Law didn't actually state that the woman must wash herself after menstrual uncleanness; but the man who touched her must. So it could be that she had gone beyond the Law in washing herself; such was her spiritual perception, which was a factor in David's attraction to her. Sexuality and spirituality are related, hence sexual temptation is especially strong for people who on one level respect spiritual principle.

11:21 *Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth?* – Joab warned the messenger to quickly explain to David why the soldiers approached so near the wall of Rabbah,

besheth? Didn't a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also'. ²² So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for. ²³ The messenger said to David, The men prevailed against us, and came out to us into the field, and we were on them even to the entrance of the gate. ²⁴ The shooters shot at your servants from off the wall; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. ²⁵ Then David said to the messenger, Thus you shall tell Joab, 'Don't let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Make your battle stronger against the city, and overthrow it'. Encourage him. ²⁶ When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband. ²⁷ When the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased Yahweh.

CHAPTER 12 Jul. 26

Nathan Confronts David

Yahweh sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³ but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and raised. It grew up together with him, and with his children. It ate of his own food, drank of his own cup, lay in his bosom, and was to him like a daughter. ⁴ A traveller came to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man who had come to him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man who had come to him. ⁵ David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As Yahweh lives, the man who has done this is worthy to die! ⁶ He shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity! ⁷ Nathan said to David, You are the man. This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.

because he knew that David would immediately quote an example from the history of Israel, to prove that such an approach was unwise. David's familiarity with the spiritual records of Israel's history and use of them to guide behaviour was therefore well known, and it presumably did not depart from him during the months between his sin and repentance of it; we can retain God's word in our minds and act upon it whilst at the same time in other areas being deeply displeasing to God.

11:25 *Don't let this thing displease you* – But those very Hebrew words are used again in :27: "But the thing that David had done displeased Yahweh". No matter how we or others may rationalize and cover up sin, God notices and judges in due time.

12:4 Nathan's parable about David's sin with Bathsheba blamed the act on a traveller 'coming to' David asking to be satisfied. The traveller of the parable represented

⁸ I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that would have been too little, I would have added to you many more such things. ⁹ Why have you despised the word of Yahweh, to do that which is evil in His sight?

You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hit-

David's lusts which led to adultery and murder, although this was not his usual state of mind – they were as a traveller to him.

12:8 There will be anomalies in the lives of our brethren – just as there are in the lives of us all (if only we would examine ourselves ruthlessly enough to see them). And in some ways at some times, God goes along with them. Thus He gave Saul's wives to David, which would've involved David being married to both a mother and daughter – for he had married Saul's daughters. And this giving of Saul's wives to David may not have occurred simply after Saul's death. For David's eldest son, Amnon, was borne by Ahinoam (3:2), who was initially Saul's wife (1 Sam. 14:50). Now this is not to justify sin. Adultery, taking another's wife or husband, is all wrong. Let there be no mistake. But God at times sees the bigger, or longer, perspective, and tolerates things which we may quite rightly find intolerable. And if He loves us despite of our sin and failure – are we surprised that we are invited to show love to others in the face of their sin and failure toward us? A black and white insistence upon God's standards being upheld in the lives of others, demanding their repentance for having hurt us, is what has caused so much division between believers. Whilst God alone will apportion the guilt for this, in the final algorithm of Divine judgment, it's worth observing that the fault for division isn't always with the sinners, the wider thinkers, the freewheelers; but with the inflexible intolerance of those in power.

If that would have been too little, I would have added to you – This seems to be saying that God would have made concessions to David's sexual weakness, even further than the ones He had already made. It is as if God had prepared those concessions on different levels. If David had felt that he needed yet more sexual fulfilment, God had a way prepared to meet this. Yet David took it into his own hands to decide what God would concede to him. However, God's concessions to David cannot necessarily be extrapolated to our lives today. "Too little" recalls 7:19, where the promises to David are described as a "little thing"; the promises were so wonderful that David should not have allowed himself to fall into such sin. And we likewise. Such is the wonder of God's promise to us that we really have no excuse to sin. Every sin is a denial of His promises.

12:9 David murdered, committed adultery and even the deadly sin of presumption (cp. Num. 15:31). All of which required his death; and yet he is held up in Rom. 4:7 as representative of every sinner. Only if we appreciate the seriousness of our position before God will we be able to feel true joy, peace and commitment after realizing our forgiveness. Note how God reads our motives; He saw David as if *he* had killed Uriah with *his* sword; even though David's command to Joab to retire from Uriah and let the Ammonites kill him was carefully calculated not to break the letter of the law.

tite to be your wife'. ¹¹ This is what Yahweh says: 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun'.

David Acknowledges His Sin

¹³ David said to Nathan, I have sinned against Yahweh. Nathan said

to David, Yahweh also has put away your sin. You will not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to Yahweh's enemies to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die. ¹⁵ Nathan departed to his house. Yahweh struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it was very sick. ¹⁶ David therefore begged God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night on the earth. ¹⁷ The elders of his house arose beside him, to raise him up

12:9, 10 David "despised the word of Yahweh... you despised Me". His attitude to God's word was his attitude to God – for the word of God, in that sense, was and is God.

12:13 David's "I have sinned" is word for word what Saul said at his condemnation (1 Sam. 15:24). David then lies all night upon the earth, refuses to eat, people try to raise him up from the ground, and then they succeed in setting bread before him and he eats it (:16,17,20). David was consciously doing exactly what Saul did in 1 Sam. 28:20-25, the night before his death / condemnation. David was recognizing, of his own volition, that he was no better than Saul. And by doing this, he was saved. Unlike Saul, he altered the verdict of condemnation by meaningful repentance. Paul makes the point that if we condemn ourselves, we will not be condemned (1 Cor. 11:31). The terms of the judgment pronounced against him are framed to echo the rejection and condemnation of Saul: He despised the commandment of Yahweh (:9) as did Saul (1 Sam. 15:29). Evil was raised up against David out of his own house (:11) – what happened to Saul (1 Sam. 20:30). David's wives were given to his neighbour (:11), as Saul's wives were (12:8; 1 Sam. 15:28; 28:17).

You will not die – David at that moment represents us all, today. The Spirit changes David's personal reflections upon this forgiveness in Ps. 32:1 ("Blessed is *he*") to "blessed are *they*" (Rom. 4:7) to make this point. "Blessed is the man (e.g. David, or any sinner – David is our example) unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2) is alluded to in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ... not imputing (the world's) trespasses unto them". Through being justified, any repentant sinner will then have the characteristics of Christ, in God's sight. In Christ there was no guile (1 Pet. 2:22), as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2). "Blessed is the man... in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev.14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

12:16 David prayed and fasted for his child by Bathsheba not to die – even though

from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.¹⁸ It happened on the seventh day, that the child died. The servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he didn't listen to our voice. How will he then harm himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? ¹⁹ But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, Is the child dead? They said, He is dead. ²⁰ Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his clothing; and he came into the house of Yahweh, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he ate. ²¹ Then his servants said to him, What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the

child while he was alive; but when the child was dead, you rose up and ate bread. ²² He said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows whether Yahweh will not be gracious to me, that the child may live?'. ²³ But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.

Birth of Solomon

²⁴ David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her, and lay with her. She bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Yahweh loved him; ²⁵ and He sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he named him Jedidiah, for Yahweh's sake. ²⁶ Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. ²⁷ Joab sent messengers to David and said, I have fought against Rabbah. Yes, I have taken the city of waters. ²⁸ Now therefore gather the

God had said that it would. He clearly believed that God was a God who was open to changing in response to prayer. Prayer and repentance can change God's stated purpose. Prayer changes things. It really does. What would otherwise have happened can be changed by prayer. We, little and tiny humans, can change the mind of Almighty God. This is the extent of His sensitivity to us. Moses, Samuel and Jeremiah had the power to *within limits* change God's mind towards His people (Jer. 15:1).

12:23 This verse is sure proof that David didn't believe that dead children go to live in Heaven; there is no immortal soul taught in the Bible.

12:28 Whatever carried the name of a person was seen as his property. If a city was conquered, it bore the name of the conqueror, as here; the names of owners were on their property (Ps. 49:12); and in this context, God's Name is over His people (Dt. 28:10). So to bear God's Name is to recognize His complete ownership and even conquest of us. By baptism into His Name we become totally His. And yet there's a significant twist to all this in Is. 43:1: "I have called you by *your* name, because you are Mine". It seems like a slip – we expect God to say that He has called us by *His* Name, because we are His. But no – He wishes us to bear both His Name and our own name, He doesn't wish to subsume us beneath His ownership and manifestation to the point that we are not significant as persons.

rest of the people together, and encamp against the city and take it; lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. ²⁹ David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it and took it. ³⁰ He took the crown of their king from off his head; and its weight was a talent of gold, and in it were precious stones; and it was set on David's head. He brought out the spoil of the city, exceeding much. ³¹ He brought out the people who were therein, and put them under saws, and under iron picks, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and he did so to all the cities of the children of Ammon. David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 13 Jul. 27

Amnon and Tamar

It happened after this, that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. ² Amnon was so troubled that he fell sick because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her. ³ But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very subtle man. ⁴ He said to him, Why, son of the king, are you so sad from day to day? Won't you tell me? Amnon said to him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. ⁵ Jonadab said to him, Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to see you, tell him, 'Please let my sister Tamar

come and give me bread to eat, and dress the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand'. ⁶ So Amnon lay down and faked being sick. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, Please let my sister Tamar come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand. ⁷ Then David sent home to Tamar saying, Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him. ⁸ So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹ She took the pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. Amnon said, Have all men leave me. Every man went out from him. ¹⁰ Amnon said to Tamar, Bring the food into the inner room, that I may eat from your hand. Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the inner room to Amnon her brother. ¹¹ When she had brought them near to him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, Come, lie with me, my sister! ¹² She answered him, No, my brother, do not force me! For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Don't you do this folly. ¹³ I, to where would I carry my shame? And as for you, you will be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you. ¹⁴ However he would not listen to her voice; but being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her. ¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with exceeding great hatred; for

the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. Amnon said to her, Arise, be gone! ¹⁶ She said to him, Not so, because this great wrong in sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me!

Tamar Sent Away

But he would not listen to her. ¹⁷ Then he called his servant who ministered to him and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her. ¹⁸ She had a garment of various colours on her; for with such robes were the king's daughters who were virgins dressed. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her. ¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her garment of various colours that was on her; and she laid her hand on her head, and went her way, crying aloud as she went. ²⁰ Absalom her brother said to her, Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house. ²¹ But when king David heard of all these things, he was very

angry. ²² Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

Amnon Killed

²³ It happened after two full years, that Absalom had sheep shearers in Baal Hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons. ²⁴ Absalom came to the king and said, See now, your servant has sheep shearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant. ²⁵ The king said to Absalom, No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you. He pressed him; however he would not go, but blessed him. ²⁶ Then Absalom said, If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us. The king said to him, Why should he go with you? ²⁷ But Absalom pressed him, and he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. ²⁸ Absalom commanded his servants saying, Mark now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine; and when I tell you, 'Strike Amnon', then kill him. Don't be afraid. Haven't I commanded you? Be courageous, and be valiant! ²⁹ The servants of Absalom

13:15 Any giving in to the lust of the flesh, especially sexually, can never bring happiness but rather yet more anguish. This incident teaches clearly that sexual desire and love aren't always the same thing.

13:20 There are Biblical examples of refusing to take guilt when others feel that it should be taken. Recall how the Lord's own parents blamed Him for 'making them anxious' by 'irresponsibly' remaining behind in the temple. The Lord refused to take any guilt, didn't apologize, and even gently rebuked them (Lk. 2:42-51). In similar vein, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Even if I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret it" (2 Cor. 7:8). He would not take guilt for their being upset with him. Likewise Absalom comforted his raped sister not to 'take it to heart', not to feel guilty about it, as it seems she was feeling that way, taking false guilt upon her. We should take true guilt before God for our actual sins, and not allow others to put guilt on us.

did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man got up on his mule, and fled. ³⁰ It happened, while they were in the way, that the news came to David, saying, Absalom has slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left!

Absalom Flees

³¹ Then the king arose, and tore his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. ³² Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered, Don't let my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead; for by the appointment of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. ³³ Now therefore don't let my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead; for Amnon only is dead. ³⁴ But Absalom fled. The young man who kept the watch lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming by the way of the hillside behind him. ³⁵ Jonadab said to the king, Behold, the king's sons are coming! It is as your servant said. ³⁶ It happened, as soon as he had finished speaking, that behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice, and wept. The king also and all his servants wept bitterly. ³⁷ But Absalom fled, and went to Talmi the son of Ammihur, king of Geshur. David mourned for his son every

day. ³⁸ So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. ³⁹ King David longed to go forth to Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

CHAPTER 14 Jul. 28

Plea for Absalom

Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was towards Absalom. ² Joab sent to Tekoa and fetched there a wise woman and said to her, Please act like a mourner, and please put on mourning clothing and don't anoint yourself with oil, but be as a woman who has mourned a long time for the dead. ³ Go in to the king, and speak like this to him. So Joab put the words in her mouth. ⁴ When the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, showed respect and said, Help, O king! ⁵ The king said to her, What ails you? She answered, Truly I am a widow, and my husband is dead. ⁶ Your handmaid had two sons, and they both fought together in the field, and there was no one to part them, but the one struck the other and murdered him. ⁷ Behold, the whole family has risen against your handmaid and they say, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he murdered, and so destroy the heir also'. Thus they would quench my coal which is left, and would leave to my husband neither name nor remainder on the surface of the earth. ⁸ The king said to

14:8-10 The slayer of innocent blood was to be slain without pity, and this would in fact bring some kind of blessing "that it may go well with you" (Dt. 19:13). But

the woman, Go to your house, and I will give a command concerning you. ⁹ The woman of Tekoa said to the king, My lord O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house; and the king and his throne be guiltless. ¹⁰ The king said, Whoever says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you any more. ¹¹ Then she said, Please let the king remember Yahweh your God so that the avenger of blood destroy not any more, lest they destroy my son. He said, As Yahweh lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the earth. ¹² Then the woman said, Please let your handmaid speak a word to

my lord the king. He said, Say on. ¹³ The woman said, Why then have you devised such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring home again his banished one. ¹⁴ For we must die, and are as water split on the ground, which can't be gathered up again; neither does God take away life, but devises means that he who is banished not be an outcast from him. ¹⁵ Now therefore seeing that I have come to speak this word to my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and your handmaid said, 'I will now

David seems to have stepped up to a higher level when he told the woman of Tekoah that he would protect her son from revenge murder, after he had slain another man. The woman pointed out that if her son was slain, the inheritance would be lost in her husband's name. Here was a case where two principles seemed to be at variance: the need to slay the guilty, and the need to preserve the inheritance. The higher level was to forgive the slayer of innocent blood, even though the Law categorically stated that he should be slain.

14:11 The woman of Tekoah wanted David to show mercy, and so she says: "Let the king remember Yahweh your God". To be aware of who Yahweh is, of the characteristics outlined in Ex. 34:5-7 that comprise His Name... this must affect *our* behaviour, seeing we bear that Name. It is an understanding of the Name that inspires our faith in forgiveness and our ability to show grace.

14:13 The woman understood the implications of the promise in Eden when she tells David that God "devises means" to bring back the banished and expelled to Him. Whom did God banish? Adam, and all his children. But God 'devised means' through the promises of Gen. 3:15 so that this banishment was not permanent expulsion. The means devised was the death and resurrection of His Son, the seed of the woman. But the woman's point was that as God sought to restore His banished sons, through the pain and cost to Him of the blood of His Son, so we ought to likewise be inspired to win back the banished. And so we look to those banished from ecclesial life by disfellowship, church politics, personal animosities of past decades, or simply their own sins; or those marginalized by poverty, education, disability, health, geography... these are the banished whom we ought to be winning back.

14:14 Her point was that as God in some sense breaks His own laws, e.g. that sin leads to permanent death, so surely David likewise could have the same spirit of grace and bring about the salvation of someone rightly appointed to death. Legalism fails to understand grace.

speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant'. ¹⁶ For the king will hear, to deliver his servant out of the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God. ¹⁷ Then your handmaid said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king bring rest; for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad. May Yahweh your God be with you'. ¹⁸ Then the king answered the woman, Please don't hide anything from me that I ask you. The woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. ¹⁹ The king said, Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?

Absalom Brought Back to Jerusalem

The woman answered, As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken; for your servant Joab, he urged me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your handmaid; ²⁰ to change the face of the matter has your servant Joab done this thing. My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are on the earth. ²¹ The king said to Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing. Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom back. ²² Joab fell to the ground on his face, showed respect, and blessed the king. Joab said, Today your servant knows

that I have found grace in your sight, my lord o king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant. ²³ So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. ²⁴ The king said, Let him return to his own house, but let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and didn't see the king's face. ²⁵ Now in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. ²⁶ When he cut the hair of his head (now it was at every year's end that he cut it; because it was heavy on him, therefore he cut it); he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight. ²⁷ To Absalom there were born three sons and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a beautiful appearance. ²⁸ Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem; and he didn't see the king's face. ²⁹ Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king; but he would not come to him: and he sent again a second time, but he would not come. ³⁰ Therefore he said to his servants, Behold, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire. Absalom's servants set the field on fire. ³¹ Then Joab arose and came to Absalom to his house and said to him, Why have your servants set my field on fire? ³² Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent to you saying, 'Come

14:20 The woman thought that Angels know everything and therefore David was like an Angel (2 Sam. 14:20). Angels don't know *everything* (Mt. 24:36). Yet the woman's immature concept isn't corrected, just as wrong understandings of demons weren't.

here, that I may send you to the king to say, Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still. Now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there is iniquity in me, let him kill me'.³³ So Joab came to the king and told him; and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

CHAPTER 15 Jul. 29

Absalom Wins the Hearts of the People

It happened after this, that Absalom prepared him a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him.² Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate. It was so, that whenever any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgement, then Absalom called to him and said, What city are you from? He said, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.³ Absalom said to him, Behold, your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed by the king to hear you.⁴ Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that each man who has any suit or cause might come to me, and I would do

him justice! ⁵ It was so, that when any man came near to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand and took hold of him and kissed him. ⁶ Absalom did this sort of thing to all Israel who came to the king for judgement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. ⁷ It happened at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to Yahweh, in Hebron. ⁸ For your servant vowed a vow while I stayed at Geshur in Syria saying, 'If Yahweh shall indeed bring me again to Jerusalem, then I will serve Yahweh'. ⁹ The king said to him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. ¹⁰ But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel saying, As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron!'. ¹¹ Two hundred men went with Absalom out of Jerusalem, who were invited and went in their innocence; and they didn't know anything. ¹² Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. The conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom. ¹³ A messenger came to David say-

15:8 *If Yahweh shall indeed bring me again to Jerusalem, then I will serve Yahweh* – Absalom was quoting the words of Jacob in Gen. 28:20,21. But a little reflection ought to have shown that these were the words of Jacob in a very weak part of his life. Both Jacob and Absalom should've wanted to serve God anyway, whether or not He gave them blessing in this life. Absalom thought that all would be good for him just by quoting the words of the Bible and thus identifying himself with a righteous man (even though he paid no attention to the context of his quotation). This kind of surface level Biblicism and spirituality can easily happen today as a cover for simply doing what the flesh naturally wants to do.

ing, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. ¹⁴ David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for else none of us shall escape from Absalom. Make speed to depart, lest he overtake us quickly and bring evil down upon us and strike the city with the edge of the sword. ¹⁵ The king's servants said to the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king chooses.

David Flees Jerusalem

¹⁶ The king went forth, and all his household after him. The king left ten women, who were concubines, to keep the house. ¹⁷ The king went forth, and all the people after him; and they stayed in Beth Merhak. ¹⁸ All his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the Gittites, six hundred men who came after him from Gath, passed on before the king. ¹⁹ Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, Why do you also go with us? Return, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile. Return to your own place. ²⁰ Whereas

you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us, since I go where I may? Return, and take back your brothers. Mercy and truth be with you. ²¹ Ittai answered the king and said, As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, even there also will your servant be. ²² David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones who were with him. ²³ All the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over towards the way of the wilderness. ²⁴ Behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God; and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people finished passing out of the city. ²⁵ The king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find grace in the eyes of Yahweh, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His dwelling place; ²⁶ but if He say

15:13 *The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom* – The record of the various rebellions against David show how fickle are the hearts of men; they changed loyalty so easily according to whatever seemed to offer them the most immediate advantage; just as a study of the theme of “the crowds” in the Gospels shows the same. For all their apparent culture, sophistication and education, people’s hearts today are the same, and we can never trust in human loyalty generally; although our experience with God’s people can be amazingly better.

15:23 *The brook Kidron* – David’s exit from Jerusalem has many similarities with Christ’s crossing the brook Kidron and the mount of Olives (:30) and going to His death, surrounded by a few faithful followers who had promised to follow Him to the death (:21 = Mt. 26:35). The support which David had within the Jerusalem leadership points forward to that of Joseph and Nicodemus for Christ at the time of His betrayal and final rejection.

thus, ‘I have no delight in you;’ behold, here am I. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him.

Zadok Sent Back to Jerusalem

²⁷ The king said also to Zadok the priest, Aren’t you a seer? Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. ²⁸ Behold, I will stay at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me. ²⁹ Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they stayed there. ³⁰ David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered, and went barefoot: and all the people who were with him covered each man his head; so they went up, weeping as they went up. ³¹ Someone told David saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. David said, Yahweh, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. ³² It happened that when David had come to the top, where God was worshipped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn, and earth on his head. ³³ David said to him, If you pass on with me, then you will be a burden to me; ³⁴ but if you return to the city and tell Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king. As I have been your father’s servant in time past, so will I now be your servant; then

you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel’. ³⁵ Don’t you have Zadok and Abiathar the priests there with you? Therefore it shall be, that whatever thing you shall hear out of the king’s house, you shall tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. ³⁶ Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son, and Jonathan, Abiathar’s son; and by them you shall send to me everything that you shall hear. ³⁷ So Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city; and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 16 Jul. 30

Ziba Meets David

When David was a little past the top, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits and a skin of wine. ² The king said to Ziba, What do you mean by these? Ziba said, The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as are faint in the wilderness may drink. ³ The king said, Where is your master’s son? Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem; for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will restore me the kingdom of my father’. ⁴ Then the king said to Ziba, Behold,

16:2 This unexpected grace formed the basis of Ps. 23, where David marvels at God’s kindness in furnishing a feast for him in the wilderness at the very time that it seemed he was walking in the valley of the shadow of death. Sometimes God does things like this in our lives too – His grace bursts into the darkness of a situation.

all that pertains to Mephibosheth is yours. Ziba said, I do obeisance. Let me find grace in your sight, my lord, O king.

Shimei Curses David

⁵ When king David came to Bahurim, behold, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera. He came out and cursed continually as he came. ⁶ He cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David; and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. ⁷ Shimei said when he cursed, Be gone, be gone, you man of blood, and base fellow! ⁸ Yahweh has returned on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned! Yahweh has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son! Behold, you are caught by your own sinfulness, because you are a man of blood! ⁹ Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please let me go over and take off his head. ¹⁰ The king said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? Because he curses, and because Yahweh has said to him, ‘Curse David’, who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’.

¹¹ David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, who came forth from my bowels, seeks my life. How much more this Benjamite, now? Leave him alone, and let him curse; for Yahweh has invited him. ¹² It may be that Yahweh will look on the wrong done to me, and that Yahweh will repay me good for the cursing of me today. ¹³ So David and his men went by the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him, and cursed as he went, threw stones at him, and threw dust. ¹⁴ The king, and all the people who were with him, became weary; and he refreshed himself there.

Absalom and Ahithophel

¹⁵ Absalom, and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. ¹⁶ It happened, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, had come to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, Long live the king! Long live the king! ¹⁷ Absalom said to Hushai, Is this your kindness to your friend? Why didn’t you go with your friend? ¹⁸ Hushai said to Absalom, No; but whoever Yahweh and this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his will I be, and with him I will stay. ¹⁹ Again, whom should I serve? Shouldn’t I

16:10 Shimei was a wicked man who hated God’s servant David. God told him to curse David. Afterwards, Shimei repents and acknowledges that by doing so he sinned (2 Sam. 19:20). And although David recognized that God had told Shimei to curse him, David tells Solomon not to hold Shimei “guiltless” for how he had cursed him (1 Kings 2:9). Thus a man is encouraged by God to do the sinful act on which he has set his heart.

16:18 This is one of several Biblical examples of untruth being told in vague, ambiguous terms in order to save others’ lives. See on 17:20.

serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so will I be in your presence. ²⁰ Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give your counsel what we shall do. ²¹ Ahithophel said to Absalom, Go in to your father's concubines, that he has left to keep the house. Then all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong. ²² So they spread Absalom a tent on the top of the house; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. ²³ The counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if a man inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

CHAPTER 17 Jul. 31

Absalom Accepts Hushai's Counsel

Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, Let me now choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David tonight. ² I will come on him while he is weary and exhausted, and will make him afraid. All the people who are with

him shall flee. I will strike the king only; ³ and I will bring back all the people to you. The man whom you seek is as if all returned; and so all the people shall be in peace. ⁴ The saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel. ⁵ Then Absalom said, Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he says. ⁶ When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him saying, Ahithophel has spoken like this. Shall we do what he says? If not, speak up. ⁷ Hushai said to Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. ⁸ Hushai said moreover, You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are bitter in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Your father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. ⁹ Behold, he is now hidden in some pit, or in some other place. It will happen, when some of them have fallen at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom!' ¹⁰ Even he who is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion,

16:21 Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather (11:3 cp. 23:34); his inability to forgive David despite his evident repentance and the Divine blessing of the marriage led him to a bitterness which led him to death.

16:22 From this we could infer that David lay with Bathsheba in that same place on the roof top. This is significant insofar as it shows how exactly the thought leads to the action. David's thoughts in that spot were translated into that very action, in precisely the same physical location. The roof top is also the place of prayer, and in this we see the schizophrenic nature of David's spirituality; he went to pray, and then stood at the edge of the roof in order to view Bathsheba, with his hands on the railing around the roof which surely he would have erected, in obedience to the Law. And he realized that it was evening, and that in accordance with the spirit of the Law a menstruating woman ought to wash and be unclean until the evening. In this we see the mixing of flesh and spirit which is at the root of most of our failings. See on 11:4.

will utterly melt; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. ¹¹ But I advise that all Israel be gathered together to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that you go to battle in your own person. ¹² So shall we come on him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light on him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him we will not leave so much as one. ¹³ Moreover, if he be gone into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there isn't one small stone found there. ¹⁴ Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For Yahweh had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Yahweh might bring evil on Absalom. ¹⁵ Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar

the priests, Ahithophel counselled Absalom and the elders of Israel that way; and I have counselled this way. ¹⁶ Now therefore send quickly and tell David saying, 'Don't lodge this night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people who are with him'.

Warning Sent to David

¹⁷ Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying by En Rogel; and a female servant used to go and tell them; and they went and told king David. For they didn't want to be seen to come into the city. ¹⁸ But a boy saw them, and told Absalom. Then they both went away quickly, and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down there. ¹⁹ The woman took and spread the covering over the well's mouth, and spread out bruised grain on it; and nothing was known. ²⁰ Absalom's servants came to the

17:11 *As the sand that is by the sea for multitude* – Baptism means that we are *now* the seed of Abraham, and the promised blessings are right now being fulfilled in us (Acts 3:27-29). Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (1 Kings 4:20), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6) – all in antitype of how Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

17:14 Ahithophel advised Absalom to attack and kill righteous king David without any more delay. Absalom refused this advice. The inspired record comments: "For Yahweh had ordained to defeat the *good counsel* of Ahithophel". Was it really *good* counsel? Not in God's eyes. It was only 'good' for Absalom from a fleshly viewpoint. And yet the record speaks from Absalom's perspective; it speaks of something definitely evil as being "good" within the context in which it was given. Thus the record here refers to men's bad thinking as if it is correct. This principle explains why the New Testament uses the language of demons to describe mental illness, even though demons don't exist and God is all powerful.

17:20 *They have gone over the brook of water* – The Hebrew is ambiguous; they were literally over the water in that they were hiding over a well (:18). See on 16:18.

woman to the house; and they said, Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? The woman said to them, They have gone over the brook of water. When they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ It happened, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David; and they said to David, Arise and pass quickly over the water; for thus has Ahithophel counselled against you. ²² Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they passed over the Jordan. By the morning light there lacked not one of them who had not gone over the Jordan. ²³ When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose, and went home, to his city, and set his house in order, and hanged himself; and he died, and was buried in the tomb of his father. ²⁴ Then David came to Mahanaim. Absalom passed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. ²⁵ Absalom set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man, whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter

of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother. ²⁶ Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. ²⁷ It happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, ²⁸ brought beds, basins, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans, lentils, roasted grain, ²⁹ honey, butter, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David, and for the people who were with him, to eat: for they said, The people are hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

CHAPTER 18 Aug. 1

David's Plea for Absalom

David numbered the people who were with him, and set over them captains over thousands and captains over hundreds. ² David sent forth the people, a third part under the hand of Joab, a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. The king said to the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. ³ But the

17:23 Ahithophel was like so many people – giving up his life, even if not everyone does it by suicide, because he felt he had failed, he ran out of highway and lost his political power to others. For those in Christ, life becomes valuable; we number our days with wisdom (Ps. 90:12). We no longer fear failure, for firstly we know there is forgiveness in Christ; and secondly, our realization will be that we're on a journey, living the real life of ultimate discovery and adventure, able to live with the fears which this presents to us. Failure is no longer a problem to us; for the aim of the Kingdom is ever before us. Our failures are nothing more than temporary setbacks, as the baby who stretches out her hands to the lamp on the ceiling and cries because she can't reach it. We take them all, even our sins, in the spirit of the cross – the supreme failure which became the supreme triumph of God and the spiritual person.

18:3 David was described as the chiefest among ten thousand, and yet this is how

people said, You shall not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore now it's better that you are ready to help us from out of the city. ⁴ The king said to them, I will do what seems best to you. The king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands. ⁵ The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. All the people heard when the king commanded all the captains concerning Absalom. ⁶ So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the forest of Ephraim. ⁷ The people of Israel were struck there before the servants of David, and there was a great slaughter there that day of twenty thousand men. ⁸ For the battle was there spread over the surface of all the country; and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured. ⁹ Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, so that he was taken up between the sky and earth; and the mule that was under him went on. ¹⁰ A certain man saw it and informed Joab and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hang-

ing in an oak. ¹¹ Joab said to the man who told him, Behold, you saw it, and why didn't you strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten pieces of silver, and a belt. ¹² The man said to Joab, Though I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I still wouldn't put forth my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai saying, 'Beware that none touch the young man Absalom'. ¹³ Otherwise if I had dealt falsely against his life (and there is no matter hidden from the king), then you yourself would have set yourself against me.

Death of Absalom

¹⁴ Then Joab said, I'm not going to wait like this with you. He took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. ¹⁵ Ten young men who bore Joab's armour surrounded and struck Absalom, and killed him. ¹⁶ Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel; for Joab held back the people. ¹⁷ They took Absalom, and cast him into the great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Then all Israel fled everyone to his tent. ¹⁸ Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself the pillar, which is in the king's vale;

Solomon's illegal girlfriend describes him (Song 5:10). He had clearly told her all about his father David – and she evidently pleased Solomon by describing him as being like his father, even though she probably had never known David. He sought a wife who would be a surrogate parent rather than someone he could serve and assist towards God's Kingdom.

for he said, I have no son to keep my name in memory. He called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Absalom's monument, to this day. ¹⁹ Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, Let me now run and bear the king news, how that Yahweh has avenged him of his enemies. ²⁰ Joab said to him, You shall not be the bearer of news this day, but you shall bear news another day. But today you shall bear no news, because the king's son is dead. ²¹ Then Joab said to the Cushite, Go, tell the king what you have seen! The Cushite bowed himself to Joab, and ran. ²² Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said yet again to Joab, But come what may, please let me also run after the Cushite. Joab said, Why do you want to run, my son, since that you will have no reward for the news? ²³ But come

what may, he said, I will run. He said to him, Run! Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite.

David Mourns the Death of Absalom

²⁴ Now David was sitting between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate to the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man running alone. ²⁵ The watchman cried, and told the king. The king said, If he is alone, there is news in his mouth. He came closer and closer. ²⁶ The watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the porter, and said, Behold, a man running alone! The king said, He also brings news. ²⁷ The watchman said, I think the running of the first one is like

18:27 *He is a good man, and comes with good news* – This is the kind of comment which would be uttered by someone in David's position, and it has total psychological credibility. This kind of thing gives us every confidence that the Bible is indeed the inspired record of the actual words spoken by people thousands of years ago. What David says here is typical of our human tendency to associate the nature of the messenger with the message. The good news of the Gospel must be associated with the 'goodness' of the messenger. The Greek word *evangelion* translated 'Gospel' means, strictly, 'good news that is being passed on'; for example, the good news of a victory was passed on by runners to the capital city. It reflects the Hebrew association of carrying tidings, and good news which we see here. Once it had been spread around and everyone knew it, it ceased to be *evangelion*; it was no longer news that needed to be passed on. But in that time when there was a *special urgency* to pass it on, it was *evangelion*. This is to be the spirit of our spreading of the news about Christ; such heralding is not the same as lecturing or indifferently mentioning facts to someone. Such lecturing seeks no result; whereas the herald of God has an urgency and breathlessness about his message. There must be a passion and enthusiasm in us for the message of Christ and His Kingdom. More to be feared than over emotionalism is the dry, detached utterance of facts which has neither heart nor soul in it. Man's peril, Christ's salvation... these things cannot mean so little to us that we feel no warmth or passion rise within us as we speak about them. Remember how the early preachers were so enthusiastic in their witness that they were thought to be drunk. We are insistently pressing our good news upon others – evangelising.

the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. The king said, He is a good man, and comes with good news. ²⁸ Ahimaaz called and said to the king, All is well. He bowed himself before the king with his face to the earth and said, Blessed is Yahweh your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted up their hand against my lord the king! ²⁹ The king said, Is it well with the young man Absalom? Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, even me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I don't know what it was. ³⁰ The king said, Turn aside, and stand here. He turned aside, and stood still. ³¹ Behold, the Cushite came. The Cushite said, News for my lord the king; for Yahweh has avenged you this day of all those who rose up against you. ³² The king said to the Cushite, Is it well with the young man Absalom? The Cushite answered, May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you to do you harm, be as that young man is. ³³ The king was much moved, and went up to the room over the gate, and wept. As he went, he said, My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! I wish I had died for you, Absalom, my son, my son!

CHAPTER 19 Aug. 2

Joab Remonstrates with David

It was told Joab, Behold, the king weeps and mourns for Absalom. ² The victory that day was turned into mourning to all the people; for the people heard it said that day, The king grieves for his son. ³ The people sneaked into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. ⁴ The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, My son Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son! ⁵ Joab came into the house to the king and said, You have shamed this day the faces of all your servants, who this day have saved your life, and the lives of your sons and of your daughters, and the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines; ⁶ in that you love those who hate you, and hate those who love you. For you have declared this day, that princes and servants are nothing to you. For today I perceive that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it would have pleased you well. ⁷ Now therefore arise, go out, and speak to the heart of your servants; for I swear by Yahweh, if you don't go out, not a man will stay with you this night. That would be worse for you than all the

19:6 Material relevant to David is applied directly to all believers in the New Testament, thus setting him up as our example and realistic pattern rather than merely a historical figure. Joab's comment about the way David loved his enemies was thus set up by Jesus as the example for each of us (Mt. 5:44). And yet David only came to be so kind and forgiving because of his experience of God's forgiveness to him over the Bathsheba incident. Just as God did not impute iniquity to David over this (Ps. 32:2), so David did not 'impute iniquity' to Shimei for cursing him, and did not carry out a rightful death sentence against that man (:19,21). Note how Shimei uses the very same wording which David used in *his* repentance: "I have sinned" (:20).

evil that has happened to you from your youth until now. ⁸ Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. They told all the people saying, Behold, the king is sitting in the gate. All the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled every man to his tent. ⁹ All the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, and he saved us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom. ¹⁰ Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why don't you speak a word of bringing the king back? ¹¹ King David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests saying, Speak to the elders of Judah saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house? Since the speech of all Israel has come to the king, to return him to his house. ¹² You are my brothers, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?' ¹³ Say to Amasa, 'Aren't you my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you aren't captain of the army before me continually in place of Joab'. ¹⁴ He bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as one man; so that they sent to the king, saying, Return, you and all your servants.

Shimei Pardoned

¹⁵ So the king returned, and came to the Jordan. Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to bring the king over the Jordan. ¹⁶ Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, who was of Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David. ¹⁷ There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went through the Jordan in the presence of the king. ¹⁸ A ferry boat went to bring over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, when he had come over the Jordan. ¹⁹ He said to the king, Don't let my lord impute iniquity to me, nor remember that which your servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. ²⁰ For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore behold, I have come this day the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king. ²¹ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, Shall Shimei not be put to death for this, because he cursed Yahweh's anointed? ²² David said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you

19:11 "We are of (Christ's) bones and flesh" (Eph. 5:32) is a direct allusion back to the way David called the men of Judah *who were not enthusiastic for his return in glory* "my bones and my flesh". How much more intimate then can we feel to Christ, we who are baptized into His body and who look for His return eagerly?

19:14 *He bowed the heart of all the men of Judah* – See on 15:13.

19:22 This is an example of where we read of Israel's King having a human being who was an adversary [Heb. *Satan*, the Greek Septuagint version here uses *diabolos*].

should this day be adversaries to me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For don't I know that I am this day king over Israel? ²³ The king said to Shimei, You shall not die. The king swore to him.

Mephibosheth Seeks Pardon

²⁴ Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither groomed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace. ²⁵ It happened, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth? ²⁶ He answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, I will saddle me a donkey that I may ride thereon, and go with

the king; because your servant is lame. ²⁷ He has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God. Do therefore what is good in your eyes. ²⁸ For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right therefore have I yet that I should cry any more to the king? ²⁹ The king said to him, Why do you speak any more of your matters? I say, you and Ziba divide the land. ³⁰ Mephibosheth said to the king, Yes, let him take all, because my lord the king has come in peace to his own house. ³¹ Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim; and he went over the Jordan with the king, to conduct him over the Jordan. ³² Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even eighty years

There are other such examples in 1 Sam. 29:4; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25. We face a simple choice – if we believe that every reference to ‘Satan’ or ‘Devil’ refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren't people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that ‘Satan’ is simply a word meaning ‘adversary’, and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself – it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word. The idea is sometimes used to describe our greatest adversary, i.e. our own sin, and at times for whole systems or empires which stand opposed to the people of God and personify sinfulness and evil. But it seems obvious that it is a bizarre approach to Bible reading to insist that whenever we meet these words ‘Satan’ and ‘Devil’, we are to understand them as references to a personal, supernatural being. See on 24:1.

19:23 David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (16:10,11). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). Perhaps it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote: “Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man... as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so may it be far from him. He clothed himself also with cursing as with a garment...” (Ps. 109:16-18).

19:28 To be invited to sit at the King's table is an honour indeed; we have this invitation to break bread with Jesus the King.

old: and he had provided the king with sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.

³³ The king said to Barzillai, Come over with me, and I will sustain you with me in Jerusalem. ³⁴ Barzillai said to the king, How many are the days of the years of my life, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? ³⁵ I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern between good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be yet a burden to my lord the king? ³⁶ Your servant would but just go over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward? ³⁷ Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, by the grave of my father and my mother. But behold, your servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good to you. ³⁸ The king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good to you. Whatever you require of me, that I will do for you. ³⁹ All the people went over the Jordan, and the king went over. Then the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned to his own place.

⁴⁰ So the king went over to Gilgal, and Chimham went over with him. All the people of Judah brought the king over, and also half the people of Israel. ⁴¹ Behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household, over the Jordan, and all David's men with him? ⁴² All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is a close relative to us. Why then are you angry about this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's cost? Or has he given us any gift? ⁴³ The men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more claim to David than you. Why then did you despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

CHAPTER 20 Aug. 3

Sheba's Rebellion

There happened to be there a base fellow, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew the trumpet and said, We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, Israel! ² So all the

19:35 Even in the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, written in Solomon's later life, he still uses words and phrases which have their root in his father David – e.g. his description of women as snares in Ecc. 7:26 goes back to how his father dealt with women who were a snare (1 Sam. 18:21); his whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai here. The simple point is that the influence we have upon our children will continue all their lives, even into their old age.

20:2 *All the men of Israel changed* – See on 15:13.

men of Israel changed from following David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah joined with their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem. ³ David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in custody, and provided them with sustenance, but didn't go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood. ⁴ Then the king said to Amasa, Call me the men of Judah together within three days, and be here present. ⁵ So Amasa went to call the men of Judah together; but he stayed longer than the set time which he had appointed him. ⁶ David said to Abishai, Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your lord's serv-

ants, and pursue after him, otherwise he will get himself fortified cities, and escape out of our sight.

Joab Kills Amasa

⁷ There went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the mighty men; and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. ⁸ When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was clothed in his battle-dress that he had put on, and on it was a sash with a sword fastened on his waist in its sheath; and as he went forth it fell out. ⁹ Joab said to Amasa, Is it well with you, my brother? Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. ¹⁰ But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand. So he struck him with it

20:5 As Samuel tarried longer than Saul expected (1 Sam. 13:8), so Amasa "tarried longer than the set time which [David] had appointed him". Circumstances repeat within our lives and also between our experiences and those of characters in Biblical history. God through His Angels is working out a script for us, so that potentially we are enabled to see that God is teaching us through repetition and through re-framing circumstances in different contexts to see if we have really learnt the lesson intended. We learn from this that we are not in the hands of random fate, but rather there is meaning attached to every event, even if we can't immediately discern it – and perhaps in some cases we will only finally discern it in the Kingdom.

20:8 It *seemed* that the sword at Joab's side accidentally fell out of its scabbard as he went toward Amasa to greet him – but it was on purpose, of course. The Bible at times like this is recording situations according to how they appear to men, rather than how they are in ultimate reality. This helps us understand the apparently non-scientific parts of the Bible, e.g. the attribution of mental illness to 'demons' in the New Testament.

20:10 *Amasa took no heed to the sword* – Drivers can see a collision coming, but not swerve; there is a lack of cognition somewhere in the human psyche. Pilots take off at times knowing that their wings are frozen, and crash. Amasa saw the sword and must have seen the possibility of death, but didn't take cognisance of it. Samson must have known, on one level, what Delilah would do. Jesus too was human, and knew what Judas would do from the beginning; and yet felt and acted as if He hadn't taken cognisance of it. But mankind is in partial amnesia, somewhere, somehow, we fail

in the body, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and didn't strike him again; and he died. Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. ¹¹ There stood by him one of Joab's young men and said, He who favours Joab, and he who is for David, let him follow Joab! ¹² Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the midst of the highway. When the man saw that all the people stood still, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a garment over him, when he saw that everybody who came by him stood still.

Sheba Killed

¹³ When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. ¹⁴ He went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, and to Beth Maacah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him. ¹⁵ They came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maacah, and they cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart; and all the people who were with Joab battered at the wall, in order to throw it down. ¹⁶ Then a wise woman cried out of the city, Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come near here, that I may speak with you'. ¹⁷ He came near to her; and the woman said, Are you Joab? He answered, I am. Then she said to him, Hear the words of your

handmaid. He answered, I do hear.

¹⁸ Then she spoke saying, They used to say in old times, 'They shall surely ask counsel at Abel'; and so they resolved things. ¹⁹ I am among those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the inheritance of Yahweh? ²⁰ Joab answered, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. ²¹ The matter is not so. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against the king, even against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. The woman said to Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall. ²² Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. They cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. He blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each man to his tent. Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king. ²³ Now Joab was over all the army of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites; ²⁴ and Adoram was over the men subject to forced labour; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder; ²⁵ and Sheva was scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ²⁶ and also Ira the Jairite was chief minister to David.

to recognize the obvious. Likewise with the nearness of the Lord's return, with the urgency of our task in witness, with the evident need to follow God's word – this lack of cognisance so often comes into play. We really ought to pray, earnestly, for open hearts and eyes and obedient lives before our daily reading.

20:24 *The men subject to forced labour* – 1 Kings 12:4

CHAPTER 21 Aug. 3***David Atones for Saul's Bloodshed***

There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David sought the face of Yahweh. Yahweh said, There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put to death the Gibeonites. ² The king called the Gibeonites and said to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn to them: and Saul sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah); ³ and David said to the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of Yahweh? ⁴ The Gibeonites said to him, It is no matter of silver or gold between us and Saul, or his house; neither is it for us to put any man to death in Israel. He said, Whatever you say, that will I do for you. ⁵ They said to the king, The man who consumed us, and who devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the borders of Israel, ⁶ let seven men of his sons be delivered to us, and we will hang them up to Yahweh in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of Yahweh. The king said, I will give them. ⁷ But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul,

because of Yahweh's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. ⁸ But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. ⁹ He delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before Yahweh, and all seven of them fell together. They were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, at the beginning of barley harvest. ¹⁰ Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water was poured on them from the sky. She allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day, nor the animals of the field by night. ¹¹ It was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. ¹² David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh Gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, in the day that the Philistines killed Saul in Gilboa; ¹³ and he brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son: and they gathered the bones of

21:1 *There was a famine* – Innocent people suffered because of others' sin. This is why babies die and why we all suffer as the result of Adam's sin. The sinfulness of sin is largely in the effect which it has upon others. God will not force people not to sin, because He has given humanity genuine freewill; and because of this, He will not shield others from the consequences of sin, because sin and its consequence cannot be divided; sin is the consequence of the sin.

those who were hanged. ¹⁴ They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. After that God responded to the prayer for the land.

War against the Philistines

¹⁵ The Philistines had war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines. David grew faint; ¹⁶ and Ishbubenob, who was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being armed with a new sword, was about to have slain David. ¹⁷ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him, and struck the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him saying, You shall go no more out with us to battle, that you don't quench the lamp of Israel. ¹⁸ It came to pass after this, that there was again war with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was of the sons of the giant. ¹⁹ There was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan

the son of Jaareoregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite's brother, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. ²⁰ There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, twenty four in number; and he also was born to the giant. ²¹ When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, killed him. ²² These four were born to the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

CHAPTER 22 Aug. 4

David's Song of Praise

David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: ² and he said, Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, even mine; ³ God, my rock, in Him I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge. My saviour, You save me from violence. ⁴ I will call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved

21:16, 18 The "mighty *men*" of Gen. 6:4 weren't anything other than ordinary men, even if they were very large in size; that text is no proof for misguided ideas about Angels sleeping with women on earth. Here and in Dt. 3:11, the same term is used about ordinary men who could be killed; the *Rephaim* had children like other human beings, inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8).

21:22 *These four were born to the giant in Gath* – David killed Goliath but took five stones to do the job, only one of which he used (1 Sam. 17:40). He was spiritually ambitious (as we should be), and so he had planned to kill Goliath's four giant sons too. Our notes on 1 Sam. 17 show that David's victory over Goliath was typical of Christ's conquest of sin on the cross; this should inspire us to rise up against the other giants of sin which we encounter, inspired by Christ's victory there. Hence we read that Goliath's sons died at the hand of David's men and in that sense also at David's hand.

from my enemies. ⁵ For the waves of death surrounded me. The floods of ungodliness made me afraid. ⁶ The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death caught me. ⁷ In my distress I called on Yahweh. Yes, I called to my God. He heard my voice out of His temple. My cry came into His ears. ⁸ Then the earth shook and trembled. The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken,

because He was angry. ⁹ Smoke went up out of His nostrils. Fire out of His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it. ¹⁰ He bowed the heavens also, and came down. Thick darkness was under His feet. ¹¹ He rode on a cherub, and flew. Yes, He was seen on the wings of the wind. ¹² He made darkness pavilions around Himself: gathering of waters, and thick clouds of the skies. ¹³ At the brightness be-

22:6 “The cords of Sheol” are paralleled in the poetry here with “the snares of death”. ‘Sheol’ is the Hebrew word often translated “grave” in many Bibles, and refers simply to the grave and death rather than any supposed place of fiery punishment for the wicked. Righteous David ‘went there’ in that he was close to death; Christ also died and was in the grave, so it clearly isn’t a place where only the wicked go.

22:7 *My cry came into His ears* – This is the wonder of prayer. Our actual words are personally heard by the God who is so far away; and He acts mightily on earth (:8) in response.

22:8 “The earth” is paralleled with “the foundations of heaven”. This (and also Job 26:11; 1 Sam. 2:8) speaks as if Heaven / the sky rests on the mountains, from where earth seems to touch the heavens (Is. 13:5), with the stars stretched out in the north (Job 26:7). Prov. 8:28 speaks of God establishing “the clouds *above*”, and the surrounding context seems to describe God as forming the sky around the earth and then putting a horizon in place – just the sort of scientifically incorrect geo-centric view held by people at the time. The point surely was that *however* people understood creation to be or to have happened, God had done it, and in wisdom. God adds no footnote to David’s words, pointing out his understanding to be incorrect. This is important to bear in mind in our days, as we who believe in God as creator encounter so many scientific theories about the origin of our world.

22:10 God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He ‘preaches’ to humanity (see too Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; in this sense Christ ‘went to’ people and preached without going Himself personally, 1 Pet. 3:19). We are therefore very intensely manifesting Him whenever we take His word to others, and our behaviour should reflect that.

22:11 The Old Testament describes Yahweh, the one true God, as riding through the heavens on chariots to the help of His people Israel (see too Dt. 33:26; Ps. 18:10; 104:3; Is. 19:1; Hab. 3:8). But Baal was known as ‘the one who rides upon the clouds’. Clearly the language of Baal is being appropriated to Yahweh, teaching Israel that there was no other God apart from God, no cosmic satan bringing evil, no gods of good bringing blessing – all was from Yahweh (Is. 45:5-7). Often the Bible alludes to contemporary language used about false beliefs and deconstructs them, and the passages which do this are often misunderstood because readers are unaware of the local language and ideas being deconstructed.

fore Him, coals of fire were kindled.

¹⁴ Yahweh thundered from heaven, the Most High uttered His voice.

¹⁵ He sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and confused them.

¹⁶ Then the channels of the sea were exposed, the foundations of the world were laid bare by the rebuke of Yahweh, by the blast of the breath of His nostrils. ¹⁷ He sent from on high and He took me, He drew me out of many waters. ¹⁸ He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

¹⁹ They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support. ²⁰ He also brought me out into a large place. He delivered me, because He delighted in me. ²¹ Yahweh rewarded me according to my righteousness. He rewarded me according to the cleanness of my hands. ²² For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God. ²³ For all His ordinances were

before me. As for His statutes, I did not depart from them. ²⁴ I was also perfect towards Him; I kept myself from my iniquity. ²⁵ Therefore Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eyesight. ²⁶ With the merciful You will show Yourself to have bowed the neck; with the perfect man You will show Yourself perfect. ²⁷ With the purified You will show Yourself pure, with the crooked You will show Yourself tortuous.

God's Way Is Perfect

²⁸ You will save the afflicted people, but Your eyes are on the proud, that You may bring them down. ²⁹ For You are my lamp, Yahweh. Yahweh will light up my darkness. ³⁰ For by You, I run against a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall. ³¹ As for God, His way is perfect. The word of Yahweh is tested. He is a shield to all

22:21-25 David at the end of his life could say that he was upright and had kept himself from his iniquity – despite his sins concerning Bathsheba and Uriah. He could only say this by a clear understanding of the concept of imputed righteousness (Ps. 32:1-8), believing that he was totally “purified” from the past (:27). He really believed it and felt it, as we should. Paul’s claim to have always lived in a pure conscience must be seen in the same way (Acts 23:1; 2 Tim. 1:3) – when there were times when he kicked against the goads in his conscience (Acts 9:5).

22:26 *To have bowed the neck* – The Hebrew word only occurs elsewhere in Prov. 25:10 concerning ‘bowing the neck’ in shame or reverence. And this is what the Hebrew means: to bow the neck. This, David recognized in his time of spiritual maturity, was what God does in response to those who show a truly spiritual attitude to their brethren. David thus recognized the humility of God; all the characteristics we are asked to demonstrate are emulations of His characteristics, and humility is one of them.

22:31 David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. “God, my rock [is] my shield... he is a shield to *all* those who take refuge in Him” (:3,31). “I am in distress; let *us* fall now into the hand of Yahweh” (24:14) reflects this. When he sung Psalms, he invited Israel to come and sing along with him

those who take refuge in Him. ³² For who is God, besides Yahweh? Who is a rock, besides our God? ³³ God is my strong fortress. He makes my way perfect. ³⁴ He makes His feet like hinds' feet, and sets me on my high places. ³⁵ He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms bend a bow of brass. ³⁶ You have also given me the shield of your salvation. Your gentleness has made me great. ³⁷ You have enlarged my steps under me. My feet have not slipped. ³⁸ I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them. I didn't turn again until they were consumed. ³⁹ I have consumed them, and struck them through, so that they can't arise. Yes, they have fallen under my feet. ⁴⁰ For You have armed me with strength for the battle. You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. ⁴¹ You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, so that I might cut off those who hate me. ⁴² They looked, but there was none to save; even to Yahweh, but He didn't answer them. ⁴³ Then I beat them as small as the dust of the earth. I crushed them as the mire of the streets, and spread them abroad. ⁴⁴ You also have delivered me from the strivings of my people. You have preserved me to be the head of the nations. A people whom I have not known will serve me. ⁴⁵ The foreigners will submit themselves to me. As

soon as they hear of me, they will obey me. ⁴⁶ The foreigners will fade away, and will come trembling out of their hiding places. ⁴⁷ Yahweh lives! Blessed be my rock! Exalted be God, the rock of my salvation, ⁴⁸ even the God who executes vengeance for me, who brings down peoples under me, ⁴⁹ who delivers from my enemies. Yes, You lift me up above those who rise up against me. You deliver me from the violent man. ⁵⁰ Therefore I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations. I will sing praises to your name. ⁵¹ He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore.

CHAPTER 23 Aug. 5

David's Last Words

Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse says, the man who was raised on high says, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: ² The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me. His word was on my tongue. ³ The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'One who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God, ⁴ shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, like the clear shining after rain'. ⁵ Most cer-

(Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). In this we see foreshadowed the representative nature of the work, being and sacrifice of Jesus.

23:2 The inspired writers of the Bible spoke their words because God's Spirit was moving them (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

23:4 *Like the clear shining after rain* – David was talking about his promised descendant, Jesus, for he knew his own immediate family wasn't going to totally fulfil

tainly my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He doesn't make it grow. ⁶ But all of the ungodly shall be as thorns to be thrust away, because they can't be taken with the hand; ⁷ but the man who touches them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear. They shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

David's Mighty Men

⁸ These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb Basshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite, who slew eight hundred at one time. ⁹ After him was Eleazar the son

of Dodai the son of an Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines who were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel had fled away. ¹⁰ He arose, and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand froze to the sword; and Yahweh worked a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to take spoil. ¹¹ After him was Sham-mah the son of Agee a Hararite. The Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the people fled from the Philistines. ¹² But he stood in the midst of the plot and defended it, and killed the Philistines; and Yahweh worked a great victory. ¹³ Three of the thirty chief men went

the promises to him about the Kingdom of God (:5). Christ's future Kingdom will be like the dawn of a new day in which He is like the sun (Mal. 4:2), after the rain of all this world's problems has finally ended.

23:5 Is. 26:8,9 parallels "the desire of my soul" with "my spirit"; it is the dominant desire of a man. For David, the salvation promised to him through Christ was "all my desire". The direction of his life was towards that end. 2 Chron. 15:12,15 parallels seeking God with having our whole desire for Him, giving all our heart and soul to Him. God judges a man's life with regard to where the essential, dominant desire of his heart is focused. And like David, our dominant desire should be for the coming of the Kingdom.

23:6, 7 *The ungodly shall be as thorns... the man who touches them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear. They shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place* – Jesus had this in mind when He taught that only He could root up the weeds; we cannot do so (Mt. 13:24-30). The wicked will be destroyed in the same place (just outside Jerusalem) where Christ was "filled with iron" by the spear thrust. It isn't possible for us to uproot the tares because this can only possibly be done by the One who totally uprooted sin in Himself, dying to it on the cross. This association between Christ's unique right to judge and His victorious death is shown by the way the "thorns" will be burnt in the same area as He was crucified in. Literal Gehenna was in the same vicinity as Golgotha; and this in this sense His death was a foretaste of the future judgment. Phil. 2:9-11 reasons along the same lines; because Christ died for us, He *therefore* has the right to have every knee bowing to Him at the judgment. On account of being "the Son of man" and yet also being our perfect Messiah, He has the right *therefore* to be judge (Jn. 5:27 cp. Dan. 7:13,14).

down, and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam; and the troop of the Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. ¹⁵ David longed and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! ¹⁶ The three mighty men broke through the army of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but he would not drink of it, but poured it out to Yahweh. ¹⁷ He said, Be it far from me, Yahweh, that I should do this! Isn't it the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. The three mighty men did these things. ¹⁸ Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the three. He lifted up his spear against three hundred and killed them, and had a name among the three. ¹⁹ Wasn't he the most honourable of the three? Therefore he was made their captain: however, he didn't attain to the three. ²⁰ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds, he killed the two sons of Ariel of Moab: he went down also and killed a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. ²¹ He killed an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand,

and killed him with his own spear. ²² Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did these things, and had a name among the three mighty men. ²³ He was more honourable than the thirty, but he didn't attain to the three. David set him over his guard. ²⁴ Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, ²⁵ Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, ²⁶ Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, ²⁷ Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, ²⁸ Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, ²⁹ Heleb the son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, ³⁰ Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, ³¹ Abialbon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, ³² Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, ³³ Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite, ³⁴ Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, ³⁵ Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, ³⁶ Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, ³⁷ Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armour bearers to Joab the son of Zeruiah, ³⁸ Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ³⁹ Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

CHAPTER 24 Aug. 6

David Numbers Israel and Judah

Again the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and He

24:1 The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents, as the four gospels are records of the same events but using different language. Here,

moved David against them saying, Go, number Israel and Judah. ² The king said to Joab the captain of the army, who was with him, Now go back and forth through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the sum of the people. ³ Joab said to the king, Now may Yahweh your God add to the people, however many they may be, one hundred times; and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king delight in this thing? ⁴ Notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the army. Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel. ⁵ They passed over the Jordan, and encamped in Arzer, on the right side of the city that is in the middle of the valley of Gad, and to Jazer: ⁶ then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; and they came to Dan Jaan, and around to Sidon, ⁷ and came to the stronghold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites; and they went out to the south of Judah, at Beersheba. ⁸ So when they had gone back and forth through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months

and twenty days. ⁹ Joab delivered the sum of the numbering of the people to the king; and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

David Begs God's Mercy

¹⁰ David's heart struck him after that he had numbered the people. David said to Yahweh, I have sinned greatly in that which I have done. But now, Yahweh, put away, I beg you, the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly. ¹¹ When David rose up in the morning, the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹² Go and speak to David, 'Thus says Yahweh, I offer you three things. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you'. ¹³ So Gad came to David, and told him, and said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days of plague in your land? Now answer, and consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me. ¹⁴ David said to Gad, I am in distress; let us fall now into the hand of Yahweh; for His mercies are

Yahweh moved David against Israel in order to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel account in 1 Chron. 21:1 says that "Satan" moved David to take the census. In one passage God does the 'moving', in the other Satan does it. God acted as a 'Satan' or adversary to David. He did the same to Job by bringing trials into his life, so that Job said about God: "With the strength of Your hand You oppose me" (Job 30:21); 'You are acting as a Satan against me', was what Job was basically saying. The word 'satan' of itself carries no sinful or evil connotation; it simply means an adversary. See on 19:22.

24:14 It is written in the context of God's final condemnation that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). But David said that he would

great. Let me not fall into the hand of man. ¹⁵ So Yahweh sent a plague on Israel from the morning even to the appointed time; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men. ¹⁶ When the angel stretched out his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it, Yahweh relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who destroyed the people, It is enough. Now stay your hand. The angel of Yahweh was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁷ David had spoken to Yahweh when he saw the angel who struck the people, and had said, Behold, I have sinned, and I have done perversely; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me, and against my father's house.

The Plague Afflicting Israel Is Stopped

¹⁸ Gad came that day to David and said to him, Go up, build an altar to Yahweh on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁹ David went up according to the saying of Gad, as Yahweh commanded. ²⁰ Araunah looked out, and saw the king and his servants coming on towards him. Then Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. ²¹ Araunah said, Why has my lord the king come to his servant? David said, To buy your threshing floor, to build an altar to Yahweh, that the plague may be stopped from afflicting the people. ²² Araunah said to David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Behold, the

prefer to fall into the hands of God rather than into the hands of man. To fall into the hands of God is thus a figure for judgment / condemnation by Him. Fearful as it is, it is actually far milder than the judgment of men. This is how cruel our judgment of others can be; this is how awful is human condemnation of each other. It is worse that God's. No wonder that the Lord established "Judge not..." as a foundation principle for His true people. God is kinder than men. It's better to be punished by Him than by men. This puts paid to the Catholic conception of God as a merciless torturer of wicked men. Clearly the doctrine of eternal torments was invented by men, not God.

24:16, 17 Thanks to David building an altar at his own expense and asking God to kill him and his family, God stopped the plague upon Israel; the stretched out hand of God in destruction was what David asked to be upon him and his family. Israel were suffering the effect of their own sin, in not paying the temple tax (Ex. 30:11-16); but in the spirit of Christ, David was willing to die for them. And his dominant desire was counted as if it had been done, and thanks to his self-sacrificial spirit, the people were saved when they personally were unworthy. The wrath of God can be turned away by the actions of those He is angry with (Num. 25:4; Dt. 13:15-17; Ezra 10:14; Jonah 3:7,10; 2 Chron. 12:7; Jer. 4:4; 21:12). And yet that wrath can also be turned away by the prayers of a third party (Ps. 106:23; Jer. 18:20; Job 42:7). This means that in some cases, our prayers for others can be counted as if they have repented. We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7).

cattle for the burnt offering, and the threshing instruments and the yokes of the oxen for the wood: ²³ all this, my king, does Araunah give to the king. Araunah said to the king, May Yahweh your God accept you. ²⁴ The king said to Araunah, No; but I will most certainly buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offer-

ings to Yahweh my God which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. ²⁵ David built an altar to Yahweh there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So Yahweh heard the prayer for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 1 Aug. 7

Adonijah's Rebellion

Now king David was old and advanced in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he couldn't keep warm. ² Therefore his servants said to him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin. Let her stand before the king, and cherish him; and let her lie on your chest, so that my lord the king may keep warm. ³ So they sought for a beautiful young lady throughout all the borders of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. ⁴ The young lady was very beautiful; and she cherished the king, and ministered to him; but the king didn't know her intimately. ⁵ Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king. Then he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. ⁶ His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so? And he was also a very handsome man; and he was born after Absalom. ⁷ He conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest: they followed Adonijah and helped him. ⁸ But Zadok the priest,

Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei and the mighty men who belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. ⁹ Adonijah killed sheep and cattle and fatlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En Rogel; and he called all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants: ¹⁰ but Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he didn't call.

Nathan and Bathsheba Persuade David to Pronounce Solomon as King

¹¹ Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon saying, Haven't you heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith reigns, and David our lord doesn't know it? ¹² Now therefore come, please let me give you advice, that you may save your own life, and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³ Go in to king David and tell him, 'Didn't you, my lord, king, swear to your handmaid saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then does Adonijah reign?' ¹⁴ Whilst you are talking

1:2 This cure for hypothermia seems to leave somewhat to be desired in moral terms. Even if we want to do the best for someone, that genuine motivation shouldn't lead us to cross moral boundaries; for we may lead others into sin by doing so. There are many such incidents recorded in Biblical history which are left open-ended, as it were, for us to reflect upon as to whether they were sin or not. This is intentional; to provoke our thought and introspection.

1:6 David hadn't disciplined his son because he wanted to please him – and it resulted in this awful betrayal. The parental role isn't to please their children, but to raise them to be God's children.

there with the king, I also will come in after you, and confirm your words. ¹⁵ Bathsheba went in to the king into the room. The king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite was ministering to the king. ¹⁶ Bathsheba bowed, and showed respect to the king. The king said, What would you like? ¹⁷ She said to him, My lord, you swore by Yahweh your God to your handmaid, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne’. ¹⁸ Now, look, Adonijah reigns; and you, my lord the king, don’t know it. ¹⁹ He has killed cattle, fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the army; but he hasn’t called Solomon your servant. ²⁰ You, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, that you should tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. ²¹ Otherwise it will happen, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. ²² Behold, while she still talked with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. ²³ They told the king, saying, Here is Nathan the prophet! When he had come in before the king, he bowed down before

the king with his face to the ground. ²⁴ Nathan said, My lord, king, have you said, ‘Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne?’ ²⁵ For he is gone down this day, and has killed cattle and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has called all the king’s sons, and the captains of the army, and Abiathar the priest. Even now they are eating and drinking before him and saying, ‘Long live king Adonijah!’ ²⁶ But he hasn’t called me, even me your servant, nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon. ²⁷ Is this thing done by my lord the king, and you haven’t shown to your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him? ²⁸ Then king David answered, Call to me Bathsheba. She came into the king’s presence, and stood before the king. ²⁹ The king swore and said, As Yahweh lives, who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity, ³⁰ most certainly as I swore to you by Yahweh the God of Israel, saying, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place;’ most certainly so will I do this day. ³¹ Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and showed respect to the king, and said,

1:15 There’s something very tragic in this scene; Bathsheba, the one time beautiful woman whom David had risked his salvation to sleep with, comes in and finds a younger woman sexually stimulating David. The sins of youth seem so far away from old men on their deathbeds, but then they like all of us suffer the consequence of our sins. David’s calling of Bathsheba to come to him (:28) recalls how he had called her to come sleep with him many years before.

1:31 *Let my lord king David live forever* – This is an example of using language without literally believing the truth of the words; for Bathsheba has just pointed out that David is going to die (:21). The language of demon possession in the New Testament

Let my lord king David live forever! ³² King David said, Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. They came before the king. ³³ The king said to them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. ³⁴ Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel. Blow the trumpet, and say, 'Long live king Solomon!'. ³⁵ Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne; for he shall be king in my place. I have appointed him to be prince over Israel and over Judah. ³⁶ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, Amen. May Yahweh, the God of my lord the king, say so too. ³⁷ As Yahweh has been with my lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David.

Solomon Is Proclaimed King

³⁸ So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and caused Solomon to ride on king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. ³⁹ Zadok the priest took the horn of oil out of

the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. They blew the trumpet; and all the people said, Long live king Solomon! ⁴⁰ All the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth shook with their sound. ⁴¹ Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished eating. When Joab heard the sound of the trumpet he said, Why is this noise of the city being in an uproar? ⁴² While he yet spoke, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said, Come in; for you are a worthy man, and bring good news. ⁴³ Jonathan answered Adonijah, Most certainly our lord king David has made Solomon king. ⁴⁴ The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and they have caused him to ride on the king's mule. ⁴⁵ Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon. They have come up from there rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that you have heard. ⁴⁶ Also, Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom. ⁴⁷ Moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David saying, 'May your God make the name of

and other non-scientific usages of language in the Bible must be considered in this light.

1:42 *You are a worthy man, and bring good news* – We too can assume that the message carried by a person must be good and true because we perceive them to be a good person. Yet they are only 'good' in our eyes, in our experience and perception of them. The messages we receive from others must somehow be separated by us from our perception of them as a person, and in our context, compared against God's revealed word before we accept them as true.

Solomon better than your name, and make his throne greater than your throne'; and the king bowed himself on the bed.⁴⁸ Also thus said the king, 'Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who has given one to sit on my throne this day, my eyes even seeing it'.⁴⁹ All the guests of Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and each man went his way.⁵⁰ Adonijah feared because of Solomon; and he arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.⁵¹ It was told Solomon saying, Behold, Adonijah fears king Solomon; for, behold, he has laid hold on the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let king Solomon swear to me first that he will not kill his servant with the sword'.⁵² Solomon said, If he shows himself a worthy man, not a hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness be found in him, he shall die.⁵³ So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. He came and bowed down to king Solomon; and Solomon said to him, Go to your house.

CHAPTER 2 Aug. 8

David Charges Solomon

Now the days of David drew near that he should die; and he com-

manded Solomon his son saying,² I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong therefore, and show yourself a man;³ and keep the instruction of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn yourself.⁴ This is so that Yahweh may establish His word which He spoke concerning me saying, 'If your children take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you', He said, 'a man on the throne of Israel'.⁵ Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me and what he did to the two captains of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war on his sash that was about his waist, and in his shoes that were on his feet.⁶ Do therefore according to your wisdom, and don't let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace.⁷ But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them

1:48 *My eyes even seeing it* – The promise of 2 Sam. 7:16 about David's great son being established on his throne referred to Christ reigning on David's throne at His return to earth, when David would be resurrected to see it. But in his old age, David seems to have lost focus upon Christ and become obsessed with the idea of having God's promises fulfilled in this life, and he came to see Solomon as the fulfilment of the promises more than Christ. No matter how long we have been in Christ, we must be aware that we can always let our focus upon Him slip, and seek for the fulfilment of the Kingdom promises in this life rather than their main, intended fulfilment in the future Kingdom.

2:2 *Show yourself a man* – David here redefines manliness as obedience to God's law; he entirely subverts the stereotype of 'manliness'.

be of those who eat at your table; for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother. ⁸ Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I vowed to him by Yahweh saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword'. ⁹ Now therefore don't hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down to Sheol with blood. ¹⁰ David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹ The days that David reigned over Israel were forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

Solomon Destroys His Rivals

¹² Solomon sat on the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was firmly established. ¹³ Then Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. She said, Do you come peaceably? He said, Peaceably. ¹⁴ He said moreo-

ver, I have something to tell you. She said, Say on. ¹⁵ He said, You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign. However the kingdom is turned around, and has become my brother's; for it was his from Yahweh. ¹⁶ Now I ask one petition of you. Don't deny me. She said to him, Say on. ¹⁷ He said, Please speak to Solomon the king (for he will not tell you 'no'), that he give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife. ¹⁸ Bathsheba said, Alright. I will speak for you to the king. ¹⁹ Bathsheba therefore went to king Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. The king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. ²⁰ Then she said, I ask one small petition of you; don't deny me. The king said to her, Ask on, my mother; for I will not deny you. ²¹ She said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife. ²² King Solomon answered his mother, Why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also;

2:7 *Let them be of those who eat at your table* – To eat at the king's table was a sign of acceptance and special favour; and all believers are invited to eat at Christ's table at the breaking of bread. To refuse or ignore the invitation is to turn down a great honour.

2:8, 9 David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: here he asks Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident. And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote the words of Ps. 109:16-18 wishing cursing upon Shimei. We too must struggle to keep up the level of grace we may show to a person, to the end of our lives. Forgiveness in this sense isn't a one time act, but an ever continuing process we engage in.

for he is my elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah. ²³ Then king Solomon vowed by Yahweh saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life. ²⁴ Now therefore as Yahweh lives, who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as He promised, surely Adonijah shall be put to death this day. ²⁵ King Solomon sent by Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell on him, so that he died. ²⁶ To Abiathar the priest the king said, Go to Anathoth, to your own fields; for you are worthy of death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord Yahweh before David my father, and because you were afflicted in all in which my father was afflicted. ²⁷ So

Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest to Yahweh, that he might fulfil the word of Yahweh, which He spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. ²⁸ The news came to Joab; for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he didn't turn after Absalom. Joab fled to the tabernacle of Yahweh, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. ²⁹ It was told king Solomon, Joab has fled to the tabernacle of Yahweh, and behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada saying, Go, fall on him. ³⁰ Benaiah came to the tabernacle of Yahweh and said to him, Thus says the king, 'Come forth!'. He said, No; but I will die here. Benaiah brought the king word again saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. ³¹ The king said to him, Do as he has said, and fall on him, and bury him; that you may take away the blood

2:24 *Who has made me a house, as He promised* – The promise to David was that he would have a son who on account of his obedience would be given an eternal kingdom / house. The main fulfilment was to be in Messiah, the Son of God. But Solomon too quickly assumed the promise was to him and that his success in establishing his own kingdom was a fulfilment of that promise; and he overlooked the conditions. He does the same in :45 when he pronounces that “king Solomon shall be blessed”, again ignoring the conditions attached to the promised blessings. We too can do the same – overlooking, skimming over, the conditions of immortality, and assuming any present blessing is a sign we are ultimately acceptable with God.

2:28 The legal codes of the surrounding nations held that certain physical, sacred places could be entered and provide even murderers with freedom from judgment. The Torah allows this in some cases, but not in the case of deliberate murder. Thus when Joab grabs the horns of the altar, thinking he therefore couldn't be slain for his sin, he is dragged away and slain. This would've read strangely to many of the surrounding peoples. Hammurabi's laws had a sliding scale of punishment according to the social status of the person who had been harmed by misbehaviour – if a rich man struck out the eye of a 'commoner', he had to pay less compensation than if he did so to a person of higher status. The Torah reflects the immense value placed by God upon the human person; for such distinctions are totally absent in it. We are to likewise perceive the value and meaning of persons, and treat them accordingly.

which Joab shed without cause, from me and from my father's house. ³² Yahweh will return his blood on his own head, because he fell on two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword, and my father David didn't know it: Abner the son of Ner, captain of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the army of Judah. ³³ So shall their blood return on the head of Joab, and on the head of his seed forever. But to David, and to his seed, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace forever from Yahweh. ³⁴ Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell on him, and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. ³⁵ The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army; and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar. ³⁶ The king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and don't go out anywhere from there. ³⁷ For on the day you go out, and pass over the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall surely die: your blood shall be on your own head. ³⁸ Shimei said to the king, The saying is good. As my lord the king has said, so will your servant do. Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days. ³⁹ It happened at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. They told Shimei saying, Behold, your servants are in Gath. ⁴⁰ Shimei arose, saddled his donkey,

and went to Gath to Achish, to seek his servants; and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath. ⁴¹ It was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had come again. ⁴² The king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, Didn't I adjure you by Yahweh and warn you, saying, 'Know for certain, that on the day you go out, and walk abroad any where, you shall surely die?'. You said to me, 'The saying that I have heard is good'. ⁴³ Why then have you not kept the oath of Yahweh, and the commandment that I have instructed you with? ⁴⁴ The king said moreover to Shimei, You know all the wickedness which your heart knows full well, what you did to David my father. Therefore Yahweh shall return your wickedness on your own head. ⁴⁵ But king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before Yahweh forever. ⁴⁶ So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out, and fell on him, so that he died. The kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

CHAPTER 3 Aug. 9

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of Yahweh, and the wall of Jerusalem all around. ² At that time the people sacrificed in the high places, because there was no

house built for the name of Yahweh. ³ Solomon loved Yahweh, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. ⁴ The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ In Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give you. ⁶ Solomon said, You have shown to Your servant David my father great grace, according as he walked before You in truth, righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You. You have kept for him this great grace, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. ⁷ Now, Yahweh my God, You have made Your servant king instead of David my father. I am but a little child. I don't know how to go out or come in. ⁸ Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people, that can't be numbered nor counted for multitude. ⁹ Give Your servant therefore an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this Your great people? ¹⁰ The speech pleased the Lord,

that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ God said to him, Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life, neither have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice; ¹² therefore I have done according to your word. Behold, I have already given you a wise and an understanding heart; so that there has been none like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like you. ¹³ I have also given you that which you have not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like you, all your days. ¹⁴ If you will walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days. ¹⁵ Solomon awoke; and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

The Two Prostitutes

¹⁶ Then two women who were prostitutes came to the king, and stood before him. ¹⁷ The one woman

3:3 It seems that Solomon loved God insofar as this was a living out of parental expectations; David is spoken of by both Solomon and the record as Solomon's "father" hundreds of times. Yet God will work in our lives so that our love of Him is purely of our own account, rather than the living out of parental or others' expectations.

3:12 *I have already given you* – God may have prepared great things potentially for us, which are only 'released' by our prayer for them. Solomon asked God for a wise heart – but he was told that God had already given him this. The process of educating Solomon in wisdom would have started long before; but it was released, as it were, by Solomon's specific prayer.

said, Oh my lord, I and this woman live in one house. I gave birth with her in the house. ¹⁸ It happened the third day after I gave birth, that this woman gave birth also. We were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, just us two in the house. ¹⁹ This woman's child died in the night, because she lay on it. ²⁰ She arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while your handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. ²¹ When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, it was dead; but when I had looked at it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, whom I bore. ²² The other woman said, No; but the living is my son, and the dead is your son. The other said, No; but the dead is your son, and the living is my son. Thus they spoke before the king. ²³ Then the king said, The one says, 'This is my son who lives, and your son is the dead'; and the other says, 'No;

but your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one'. ²⁴ The king said, Get me a sword. They brought a sword before the king. ²⁵ The king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. ²⁶ Then the woman whose the living child was spoke to the king, for her heart yearned over her son, and she said, Oh my lord, give her the living child, and in no way kill it! But the other said, It shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide it. ²⁷ Then the king answered, Give her the living child, and in no way kill it. She is its mother. ²⁸ All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do justice.

CHAPTER 4 Aug. 10

The Administration of Solomon's Kingdom

King Solomon was king over all Israel. ² These were the princes

3:26 Solomon immediately demonstrated his wisdom by the way he judged between the two prostitutes who came to him. They lived in the same house, and had given birth at the same time. The whole situation spoke of the kind of shameless prostitution which the Mosaic Law demanded should be punished by death. But the way of Divine wisdom in this case was not to automatically apply Divine law in condemning sinners. Instead, by cutting to the conscience within those women and appealing to it, they were led to at least the possibility of repentance, transformation and salvation. Solomon's wisdom was given him in order to know how to guide God's great people. The way of wisdom is therefore sometimes not to press a point when someone's in the wrong. We see this in all levels of relationships. There are weak points in relationships, fissure lines, which when pressed or brought under tension will cause earthquakes and destruction. It's best not to press on them; and yet if they are ignored, then the quality of relationship suffers and descends into interacting only over 'safe' matters. So what are we to do? By not raising the obvious issue – you're prostitutes and must be put to death – Solomon showed grace, but he showed it in such a way that those women surely couldn't have felt the same again; rather like the woman taken in adultery in Jn. 8:1-11. The very fact she was not condemned by the One who could condemn her – meant that she went away indeed vowing to "sin no more".

whom he had: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; ³ Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; ⁴ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ⁵ Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan was chief officer, the king's friend; ⁶ Ahishar was over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the men subject to forced labour. ⁷ Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household: each man had to make provision for a month in the year. ⁸ These are their names: Ben Hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; ⁹ Ben Deker, in Makaz, and in Shaalvim, and Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan; ¹⁰ Ben Hessed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh, and all the land of Hepher); ¹¹ Ben Abinadab, in all the height of Dor (he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as wife); ¹² Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth Shean which is beside Zarethan, beneath Jezreel, from Beth Shean to Abel Meholah, as far as beyond Jokmeam; ¹³ Ben Geber, in Ramoth Gilead (to him belonged the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead; to him belonged

the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars); ¹⁴ Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; ¹⁵ Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as wife); ¹⁶ Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; ¹⁷ Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; ¹⁸ Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin; ¹⁹ Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only officer who was in the land. ²⁰ Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry. ²¹ Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt: they brought tribute, and served Solomon all the days of his life. ²² Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal, ²³ ten head of fat cattle, twenty head of cattle out of the pastures, one hundred sheep, besides harts, gazelles, roebucks and fattened fowl. ²⁴ For he had dominion over all on this side of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings on this side of the River: and he had peace on all sides around him. ²⁵ Judah and Israel lived

4:20 The promises of the future Kingdom were fulfilled to a limited extent at this time; Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (2 Sam. 17:11), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6) – all in antitype of how we, Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

4:25 Rabshakeh promised the Jews an Assyrian Kingdom where everyone sat under their own vine and fig tree – consciously parodying Micah's contemporary prophecies of God's future Kingdom (Is. 36:16 cp. Mic. 4:4). The Assyrian Kingdom was being

safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. ²⁶ Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. ²⁷ Those officers provided food for king Solomon, and for all who came to king Solomon's table, every man in his month; they let nothing be lacking. ²⁸ Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds brought they to the place where the officers were, each man according to his duty.

The Wisdom of Solomon

²⁹ God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and very great perception, according to the sand which is on the seashore. ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol, Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations all around. ³² He

spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs were one thousand and five. ³³ He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, birds, creeping things and fish. ³⁴ There came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

CHAPTER 5 Aug. 10

Hiram Cooperates with Solomon to Build the Temple

Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the place of his father: for Hiram had always admired David. ² Solomon sent to Hiram saying, ³ You know how that David my father could not build a house for the name of Yahweh his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until Yahweh put his enemies under the soles of his feet. ⁴ But now Yahweh my God has given me rest

presented as a parody of Solomon's, which was the Kingdom of God (2 Chron. 9:8). Our surrounding world comprises "the kingdoms of this world" (Rev. 11:15); it is a fake kingdom of God. We have a choice between God's Kingdom and that of this world, although to unspiritual eyes, this world with its promises of a wonderful life here and now can appear a replica of *God's Kingdom*.

4:29 *According to the sand which is on the seashore* – The same term is used in :20 to describe the number of the Israelites. Solomon was given wisdom in order to assist them. We should search for wisdom in order to be of spiritual assistance to others, to God's glory. Bible study is of no value unless we harness it to the service of God's people. Our search for knowledge in every aspect of life must be because we seek to turn it into wisdom.

5:4 *Adversary* – Heb. 'satan'. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the Greek word *diabolos* to translate the Hebrew 'satan'. Hence Devil and Satan are effectively parallel in meaning. Thus we read in the Septuagint of David being an adversary [Heb. *Satan*, Gk. *diabolos*] in 1 Sam. 29:4; the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. 19:22), Hadad, Rezon and other opponents to Solomon (1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25). If

on every side. There is no adversary nor any evil occurrence. ⁵ Behold, I purpose to build a house for the name of Yahweh my God, as Yahweh spoke to David my father saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name'. ⁶ Now therefore command that they cut me cedar trees out of Lebanon. My servants shall be with your servants; and I will give you wages for your servants according to all that you shall say. For you know that there is not among us any who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians. ⁷ It happened, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he was very pleased and said, Blessed is Yahweh this day, who has given to David a wise son over this great people. ⁸ Hiram sent to Solomon saying, I have heard the message which you have sent to me. I will do all your desire concerning timber of cedar and concerning timber of fir. ⁹ My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon to the sea. I will make them into rafts to go by sea to the place that you shall appoint me, and will cause them to be broken up there, and you shall receive them. You shall accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. ¹⁰ So

Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of fir according to all his desire. ¹¹ Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food for his household, and twenty measures of pure oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year. ¹² Yahweh had given Solomon wisdom, as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a treaty together. ¹³ King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. ¹⁴ He sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses; a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home; and Adoniram was over the men subject to forced labour. ¹⁵ Solomon had seventy thousand who bore burdens, and eighty thousand who were stone cutters in the mountains; ¹⁶ besides Solomon's chief officers who were over the work, three thousand three hundred, who bore rule over the people who laboured in the work. ¹⁷ The king commanded, and they cut out great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with worked stone. ¹⁸ Solomon's builders along with Hiram's builders and the Gebalites cut them, and prepared the timber and the stones to build the house.

we believe that every reference to 'Satan' or 'Devil' refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren't people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that 'satan' is simply a word meaning 'adversary', and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself – it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word. The idea is sometimes used to describe our greatest adversary, i.e. our own sin, and at times for whole systems or empires.

5:12 The practical result of wisdom was peace between persons, and this should be the practical outcome of translating all our knowledge of God into practical wisdom.

CHAPTER 6 Aug. 11***The Plan of the Temple***

It happened in the four hundred and Leightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh. ² The house which king Solomon built for Yahweh, its length was sixty cubits, and its breadth twenty, and its height thirty cubits. ³ The porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was its length, according to the breadth of the house. Ten cubits was its breadth before the house. ⁴ He made windows of fixed lattice work for the house. ⁵ Against the wall of the house he built storeys all around, against the walls of the house all around, both of the temple and of the oracle; and he made side rooms all around. ⁶ The lowest storey was five cubits broad, and the middle was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad; for on the outside he made offsets in the wall

of the house all around, so that the supporting beams should not should not be inserted into the walls of the house. ⁷ The house, when it was in building, was built of stone prepared at the quarry; and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building. ⁸ The door for the middle side rooms was in the right side of the house: and they went up by winding stairs into the middle storey, and out of the middle into the third. ⁹ So he built the house, and finished it; and he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar. ¹⁰ He built the storeys against the whole house, each five cubits high: and they were attached to the house by cedar beams. ¹¹ The word of Yahweh came to Solomon saying, ¹² Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes, and execute My ordinances, and keep all My commandments to walk in them; then will I establish My word with you, which I spoke to David your father. ¹³ I will dwell among the chil-

6:7 We are represented by these stones of the temple (1 Pet. 2:5); we are being quarried and shaped now by the hand of God in our lives, and will be assembled into the temple at Christ's return. It will be too late then for corners to be knocked off; the shaping process is going on now. Stones need shaping so that they fit nicely with the other stones, in order to be a useful part of the entire house. Spiritual isolation isn't therefore what God intends; the shaping process involves us in inter-personal relationships and getting along with others, rather than walking away every time there is awkward conflict.

6:12 God saw the need to remind Solomon that he was still required to be obedient; the promises about him were always conditional upon this. Solomon was tempted to reason that because of his works and his outstanding effort in building the temple, he was thereby excused from practical obedience in other areas of his life. We too can face the same temptation; to serve God in one area of our lives and think that this excuses us from submitting our entire lives to His word.

6:13 Thanks to Solomon's prayer, and *if* he had been obedient, all Israel would have

dren of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel. ¹⁴ So Solomon built the house, and finished it. ¹⁵ He built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar: from the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the house with boards of fir. ¹⁶ He built twenty cubits on the back part of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the ceiling: he built them for it within, for an inner sanctuary, even for the most holy place. ¹⁷ In front of the temple sanctuary was forty cubits. ¹⁸ There was cedar on the house within, carved with buds and open flowers: all was cedar; there was no stone seen.

The Inner Sanctuary

¹⁹ He prepared an inner sanctuary in the midst of the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of Yahweh. ²⁰ Within the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in its height; and he overlaid it with pure gold: and he covered the altar with cedar. ²¹ So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he drew chains of gold across before the inner sanctuary; and he overlaid it with gold. ²² The whole

house he overlaid with gold, until all the house was finished: also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold. ²³ In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. ²⁴ Five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing to the uttermost part of the other were ten cubits. ²⁵ The other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubim were of one measure and one form. ²⁶ The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was it of the other cherub. ²⁷ He set the cherubim within the inner house; and the wings of the cherubim were stretched forth, so that the wing of the one touched the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house. ²⁸ He overlaid the cherubim with gold. ²⁹ He carved all the walls of the house around with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, inside and outside. ³⁰ The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, inside and outside. ³¹ For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood: the lintel and door posts were a fifth part of the wall. ³² So he

been blessed and experienced Yahweh dwelling amongst them. Our obedience or disobedience really can affect third parties.

6:19 *Inner sanctuary* – Translated in some Bibles as “oracle”, the Hebrew word thus translated also means ‘the word’, and can be interpreted as meaning ‘the speaking place’. God speaks to us today in His word; as we read His word and respond to it, we are in the most holy place, as God speaks to us and we respond – whether we read on the bus, hear it on our headphones or read in bed at night. Daily Bible reading is therefore so important in our personal relationship with God.

made two doors of olive wood; and he carved on them carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim, and on the palm trees. ³³ In the same way he also made for the entrance of the temple door posts of olive wood, out of a fourth part of the wall; ³⁴ and two doors of fir wood: the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. ³⁵ He carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers; and he overlaid them with gold fitted on the engraved work. ³⁶ He built the inner court with three courses of cut stone, and a course of cedar beams. ³⁷ In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of Yahweh laid, in the month Ziv. ³⁸ In the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all its parts, and according to all its fashion. Thus he was seven years in building it.

CHAPTER 7 Aug. 12

Solomon's House

Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. ² For he built the house of the forest of Lebanon; its length was one hundred cubits, and its breadth fifty cubits, and its height

thirty cubits, on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. ³ It was covered with cedar above over the forty-five beams, that were on the pillars; fifteen in a row. ⁴ There were window frames in three rows, and window was over against window in three ranks. ⁵ All the doors and posts had square frames: and window was opposite window in three tiers. ⁶ He made the porch of pillars; its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits; and a porch before them; and pillars and a threshold before them. ⁷ He made the hall of judgment for the throne where he was to judge, even the porch of judgment: and it was covered with cedar from floor to floor. ⁸ His house where he was to dwell had another court within the porch, which was of the same plan. He made also a house for Pharaoh's daughter (whom Solomon had taken as wife), like this porch. ⁹ All these were of costly stones, even of cut stone, according to measure, sawn with saws, inside and outside, even from the foundation to the coping, and so on the outside to the great court. ¹⁰ The foundation was of costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. ¹¹ Above were costly stones, cut stone, according to measure, and cedar wood. ¹² The great

6:38 *He was seven years in building it* – Perhaps prophetic of God's 7000 year plan to build a spiritual temple for Him to dwell in. Throughout the temple there was the theme of God's glory – the cherubim motif was throughout the building (:29). Our entire purpose both now and eternally is to give glory to God and not to ourselves.

7:1 Solomon spent nearly twice as long building his own house as he did God's house (6:38). He liked building (Ecc. 2:4); he served God in ways convenient to him, rather than taking up a cross and going against his own natural desires. See on 9:1.

court around had three courses of cut stone, and a course of cedar beams; like the inner court of the house of Yahweh, and the porch of the house.

The Two Pillars and Laver

¹³ King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. ¹⁴ He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill, to work all works in brass. He came to king Solomon, and performed all his work. ¹⁵ For he fashioned the two pillars of brass, each eighteen cubits high: and a line of twelve cubits encircled both of them around. ¹⁶ He made two capitals of molten brass, to set on the tops of the pillars: the height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. ¹⁷ There were nets of chequer work, and wreaths of chain work, for the capitals which were on the top of

the pillars; seven for the one capital, and seven for the other capital. ¹⁸ So he made the pillars; and there were two rows around on the one network, to cover the capitals that were on the top of the pillars: and he did so for the other capital. ¹⁹ The capitals that were on the top of the pillars in the porch were of carved lilies, four cubits. ²⁰ There were capitals above also on the two pillars, close by the cushion which was beside the network: and the pomegranates were two hundred, in rows around on the other capital. ²¹ He set up the pillars at the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called its name Jachin; and he set up the left pillar, and called its name Boaz. ²² On the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished. ²³ He made the molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and its height was five cubits; and a line of thirty cubits encircled it. ²⁴ Under its brim around

7:12 *Like as the inner court of the house of Yahweh* – Solomon was maybe unconsciously playing God, creating a throne for himself in similar and more glorious style to God's throne room in the temple.

7:23 Sometimes the Bible is very vague. There are times when the Spirit uses approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). And here 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty". Surely this is to show that God is God, not man, and as such He's not on the back foot, writing under the fear of criticism. His word is not contradictory, but on the other hand, God has more spiritual culture than to sink down to the level of a man who wanted to foresee all criticism in writing something which could stand all petty criticism. He has a spiritual culture much higher than this. And this is the answer to many of the petty objections about 'Bible contradictions' which are raised by cynics.

there were buds which encircled it, for ten cubits, encircling the sea: the buds were in two rows, cast when it was cast. ²⁵ It stood on twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south and three looking toward the east; and the sea was set on them above, and all their hinder parts were inward. ²⁶ It was a handbreadth thick: and its brim was worked like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily: it held two thousand baths. ²⁷ He made the ten bases of brass; four cubits was the length of one base, and four cubits its breadth, and three cubits its height. ²⁸ The work of the bases was like this: they had panels; and there were panels between the ledges; ²⁹ and on the panels that were between the ledges were lions, oxen, and cherubim; and on the ledges there was a pedestal above; and beneath the lions and oxen were wreaths of hanging work. ³⁰ Every base had four bronze wheels, and axles of brass; and the four feet of it had supports: beneath the basin were the supports molten, with wreaths at the side of each. ³¹ The mouth of it within the capital and above was a cubit: and its mouth was round after the work of a pedestal, a cubit and a half; and also on its mouth were engravings, and their panels were foursquare, not round. ³² The four

wheels were underneath the panels; and the axles of the wheels were in the base: and the height of a wheel was a cubit and half a cubit. ³³ The work of the wheels was like the work of a chariot wheel: their axles, and their rims, and their spokes, and their naves, were all molten. ³⁴ There were four supports at the four corners of each base: its supports were of the base itself. ³⁵ In the top of the base was there a round compass half a cubit high; and on the top of the base its stays and its panels were of the same. ³⁶ On the plates of its stays, and on its panels, he engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the space of each, with wreaths all around. ³⁷ In this way, he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, and one form. ³⁸ He made ten basins of brass: one basin contained forty baths; and every basin was four cubits; and on every one of the ten bases one basin. ³⁹ He set the bases, five on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house: and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward, toward the south. ⁴⁰ Hiram made the basins, and the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he worked for king Solomon in the house of Yahweh: ⁴¹ the two pillars, and the two bowls of the capitals that were

7:25 The sea or laver was a washing place in which the priests and sacrifices had to be washed before approaching God. It speaks of baptism under the new covenant, and is alluded to in Tit. 3:5, which speaks of our being saved by faith through the laver or bath of regeneration. Water baptism is part of the process of regeneration, the required expression of our faith in God's salvation, and is therefore vital for all who would come to God in this age.

on the top of the pillars; and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars; ⁴² and the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks; two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars; ⁴³ and the ten bases, and the ten basins on the bases; ⁴⁴ and the one sea, and the twelve oxen under the sea; ⁴⁵ and the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: even all these vessels, which Hiram made for king Solomon, in the house of Yahweh, were of burnished brass. ⁴⁶ The king cast them in the plain of the Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. ⁴⁷ Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many: the weight of the brass could not be found out.

The Utensils for the Temple

⁴⁸ Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of Yahweh: the golden altar, and the table whereupon the show bread was, of gold; ⁴⁹ and the lampstands, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, of pure gold; and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; ⁵⁰ and the cups, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the fire

panes, of pure gold; and the hinges, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, of the temple, of gold. ⁵¹ Thus all the work that king Solomon worked in the house of Yahweh was finished. Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold and the vessels, and put them in the treasures of the house of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 8 Aug. 13

The Temple Is Dedicated

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the families of the people of Israel, to king Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of the city of David, which is Zion. ² All the men of Israel assembled themselves to king Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. ³ All the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. ⁴ They brought up the ark of Yahweh, and the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent; all these the priests and the Levites brought up. ⁵ King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled to him, were with him before the ark, sac-

7:50 *The hinges... of gold* – Gold wasn't the most suitable material for many of the utensils. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). The life of faith means that we may do things which appear to have a very weak human basis, and yet this is how God loves to work – through the human weakness of decisions taken and work done in faith.

8:5 *Sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted nor numbered* – Solomon hadn't learnt the lesson his father David did after his sin with Bathsheba – that God doesn't really want multitudes of animal sacrifices, but rather the sacrifice of a broken heart and true internal spirituality (Ps. 50:8-15; 51:16,17; Is. 1:11; Jer. 7:22; Am.

rificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted nor numbered for multitude. ⁶ The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its poles above. ⁸ The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary; but they were not seen outside: and there they are to this day. ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ When the priests had come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house of Yahweh, ¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the

cloud; for the glory of Yahweh filled the house of Yahweh.

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

¹² Then Solomon said, Yahweh has said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. ¹³ I have surely built You a house, a place for You to dwell in forever. ¹⁴ The king turned his face about, and blessed all the assembly of Israel: and all the assembly of Israel stood. ¹⁵ He said, Blessed is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to David my father, and has with His hand fulfilled it, saying, ¹⁶ 'Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel'. ¹⁷ Now it was with the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. ¹⁸ But Yahweh said to David

5:25). We must be aware that organized religion so easily leads us to think that the externalities of religious devotion are all important; whereas it is internal spirituality which God seeks above all, and any organized religious system we are part of should be merely an assistance towards that, rather than an end in itself.

8:17 *It was with the heart of David* – In the Hebrew Bible, the idea of being “with” someone means to “be in one’s consciousness, whether of knowledge, memory or purpose”. Thus Job speaks of how what God plans to do to him is “with God”, i.e. in His purpose (Job 23:14); David is spoken of as having the idea about building a temple “with” him (here and 2 Chron. 6:7) – and see too Num. 14:24; 1 Kings 11:11; 1 Chron. 28:12; Job 10:13; 15:9; 23:10; 27:11; Ps. 50:11; 73:23. When we read of Jesus being “with” God from the beginning (Jn. 1:1-3), the Western mind can assume this means sitting literally together with Him. But Jesus didn’t physically pre-exist His birth. It is this refusal to read the Bible within its own Hebraic context which has led to so much misunderstanding, and adopting of doctrines and positions which simply don’t stand up to closer Biblical scrutiny.

8:18 Whether God did in fact say exactly this to David is open to question, because it would contradict God’s own reasoning about why He didn’t want a temple, and the fact the promises to David were mainly about the spiritual temple to be built by God’s

my father, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart.

¹⁹ Nevertheless, you shall not build the house; but your son who shall come forth out of your body, he shall build the house for My name’.

²⁰ Yahweh has established His word that He spoke; for I have risen up in the place of David my father, and I sit on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh promised, and have built the house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. ²¹ There I have set a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of Yahweh which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. ²² Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven; ²³ and he said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above nor on earth beneath; who keeps covenant and grace with Your servants who walk before You with all their heart; ²⁴ who has kept with Your servant David my father that which You promised him. Yes, You spoke with Your mouth, and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. ²⁵ Now therefore, may Yahweh, the God of Israel, keep with

Your servant David my father that which You have promised him saying, ‘There shall not fail you a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children take heed to their way, to walk before Me as you have walked before Me’.

²⁶ Now therefore, God of Israel, please let Your word be verified, which You spoke to Your servant David my father. ²⁷ But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens can’t contain You; how much less this house that I have built! ²⁸ Yet have respect for the prayer of Your servant, and for his supplication, Yahweh my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You this day; ²⁹ that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day toward the place of which You have said, ‘My name shall be there;’ to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place. ³⁰ Listen to the supplication of Your servant, and of Your people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place. Yes, hear in heaven, Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive. ³¹ If a man sins against his neighbour, and an oath is laid on him to cause him to swear, and he comes

Son Jesus (Lk. 1:31-35). David assumed this is what God meant; and Solomon now repeats it as if it is the very word of God. This kind of error so often occurs.

8:22 Such public, ostentatious prayer is surely not in the spirit of Christ, who commanded us to pray secretly (Mt. 6:6).

8:29, 30 *Listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place* – Solomon had the wrong idea that the existence of the temple somehow made prayer more noticeable by God. One of the reasons for the destruction of the temple was to bring God’s people into direct, prayerful contact with Him in their exile in the Gentile world. God likewise takes away the props of our religion in order to bring us directly to Him.

and swears before Your altar in this house; ³² then hear in heaven, and do, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his own head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness. ³³ When Your people Israel are struck down before the enemy, because they have sinned against You; if they turn again to You, and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this house: ³⁴ then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them again to the land which You gave to their fathers. ³⁵ When the sky is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You; if they pray toward this place, and confess Your name, and turn from their sin, when You afflict them: ³⁶ then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, and of Your people Israel, when You teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land, which You have given to Your people for an inheritance. ³⁷ If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight, mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them in their cities; whatever plague, whatever sickness there is; ³⁸ whatever prayer and supplication is made by any man, or by all Your people Israel, who shall each know

the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: ³⁹ then hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart You know; (for You, even You only, know the hearts of all the children of men;) ⁴⁰ that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers. ⁴¹ Moreover concerning the foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, when he shall come out of a far country for Your name's sake ⁴² (for they shall hear of Your great name, and of Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he shall come and pray toward this house; ⁴³ hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to You for; that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name. ⁴⁴ If Your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to Yahweh toward the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name; ⁴⁵ then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. ⁴⁶ If they sin against You (for there is no man who doesn't

8:39 *Hear in heaven Your dwelling place* – We are invited to see God as having a “throne” (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps. 11:4; Is. 6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in heavenly realms, but is rather appropriate to a personal God having a specific location. We can better understand the idea of ‘God manifestation’ in personal human beings if we understand Him as being Himself personal. It also provides focus to our prayers, as it did for Solomon here.

sin), and You are angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near; ⁴⁷ yet if they shall repent in the land where they are carried captive, and turn again, and make supplication to You in the land of those who carried them captive, saying, ‘We have sinned, and have done perversely; we have dealt wickedly;’ ⁴⁸ if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to You towards their land, which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name: ⁴⁹ then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven, your dwelling place, and maintain their cause; ⁵⁰ and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions in which they have transgressed against You; and give them compassion before those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them ⁵¹ (for they are Your people, and Your inheritance, which You brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the fur-

nace of iron); ⁵² that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant, and to the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they cry to You. ⁵³ For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be Your inheritance, as You spoke by Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, Lord Yahweh.

A Final Dedication

⁵⁴ It was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication to Yahweh, he arose from before the altar of Yahweh, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread forth toward heaven. ⁵⁵ He stood, and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice saying, ⁵⁶ Blessed be Yahweh, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by Moses His servant. ⁵⁷ May Yahweh our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. Let Him not leave us, nor forsake us; ⁵⁸ that He may incline our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His

8:49 *Hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven... and maintain their cause –*

This is legal language, implying that our situations on earth are acted out within the Heavenly throne room, where God is both judge and the one who advocates for us to Himself, maintaining our case and supporting our supplication. We need never feel, therefore, that the complexities of our situations on earth are unnoticed. They are known and analyzed better than we know ourselves, in Heaven itself.

8:58 *He may incline our hearts to Him –* We’re wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love’s manipulation of circumstances, seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (see too Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10).

commandments, His statutes and his ordinances which He commanded our fathers. ⁵⁹ Let these my words, with which I have made supplication before Yahweh, be near to Yahweh our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant, and the cause of His people Israel, as each day shall require; ⁶⁰ that all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh, He is God. There is none else. ⁶¹ Let your heart therefore be perfect with Yahweh our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as you do at this day. ⁶² The king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before Yahweh. ⁶³ Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to Yahweh, twenty two thousand head of cattle, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of Yahweh. ⁶⁴ The same day the king made the middle of the court holy that was before the house of Yahweh; for there he offered the burnt offering, and the meal offering, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before Yahweh was too little to receive the

burnt offering, the meal offering, and the fat of the peace offerings. ⁶⁵ So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before Yahweh our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. ⁶⁶ On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that Yahweh had shown to David His servant, and to Israel His people.

CHAPTER 9 Aug. 14

God Warns Solomon

It happened, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of Yahweh, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, ² that Yahweh appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. ³ Yahweh said to him, I have heard your prayer and your supplication, that you have made before Me. I have made this house holy, which you have built, to put My name there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there constantly. ⁴ As for

9:1 *Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do* – See on 7:1. Solomon's building work was what he naturally desired to do, he built for his personal "pleasure" (:19); he didn't understand that true service of God requires us to go against the grain of our natural desires.

9:3 God didn't ideally want to have a physical temple, in the same way as He didn't want Israel to have a system of human kings. But He made concessions to human weakness, as He does today, so eager is He for fellowship with us.

9:4 Notice all the time God uses the word "if" in this communication. There are times in our lives when like Solomon we need to be reminded that whatever successes we have had in spiritual life, our eternal future is always conditional upon our enduring to the end (Mt. 10:22). The sense of the eternity we might miss should in some form be ever in our consciousness.

you, if you will walk before Me, as David your father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My ordinances; ⁵ then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, according as I promised to David your father saying, 'There shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel'. ⁶ But if you turn away from following Me, you or your children, and don't keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; ⁷ then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have made holy for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ⁸ Though this house is so high, yet shall everyone who passes by it be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land, and to this house?'; ⁹ and they shall answer, 'Because they forsook Yahweh their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold of other gods, and worshiped them, and served them. Therefore Yahweh has brought all this evil on them'. ¹⁰ It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of Yahweh and the king's house ¹¹ (now Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold,

according to all his desire), that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. ¹² Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they didn't please him. ¹³ He said, 'What cities are these which you have given me, my brother? He called them the land of Cabul to this day. ¹⁴ Hiram sent to the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold.

Solomon Strengthens His Kingdom

¹⁵ This is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised, to build the house of Yahweh, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazer, and Megiddo, and Gezer. ¹⁶ Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites who lived in the city, and given it for a present to his daughter, Solomon's wife. ¹⁷ Solomon built Gezer, and Beth Horon the lower, ¹⁸ and Baalath, and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land, ¹⁹ and all the storage cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. ²⁰ As for all the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the children of Israel; ²¹ their children who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel were not

9:7 I cut off Israel – A whole nation would suffer as the result of Solomon's disobedience; our sins really can affect third parties, and this is the very sinfulness of sin.

able utterly to destroy, of them Solomon raised a levy of bondservants to this day. ²² But of the children of Israel Solomon made no bondservants; but they were the men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots and of his horsemen. ²³ These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, who bore rule over the people who laboured in the work. ²⁴ But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David to her house which Solomon had built for her: then he built Millo. ²⁵ Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he built to Yahweh three times a year, burning incense with them, on the altar that was before Yahweh. So he finished the house. ²⁶ King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. ²⁷ Hiram sent in the navy his servants, sailors who had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. ²⁸ They came to Ophir, and fetched from there gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

CHAPTER 10 Aug. 15

The Queen of Sheba Visits

Solomon

When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of Yahweh, she came to test him with hard questions. ² She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that carried spices, and very much gold and precious stones; and when she had come to Solomon, she talked with him of all that was in her heart. ³ Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hidden from the king which he didn't tell her. ⁴ When the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, ⁵ and the food of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their clothing, and his cup bearers, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of Yahweh; there was no more spirit in her. ⁶ She said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your acts, and of your wisdom. ⁷ However I didn't believe the words, until I came, and my eyes had seen it. Behold, the half was not told me! Your wisdom and prosperity ex-

9:22 *Of the children of Israel Solomon made no bondservants* – But he did later, and the people complained bitterly about the harshness he showed them (12:4). He began by being inhumane to unbelievers, and then came to treat God's people with the same hardness he showed people in the world; and we can take a lesson from this.

10:4-8 *The Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's wisdom through seeing the "sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their clothing"*. It was through her observation of Solomon's people that she perceived and understood his wisdom. The nations will likewise learn the knowledge of Christ through observing the example of natural Israel and ourselves; as they should in this life too. People tend not to believe mere words until they see them lived out in practice before their eyes.

ceed the fame which I heard. ⁸ Happy are your men, happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you, who hear your wisdom. ⁹ Blessed is Yahweh your God, who delighted in you, to set you on the throne of Israel. Because Yahweh loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness. ¹⁰ She gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones. There came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. ¹¹ The navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a great quantity of almug trees and precious stones. ¹² The king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of Yahweh, and for the king's house, harps also and stringed instruments for the singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen, to this day. ¹³ King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned, and went to her own land, she and her servants.

Solomon's Wealth

¹⁴ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, ¹⁵ besides that which the traders brought, and the traffic of the merchants, and of all the kings of the mixed people, and of the governors of the country. ¹⁶ King Solomon made two hundred bucklers of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went to one buckler. ¹⁷ he made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. ¹⁸ Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the finest gold. ¹⁹ There were six steps to the throne, and the top of the throne was round behind; and there were stays on either side by the place of the seat, and two lions standing beside the stays. ²⁰ Twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other on the six steps: there was nothing like it made in any kingdom. ²¹ All king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was

10:9 Because of God's enthusiasm for human response to His ways, the exalted language in which He describes believers, even in their weakness, is an essay in His humility. Thus God "delighted" in Solomon – translating a Hebrew word meaning literally 'to bend down to'. It's used about men in love (Gen. 34:19; Dt. 21:14; 25:7), and about Jonathan's deferential attitude to David (1 Sam. 19:2). If God is humble, so should we be.

10:14 *Six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold* – The connection with 666 as the number of the man of sin (Rev. 13:18), and the similarities between Babylon's merchandise in Rev. 17 and 18 and that which came to Solomon, indicates that all was not spiritually well with Solomon. His kingdom was on one hand God's Kingdom, and yet it was also a kingdom of sin. This is ever our temptation – not atheism, but a serving of sin under the impression of serving God.

nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. ²² For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram: once every three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. ²³ So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²⁴ All the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. ²⁵ They brought every man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and clothing, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. ²⁶ Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, that he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. ²⁷ The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the lowland, for abundance. ²⁸ The horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt; and the king's merchants received them in droves, each drove at a price. ²⁹ A chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a

horse for one hundred and fifty; and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, they brought them out by their traders.

CHAPTER 11 Aug. 16

Solomon Turns Away from God

Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites; ² of the nations concerning which Yahweh said to the children of Israel, You shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon joined to these in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For it happened, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did that which was evil

10:29 Solomon's love of horses was not right for the king of Israel (Dt. 17:16). He began by being a middleman, bringing horses out of Egypt and selling them on to other nations. But he ended up being addicted to them. We should choose not to have involvement with sinful things, because it's likely that the more we deal with them, the more likely it is we will ourselves start to use them.

11:2, 3 The following passages all make the same connection between marriage out of the covenant, and adopting idolatry: Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:2-9; Jud. 3:6,7; Mal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14. Dt. 7:4 dogmatically predicts that a Gentile man will definitely turn away the heart of his Hebrew son-in-law... So certain is it that marriage to Gentiles leads to accepting their idols that Ezra 9:1,2 reasons that Israel hadn't separated from idols *because* they had married Gentiles. Marriage to unbelievers is very serious.

in the sight of Yahweh, and didn't go fully after Yahweh, as did David his father. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the mountain that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon. ⁸ So he did for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹ Yahweh was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he didn't keep that which Yahweh commanded. ¹¹ Therefore Yahweh said to Solomon, Because this is done by you, and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. ¹² Notwithstanding I will not do it in your days, for David your father's sake; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ However I will not tear away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to your son, for David My servant's

sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

Solomon's Adversaries

¹⁴ Yahweh raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom. ¹⁵ For it happened, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the army was gone up to bury the slain, and had struck every male in Edom ¹⁶ (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom); ¹⁷ that Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt, Hadad being yet a little child. ¹⁸ They arose out of Midian, and came to Paran; and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, and appointed him food, and gave him land. ¹⁹ Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. ²⁰ The sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; and

11:6 Anything less than following Yahweh with all our heart is seen as doing evil in His eyes. We see here the logic of total devotion to Him.

11:13 The extent of grace explains many apparent contradictions and paradoxes throughout God's relationships with men – e.g. God repeatedly said that He would leave David with "one tribe". But actually by grace He gave David and Judah two and a half tribes.

11:14 1 Kings 11 mentions that God raised up 'adversaries' to Solomon (see too :23,25). The Hebrew word 'satan' used here means simply an adversary. God didn't stir up a supernatural being to be a Satan/adversary to Solomon; He stirred up ordinary men. The original word 'satan' has no negative connotation in itself. Mt. 16:22,23 speaks of Peter as a 'satan' to Jesus. Note that God is in control of these 'satans'. He raised them up and put them down; 'satan' doesn't refer to anyone in radical opposition to God.

Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh. ²¹ When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to my own country. ²² Then Pharaoh said to him, But what have you lacked with me, that behold, you seek to go to your own country? He answered, Nothing, however please only let me depart. ²³ God raised up an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah. ²⁴ He gathered men to him, and became captain over a troop, when David killed them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and lived therein, and reigned in Damascus. ²⁵ He was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief of Hadad: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

Ahijah's Prophecy

²⁶ Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of

Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, he also opposed the king. ²⁷ This was the reason why he opposed the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father. ²⁸ The man Jeroboam was a brave man; and Solomon saw the young man that he was industrious, and he put him in charge of all the labour of the house of Joseph. ²⁹ It happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; now Ahijah had put on a new garment; and they two were alone in the field. ³⁰ Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it in twelve pieces. ³¹ He said to Jeroboam, Take ten pieces; for thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to you' ³² (but he shall have one tribe, for My servant David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel); ³³ because they have forsaken

11:28 The final comment upon Jeroboam is that he was not as God's servant David (14:7-9). And yet he was set up with that potential possibility. He was a young "man of valour" as was David (1 Sam. 16:18; 17:58); a ruler over all (as David, 1 Sam. 18:5); taken by God to reign over Israel (:37) as was David (2 Sam. 7:8); would have a house built (:38) as David (2 Sam. 7:11); and compare :40 with 1 Sam. 19:2,10. We are set up with great potentials; our lives are sometimes potentially guided to be similar to those of Biblical characters. But we have to make the right decisions and choices in order to realize that potential.

11:29 The division within Israel was the greatest tragedy to come upon God's people, just as it is today (Is. 7:17). The way the new garment of Ahijah was torn up symbolized the division, and it reflects the utter waste. For an outer cloak was a garment a man could wear for life; to have a new one was something significant. The Lord's coat being unrent at His death may therefore be a reflection of how His death brought about unity amongst His people (Jn. 11:52; 17:21,22). Before Him there, we simply cannot be divided amongst ourselves.

Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon. They have not walked in My ways, to do that which is right in My eyes, and to keep My statutes and My ordinances, as David his father did. ³⁴ However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand; but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David My servant's sake whom I chose, who kept My commandments and My statutes; ³⁵ but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it to you, even ten tribes. ³⁶ To his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Me to put My name there. ³⁷ I will take you, and you shall reign according to all that your soul desires, and shall be king over Israel. ³⁸ It shall be, if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in My ways, and do that which is right in My eyes, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did; that I will be with you, and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. ³⁹ I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever'. ⁴⁰ Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. ⁴¹ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all

that he did, and his wisdom, aren't they written in the book of the acts of Solomon? ⁴² The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. ⁴³ Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 12 Aug. 17

The People Complain to Rehoboam

Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ² It happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam therefore lived in Egypt; ³ and they sent and called him), that Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam saying, ⁴ Your father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, lighter, and we will serve you. ⁵ He said to them, Depart for three days, then come back to me. The people departed. ⁶ King Rehoboam took advice with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What advice do you give me to return answer to this people? ⁷ They said, If you will be a servant to this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.

12:7 We see here the paradox of servant leadership – if Rehoboam had been a servant of his people, then he would have ruled over them. In all ways, Jesus is our pattern. He was a servant of all, and so should we be. His servanthood dominated His conscious-

⁸ But he ignored the advice of the old men which they had given him, and took advice with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. ⁹ He said to them, What advice do you give, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me saying, ‘Make the yoke that your father put on us lighter?’.

¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him spoke to him saying, Thus you shall tell this people who spoke to you saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but make it lighter to us;’ you shall say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. ¹¹ Now whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions’. ¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king asked, saying, Come to me again the third day. ¹³ The king answered the people roughly, and forsook the advice of the old men which they had given him, ¹⁴ and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. ¹⁵ So the king didn’t lis-

ten to the people; for it was a thing brought about of Yahweh, that He might establish His word which Yahweh spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

The Division of the Kingdom

¹⁶ When all Israel saw that the king didn’t listen to them, the people answered the king saying, What portion have we in David? Neither do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, Israel! Now see to your own house, David. So Israel departed to their tents. ¹⁷ But as for the children of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. ¹⁸ Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to forced labour; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. King Rehoboam made speed to get himself up to his chariot, to escape to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day. ²⁰ It happened, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. ²¹ When Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house

ness. He said that He came not [so much as] to be ministered unto, but so as to minister, with the end that He gave His life for others (Mk. 10:45). This is what makes Him Lord of all – because He was servant of all.

12:15 There are times when God has influenced men not to respond to the evidently wise words of other men, in order to fulfil His purpose (see too 2 Chron. 25:20).

12:21 The Lord Jesus framed His parable about Satan’s kingdom rising up and being divided against itself (Mk. 3:23-26) in the very language of the Kingdom of Israel being “divided” against itself by Jeroboam’s ‘rising up’ (see too 13:6) – as if Israel’s

of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. ²² But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God saying, ²³ Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people saying, ²⁴ ‘Thus says Yahweh, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brothers, the children of Israel. Everyone return to his house; for this thing is of Me’. So they listened to the word of Yahweh, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Yahweh. ²⁵ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived in it; and he went out from there, and built Peniel. ²⁶ Jeroboam said in his heart, Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. ²⁷ If this people goes up to offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. ²⁸ Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he

said to them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look and see your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt! ²⁹ He set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. ³⁰ This thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan. ³¹ He made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people, who were not of the sons of Levi. ³² Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; he did so in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made; and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. ³³ He went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up to the altar, to burn incense.

CHAPTER 13 Aug. 18

A Man of God Condemns

Jeroboam

There came a man of God out of Judah by the word of Yahweh to Beth El: and Jeroboam was stand-

Kingdom was Satan's kingdom. Dividing against our brethren makes us Satan's Kingdom rather than God's.

12:24 *So they listened to the word of Yahweh* – It requires quite some humility to change our plans when we have already set up a plan of action which involves mobilizing others.

12:26 ‘Said in his heart’ is a common Biblical phrase (e.g. Gen. 17:17; 1 Sam. 27:1; Esther 6:6). The focus of the Bible is upon our spiritual mindedness, rather than upon any cosmic conflict between God and a supposed Satan figure. The arena for spiritual conflict is ultimately within the human heart.

ing by the altar to burn incense. ² He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh and said, Altar, altar, thus says Yahweh: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name. On you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and they will burn men's bones on you'. ³ He gave a sign the same day saying, This is the sign which Yahweh has spoken: Behold, the altar will be split apart, and the ashes that are on it will be poured out. ⁴ It happened, when the king heard the saying of the man of God which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that Jeroboam put out his hand from the altar, saying, Seize him! His hand, which he put out against him, dried up, so that he could not draw it back again to himself. ⁵ The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of Yahweh. ⁶ The king answered the man of God, Now entreat the favour of Yahweh your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me again. The man of God entreated Yahweh, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. ⁷ The king said to the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward. ⁸ The man of God said to the king, Even if you gave me half of your house, I would not go in

with you, neither would I eat bread nor drink water in this place; ⁹ for so was it commanded me by the word of Yahweh saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, neither return by the way that you came'. ¹⁰ So he went another way, and didn't return by the way that he came to Bethel.

The Man of God is Disobedient and Punished

¹¹ Now there lived an old prophet in Bethel; and one of his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. ¹² Their father said to them, Which way did he go? Now his sons had seen which way the man of God went, who came from Judah. ¹³ He said to his sons, Saddle the donkey for me. So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it. ¹⁴ He went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. He said to him, Are you the man of God who came from Judah? He said, I am. ¹⁵ Then he said to him, Come home with me, and eat bread. ¹⁶ He said, I may not return with you, nor go in with you; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. ¹⁷ For it was said to me by the word of Yahweh, 'You shall eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that you came'. ¹⁸ He said to him, I also am a prophet as you

13:6 The prayer of the man of God caused Jeroboam's hand to be healed. The prayers of someone else can affect the fortunes of another in a way which would not happen if they just prayed for themselves. What stronger motivation could we have to pray earnestly for each other?

are; and an angel spoke to me by the word of Yahweh, saying, ‘Bring him back with you into your house, that he may eat bread and drink water’. He lied to him.¹⁹ So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water.²⁰ It happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of Yahweh came to the prophet who brought him back;²¹ and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, Thus says Yahweh, ‘Because you have been disobedient to the mouth of Yahweh, and have not kept the commandment which Yahweh your God commanded you,²² but came back, and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, Eat no bread, and drink no water; your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers’.²³ It happened, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back.²⁴ When he had gone, a lion met him by the way, and killed him. His body was cast in the way, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the body.²⁵ Behold, men passed by, and saw the body cast in the way,

and the lion standing by the body; and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived.²⁶ When the prophet who brought him back from the way heard of it, he said, It is the man of God who was disobedient to the mouth of Yahweh. Therefore Yahweh has delivered him to the lion, which has mauled him and slain him, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke to him.²⁷ He spoke to his sons saying, Saddle the donkey for me. They saddled it.²⁸ He went and found his body cast in the way, and the donkey and the lion standing by the body. The lion had not eaten the body, nor mauled the donkey.²⁹ The prophet took up the body of the man of God, and laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. He came to the city of the old prophet to mourn, and to bury him.³⁰ He laid his body in his own grave; and they mourned over him saying, Alas, my brother!³¹ It happened, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb in which the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones.³² For the saying which he cried by the word of Yahweh against

13:18 These two prophets both loved God’s word and showed themselves faithful to Him at a time when God’s people had gone badly astray. But the point of the history is to show that this alone isn’t enough; we must not make assumptions about what God’s word is, nor must we assume that because we love His word therefore our gut feelings and natural desires are thereby justified and we can do as we wish.

13:21 When we read God’s word, we hear His voice from His very mouth. We hear “the *mouth* of God”. Jeremiah spoke “from the mouth of the Lord” (2 Chron. 36:12). His word brings Him that near to us, if we will perceive it for what it is. Thus “Scripture” is put for “God” (Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8) and vice versa (Mt. 19:4,5). When we speak and preach God’s word, we are relaying God’s voice to men, and should make appropriate effort to deport ourselves as the ministers of His word and voice.

the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely happen. ³³ After this thing Jeroboam didn't return from his evil way, but again made priests of the high places from among all the people. Whoever wanted to, he consecrated him, that there might be priests of the high places. ³⁴ This thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the surface of the earth.

CHAPTER 14 Aug. 19

Abijah's Prophecy against Jeroboam

At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. ² Jeroboam said to his wife, Please get up and disguise yourself, that you won't be recognized as the wife of Jeroboam. Go to Shiloh. Behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, who spoke concerning me that I should be king over this people. ³ Take with you ten loaves, cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will become of the child. ⁴ Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age. ⁵ Yahweh said to Ahijah, The wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son; for he is sick. This is what you shall tell her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman. ⁶ It was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet,

as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, you wife of Jeroboam! Why do you pretend to be another? For I am sent to you with heavy news. ⁷ Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you prince over My people Israel, ⁸ and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it you; and yet you have not been as My servant David who kept My commandments, and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My eyes, ⁹ but you have done evil above all who were before you, and have gone and made you other gods and molten images, to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back: ¹⁰ therefore, behold, I will bring evil on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, he who is shut up and he who is left free in Israel, and will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam, as a man sweeps away dung, until it is all gone. ¹¹ He who dies of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and he who dies in the field shall the birds of the sky eat: for Yahweh has spoken it'. ¹² Arise therefore, and go to your house. When your feet enter into the city, the child shall die. ¹³ All Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward Yahweh, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. ¹⁴ Moreover Yahweh will raise

14:14 *Even now* – This reflects how God's words are as good as done as soon as they are uttered, so certain are they of fulfilment. This is the way to understand those pas-

Him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam. This is the day! What? Even now. ¹⁵ Yahweh will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will root up Israel out of this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking Yahweh to anger. ¹⁶ He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he has sinned, and with which he has made Israel to sin.

The Death of Jeroboam

¹⁷ Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah. As she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. ¹⁸ All Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the prophet. ¹⁹ The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ²⁰ Jeroboam reigned for twenty two years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place.

Rehoboam's Reign

²¹ Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there: and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. ²² Judah did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, even worse than all that their fathers had done. ²³ For they also built themselves high places, and pillars and Asherim on every high hill, and under every green tree; ²⁴ and there were also sodomites in the land: they did according to all the abominations of the nations which Yahweh drove out before the children of Israel. ²⁵ It happened in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; ²⁶ and he took away the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house; he took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

sages which appear to teach that both Jesus and ourselves existed physically before our birth. God doesn't completely express Himself in our terms and language (although of course to some degree He does). There is a degree to which God is God, and He expresses Himself as He is. We must bring ourselves to accept His perspective. Indeed, faith is the ability to believe that what God has said will actually happen physically, and that therefore we can live as if we see that future physical event as actually having happened. In other words, faith is about adopting God's time-less perspective.

14:15 As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). The language of the world is thus applied to God's people because this is how they thought and acted. Apostate Israel are spoken of as the pagan world; and therefore at the day of judgment the rejected of the new Israel will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); assigned their portion "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46).

²⁷ King Rehoboam made in their place shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. ²⁸ It was so, that as often as the king went into the house of Yahweh, the guard bore them, and brought them back into the guard room. ²⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ³⁰ There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. ³¹ Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. Abijam his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 15 Aug. 20

Abijam's Reign

Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat began Abijam to reign over Judah. ² He reigned three years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. ³ He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as the heart of David his father. ⁴ Nevertheless for Dav-

id's sake, Yahweh his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem; ⁵ because David had done that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. ⁶ Now there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. ⁷ The rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. ⁸ Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his place.

Asa's Reign

⁹ In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Asa to reign over Judah. ¹⁰ He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. ¹¹ Asa did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, as did David his father. ¹² He put away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. ¹³ Also Maacah his mother he removed from being queen, because

14:31 *His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess* – This is repeated twice (:21). The emphasis is on the fact that Solomon's marriage to a Gentile unbeliever resulted in unbelieving children.

15:11 Asa is recorded as serving God just as well as David, when actually this wasn't the case; but God counted him as righteous. The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32). Sometimes the purges of idolatry by the kings is described in undoubtedly exaggerated language – such was God's joy that at least something was being done? Or because, again, He imputed righteousness to those who had some faith in Him?

she had made an abominable image for an Asherah; and Asa cut down her image, and burnt it at the brook Kidron. ¹⁴ But the high places were not taken away: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days. ¹⁵ He brought into the house of Yahweh the things that his father had dedicated, and the things that himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. ¹⁶ There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. ¹⁷ Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might not allow anyone to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ¹⁸ Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants; and king Asa sent them to Ben Hadad son of Tabrimmon son of Hezion, king of Syria, who lived at Damascus, saying, ¹⁹ There is a treaty between me and you, between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent to

you a present of silver and gold. Go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. ²⁰ Ben Hadad listened to king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and struck Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. ²¹ It happened, when Baasha heard of it, that he left off building Ramah, and lived in Tirzah. ²² Then king Asa made a proclamation to all Judah; none was exempted: and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and its timber, with which Baasha had built; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. ²³ Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. ²⁴ Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.

15:14 *The high places were not taken away: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days* – God appears prepared to overlook some failures because our conscience is still right with Him. And yet, despite the significance of conscience, we will be judged at the last day according to God's word rather than our own conscience as it were jumping out of us and standing there as the yardstick for our judgment. Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not *knowing* God in their hearts.

15:15, 18 Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple – and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He *apparently* treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own. Many a believer has this very same tendency.

Nadab's Reign

²⁵ Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah; and he reigned over Israel two years. ²⁶ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin. ²⁷ Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha struck him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. ²⁸ Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha killed him, and reigned in his place. ²⁹ As soon as he was king, he struck all the house of Jeroboam: he didn't leave to Jeroboam any who breathed, until he had destroyed him; according to the saying of Yahweh which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite; ³⁰ for the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and with which he made Israel to sin, because of his provocation with which he provoked Yahweh the God of Israel, to anger. ³¹ Now the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ³² There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. ³³ In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel in Tirzah for twenty-four years. ³⁴ He did evil in the sight of Yahweh,

and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin.

CHAPTER 16 Aug. 21***The Destruction of Baasha's Family***

The word of Yahweh came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, ² Because I exalted you out of the dust, and made you prince over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made My people Israel to sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins; ³ behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. ⁴ The dogs will eat Baasha's descendants who die in the city; and he who dies of his in the field- the birds of the sky will eat. ⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ⁶ Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah; and Elah his son reigned in his place. ⁷ Moreover by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of Yahweh against Baasha, and against his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck him. ⁸ In the twenty-sixth year of

16:2 We can make others stumble from the path to His salvation. Baasha made other people sin and thus provoke God to anger; his own sin and that of the people are described in identical language, to portray how he influenced them. We have far more spiritual influence upon others than we might think.

Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah for two years. ⁹ His servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household in Tirzah: ¹⁰ and Zimri went in and struck him and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place. ¹¹ It happened, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he struck all the house of Baasha: he didn't leave him a single male, neither of his relatives, nor of his friends. ¹² Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, ¹³ for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned, and with which they made Israel to sin, to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. ¹⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ¹⁵ In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. ¹⁶ The people who were encamped heard say, Zimri has conspired, and has also struck the king: therefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of

the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. ¹⁷ Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. ¹⁸ It happened, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over himself with fire, and died, ¹⁹ for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. ²⁰ Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he committed, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ²¹ Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri. ²² But the people who followed Omri prevailed against the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned. ²³ In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel for twelve years. He reigned six years in Tirzah. ²⁴ He bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer the owner of the hill. ²⁵ Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and dealt wickedly above all who were before him. ²⁶ For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam

16:25 *Dealt wickedly above all who were before him* – The same is stated about his son, Ahab (:30). The weaknesses of the fathers tend to be repeated by the children, even worse. Sin tends towards a downwards spiral, people become morally worse and worse without the influence of God's word.

the son of Nebat, and in his sins with which he made Israel to sin, to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities.²⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?²⁸ So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his place.

Ahab's Evil Reign

²⁹ In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and he reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.³⁰ Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh above all that were before him.³¹ It happened, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel

the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.³² He reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.³³ Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.³⁴ In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho: he laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of Yahweh, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

CHAPTER 17 Aug. 22

Elijah is Sustained during the Famine

Elijah the Tishbite, who was among the foreigners of Gilead, said to Ahab, As Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand,

16:31 Ahab's marriage to a Gentile was far worse than *all* the sins of Jeroboam; the idolatry, the perversion, the making of Israel sin; these were "a light thing" compared to the evil of marriage out of the faith. That perspective on marriage to unbelievers needs to be shared by us today. And further, those who married the daughters of Ahab were led astray by them (2 Kings 8:18,27).

17:1 *There shall not be dew* – Elijah was motivated in this by the way Gideon asked that there should only be dew upon the ground (or perhaps even upon the whole land of Israel) according to his word of faithful prayer (Jud. 6:37-39). It is quite possible that we, too, may be given certain prompts in life by reason of particular experiences repeating those of a Biblical character. David also prayed just the same things (2 Sam.1:21). When it comes to prayer, there is a positive pattern of influence and example both amongst us as believers and from our absorbing the spirit of Biblical examples.

But according to my word – His faith was based upon being attune to the will of God and His ways of working with His people, to the extent that he knew that because God's word abided in him, he could ask what he wanted and it would be heard, because he asked according to God's will (Jn. 15:7). But when the time comes for rain, we read that "the word of Yahweh [not Elijah's word] came to Elijah... saying... I will send rain on the earth" (18:1). God's word reveals His will, and therefore the more in

there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

² The word of Yahweh came to him saying, ³ Go away from here, turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. ⁴ It shall be, that you shall drink of the brook. I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. ⁵ So he went and did according to the word of Yahweh; for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. ⁶ The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. ⁷ It happened after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. ⁸ The word of Yahweh came to him saying, ⁹ Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain you. ¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gather-

ing sticks: and he called to her and said, Please get me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. ¹¹ As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand. ¹² She said, As Yahweh your God lives, I don't have a cake, but a handful of flour in a pitcher, and a little oil in a pitcher. Behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and bake it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. ¹³ Elijah said to her, Don't be afraid. Go and do as you have said; but make me of it a little cake first, and bring it out to me, and afterward make some for you and for your son. ¹⁴ For thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not empty, neither shall the jar of oil fail, until the day that Yahweh sends rain on the earth'. ¹⁵ She went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, ate many days. ¹⁶ The jar of meal didn't empty, neither did the jar of oil fail, accord-

touch we are with His will the more we will be able to confidently ask for things in prayer.

17:6 *Ravens* – These were unclean animals, and yet God made Elijah depend upon them and the unclean food. He was trying to teach Elijah not to trust in legalistic obedience.

17:9 God had sought to gently teach Elijah his need for others when He told Elijah to go to the widow woman in Zarephath who would “sustain you”; it worked out that Elijah sustained *her*. And he must have reflected upon this. God's intention was that *spiritually*, his experience with that woman would sustain *him*. Our efforts to sustain others lead to our being sustained.

17:12 *A handful of flour in a pitcher* – The idea is of a handful of meal in a very large container; it's a picture of her poverty, and how she was down to the last little bit of flour in a large container that was once full. And the Lord through Elijah demanded this of her, that He might save her. God can be demanding, but we don't have the same right to be upon others. She had to *first* feed God's representative, and *after* feed herself and her son (:13) – rather than give God the leftovers after she had firstly taken what *she* needed.

ing to the word of Yahweh, which he spoke by Elijah.

Elijah Raises the Widow's Son

¹⁷ It happened after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ She said to Elijah, What have I to do with you, you man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to memory, and to kill my son! ¹⁹ He said to her, Give me your son. He took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into the room where he stayed, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ He cried to Yahweh and said, Yahweh my God, have You also brought evil on the widow with whom I stay, by killing her son? ²¹ He stretched himself on the child three times, and cried to Yahweh and said, Yahweh my God, please let this child's soul come into him again. ²² Yahweh listened to the voice of

Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the room into the house, and delivered him to his mother; and Elijah said, Behold, your son lives. ²⁴ The woman said to Elijah, Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth.

CHAPTER 18 Aug. 23

Elijah and Obadiah

It happened after many days, that the word of Yahweh came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show yourself to Ahab; and I will send rain on the earth. ² Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria. ³ Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared Yahweh greatly: ⁴ for it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of Yahweh, that Obadiah took one hundred proph-

17:21 *Three times* – Perhaps the way that the first six prayers of Elijah for rain went unanswered and his need to pray three times for the child to resurrect, were all part of God teaching Elijah that no matter how close we are to Him, we have no right to expect automatic answers to prayer, even if they are according to God's will.

17:22 The woman's son was resurrected because God heard Elijah's faithful prayer; Heb. 11:35 alludes to this incident by saying that through faith – in this case, the faith of Elijah, a third party – women received their dead raised to life. Our prayers really can make a huge difference in the lives of others.

18:4 God tried to correct Elijah's despising of the other prophets of the Lord. Elijah was in a cave, and was also fed bread and water – just as the other prophets were. And yet Elijah didn't see, or didn't want to see, that connection – after having been reminded of this experience of the other prophets, he claims that he alone was a true prophet of Yahweh (:22) – he wrongly believed that all other valid prophets had been slain (19:10). But the record shows how that during Elijah's lifetime there were other prophets of Yahweh active in His service (20:13,35). Yet God still works through the conceited, the spiritually superior, those who despise their brethren. God didn't give up on Elijah because he was like this, and neither should we give up in our relationship with such brethren.

ets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water).

⁵ Ahab said to Obadiah, Go through the land, to all the springs of water, and to all the brooks. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, so that we don't lose all the animals. ⁶ So they divided the land between them to pass through-out it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. ⁷ As Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, Is it you, my lord Elijah?

⁸ He answered him, It is I. Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here!'.

⁹ He said, Wherein have I sinned, that you would deliver your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?

¹⁰ As Yahweh your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. When they said, 'He is not here', he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they didn't find you. ¹¹ Now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here'. ¹² It will happen, as soon as I am gone from you, that the spirit of Yahweh will carry you I don't

18:8 *Go, tell your lord* – Elijah didn't have too positive a view of anyone apart from himself – and that included faithful Obadiah. Obadiah repeatedly calls Elijah "my Lord" and describes himself as "your servant"; but Elijah responds to this by calling Obadiah the servant of Ahab – he tells him to go and tell "your Lord", i.e. Ahab. Elijah is insisting that he and Obadiah have nothing in common – Obadiah serves Ahab, and he is nothing to do with Elijah. 'Obadiah' means 'servant of Yahweh' – the name surely reflects very faithful parents to have called him that at the time of the Baal cult. But Elijah insists that Obadiah is really a servant of Ahab, not of Yahweh. The fact Elijah was hidden by God meant that he was forced into fellowship with the prophets of Yahweh whom Obadiah hid in a cave (:4). Elijah was thus intended to see a link between Obadiah and God, and himself and the other prophets of Yahweh. But Elijah's pride didn't let himself make the connection, just as ours often doesn't. For he continued doubtful of Obadiah's sincerity, and still insisted that he alone remained a faithful prophet of Yahweh – even though Obadiah had hidden one hundred other prophets from Jezebel's persecution. Those one hundred prophets were presumably part of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And maybe they weren't that strong – they are set up as representative of those who will only be saved by grace, not their works (Rom. 11:4-6). But, by implication, Elijah, for all his love of Israel, did not look upon them through the eyes of grace. Elijah insisted that he alone was "left"; yet God says that He has "left" Himself the 7,000 (19:18). The preservation of the people of God, or 'the truth' is done by God Himself; yet the likes of Elijah consider that it is *they* who 'preserve the truth'. Again, Elijah had to learn that we are all saved by grace. God will leave for and to Himself His people, without requiring the help of man. Elijah struggled with this issue of accepting others and not thinking he was the only one who could do the job right up to the end of his ministry; for he ascends to Heaven clutching his mantle, the sign of his prophetic ministry. It seems he took it with him because he felt that not even Elisha was really fit to do the job and take his place; but perhaps in what were possibly the last seconds of his mortal life, he learnt his lesson and let go of it, allowing it to fall to the earth to let another man take it up.

know where; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he can't find you, he will kill me. But I, your servant, have feared Yahweh from my youth. ¹³ Wasn't it told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of Yahweh, how I hid one hundred men of Yahweh's prophets with fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? ¹⁴ Now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here!' - and he will kill me. ¹⁵ Elijah said, As Yahweh of Armies lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today. ¹⁶ So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

The Contest on Mount Carmel

¹⁷ It happened that when Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, Is that you, you troubler of Israel? ¹⁸ He answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of Yahweh, and you have followed the Baals. ¹⁹ Now therefore

send, and gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal, and four hundred of the prophets of the Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table. ²⁰ So Ahab sent to all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together to Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you waver between the two sides? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. The people answered him not a word. ²² Then Elijah said to the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Yahweh; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. ²³ Let them therefore give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under it; and I will dress the other bull, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under it. ²⁴ You call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Yahweh. The God who answers by fire, let him be God. All

18:15 Elijah assured Obadiah that he was really telling him the truth, because Yahweh of Hosts (Angels) is real, and he stood before those Angels. A sense of Angelic presence and observation will likewise inspire us to transparent lives (1 Cor. 11:10; 1 Tim. 5:21).

18:21 The inertia of indecision is a huge problem. Your own example of making clear choices, doing what is right before God rather than what is wise and smart in human eyes, will reveal a sense of clarity about you which will become inspirational to your brethren. Yours will not be one of those many lives that is paralyzed by constantly postponing the choices, by indecision, like Israel on Carmel, hopping backwards and forwards between two opinions. When Elijah demands that the people chose which lord they will serve – Baal [= 'lord'] or Yahweh, he is really getting to the very crux of spirituality – for truly, there can be no halting between the two opinions of serving Baal and serving Yahweh. Jesus based His words of Lk. 16:13 on those of Elijah here – we can't serve two masters. Although on one hand the Lord Jesus Himself quotes Elijah's 'truth' approvingly, there is evidence galore that at the very same time, Elijah's attitudes were far from Christ-like

the people answered, It is well said. ²⁵ Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one bull for yourselves, and dress it first; for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it. ²⁶ They took the bull which was given to them and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon,

saying, Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any who answered. They leaped about the altar which was made. ²⁷ It happened at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry louder; for he is a god! Either he is musing, or he has gone aside to the toilet, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleeps and must be awak-

18:26-29 The idea of prophets was well known in the world around ancient Israel. The idea of a prophet was that a person was caught up in some kind of ecstasy, transported into some 'other' world, leaving behind their humanity. The true prophets were different. Their inspiration was about being attuned to the mind of God, they remained very much in the flesh and in the world, and the subjects of their prophecy related to very real, human things – injustice, a guy building an extension on his house without paying the labourers. Not flashing lights and ethereal coasting through space. The pagan prophets (e.g. the prophets of Baal here) worked themselves into a frenzy in order to reach a state of depersonalization and loss of consciousness, in the hope that then they would be filled with Divine consciousness. True prophets were absolutely different; the inspiration process required them to be fully in touch with their own consciousness and personality, and it was exactly through their humanity that the personality of God came through in the inspired words they spoke and wrote. This is why at times the prophets give God's word but then interrupt, as it were, in full consciousness, to plead or even protest (e.g. Am. 7:2). Whereas the false prophets aimed to lose consciousness in order to receive something from God's consciousness, the true prophets received heightened sensitivity and conscience / consciousness in order to receive God's word and to know His mind. The message which the true prophets received wasn't some vague abstraction or personal transport into an unreal world. What they received from God was the sense that this world and its fate are very dear to its creator. It was because the true prophets entered into the mind of God, that this issued in the experience of words. The false prophets tended to experience something *happening*; whereas the true prophets experienced the thoughts of God, which issued in words. Their experience had form, but no content. The Pentecostal 'Holy Spirit' experiences appear to be the form of ecstasy claimed by the false prophets. Receipt of God's true revelation involved dialogue with God, even disagreement with Him for a moment, response, pleading, speech and counterspeech. It wasn't a case of merely passively hearing a voice and writing it down.

18:27 *To the toilet* – This kind of mockery and crudeness is surely not how the Father and Son would have us act. We aren't to mock false beliefs in this way. Yet Elijah did this whilst at the same time deeply believing the fire would come down, and bringing it down by his faith. Elijah's mocking attitude is also shown by the way in which he demands they find him four barrels of water – on the top of a mountain, after a major three and a half year drought (:33). Presumably they took the water from the sea at the bottom of the mountain – and thus Elijah's sacrifice would be offered with salt. He was strictly obedient to the requirements for sacrifice – yet amidst an abusive,

ened. ²⁸ They cried aloud, and cut themselves in their way with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. ²⁹ It was so, when mid-day was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the offering; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any who responded. ³⁰ Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me; and all the people came near to him. He repaired the altar of Yahweh that was thrown down. ³¹ Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of Yahweh came, saying, Israel shall be your name. ³² With the stones he built an altar in the name of Yahweh. He made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. ³³ He put the wood

in order, and cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood. ³⁴ He said, Do it a second time; and they did it the second time. He said, Do it a third time; and they did it the third time. ³⁵ The water ran around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. ³⁶ It happened at the time of the offering of the offering, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Answer me, Yahweh, answer me, that this people may know that You, Yahweh, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again. ³⁸ Then

self-justifying mindset. The very possession of truth can take our attention away from our need for self-examination and right attitudes towards others. In this lies one of our most subtle temptations.

18:36 Elijah “prayed in his prayer” (James 5:17 Gk.) – there was a deep prayer going on within his prayer, words and feelings within words – the prayer of the very inner being. This was how much he sought their repentance. The James passage sets Elijah up as a pattern for our prayer for our wayward brethren. He really is our pattern here. He clearly saw prayer as requiring much effort; and the way he prays at the time of the evening sacrifice on Horeb suggests that he saw prayer as a sacrifice.

18:37 *Answer me* – Elijah appears utterly certain that God will answer by a bolt of fire, without having asked Him first. He asks God to “answer me” without specifically requesting for fire to be sent down; he brings the situation before God and asks Him to ‘answer’ that situation. Prayer is often answered in ways we do not perceive, or by an answer which will only much later be revealed. Elijah’s prayer here will only be finally answered when Elijah comes in the last days (Mal. 4:6).

You have turned their heart back – God appeals for people to respond by pointing out that in prospect, He has already forgiven them. Thus Elijah wanted Israel to know that God had already in prospect turned their hearts back to Him (see too Is. 44:22). We preach the cross of Christ, and that through that forgiveness has been enabled for all men; but they need to respond by repentance in order to access it. God has potentially enabled their conversion (see Jn. 1:7). Hence the tragedy of human lack of response; so much has been enabled, the world has been reconciled, but all this is in vain if they will not respond.

the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood, the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces. They said, Yahweh, he is God! Yahweh, He is God! ⁴⁰ Elijah said to them, Seize the prophets of Baal! Don't let one of them escape! They seized them. Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and killed them there.

Elijah Prays for Rain

⁴¹ Elijah said to Ahab, Get up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain. ⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down on the earth, and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ He said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. He went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. He said seven times, Go again. ⁴⁴ It happened at the seventh time that he said, Behold, a small cloud, like a man's hand, is rising out of the sea. He said, Go up, tell Ahab, 'Get ready and go down, so that the rain doesn't stop you'. ⁴⁵ It happened in a little while, that the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ The hand of Yahweh was on Elijah; and he tucked his cloak into his belt and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

CHAPTER 19 Aug. 24

Elijah Meets God at Horeb

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I don't make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time! ³ When he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough. Now, O Yahweh, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. ⁵ He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, an angel touched him, and said to him, Arise and eat! ⁶ He looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on the coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of Yahweh came again the second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you. ⁸ He arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the Mount of God. ⁹ He came there to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, and he said to him, What are

18:40-44 Believe that you really will receive; avoid the temptation of asking for things as a child asks for birthday presents, with the vague hope that something might turn up. Remember how Elijah heard, by faith, the noise of rain even before he had formally prayed for it, and when there was no hint of rain.

you doing here, Elijah? ¹⁰ He said, I have been very zealous for Yahweh, the God of Armies; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. ¹¹ He said, Go out, and stand on the mountain before Yahweh. Behold, Yahweh passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke

in pieces the rocks before Yahweh; but Yahweh was not in the wind. After the wind an earthquake; but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake a fire passed; but Yahweh was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. ¹³ It was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. Behold, a voice came to him, and said, Why are you still

19:10 “I, even I *only* am left” was Elijah’s cry to God as he realized the depth of Israel’s apostasy. But this was interpreted by God as a prayer for God to condemn Israel (Rom. 11:2,3). God read what was in Elijah’s heart, and counted this as his prayer.

19:11, 13 The Angel tells Elijah to actually go and stand before the Lord and learn what it really meant; so he had to literally stand before the Angel as He passed by. Yet Elijah hid his face; he was no longer so happy to be before the Lord once he realized the humility and breaking in pieces of a proud man’s spirit that it really implies. So (:13) he wrapped *his face* [in Hebrew, the words for ‘face’ and ‘before’ are the same] in his mantle and “stood” in the cave mouth before the Angel. Too ashamed to really stand before the Lord, Elijah therefore wrapped his face. Earlier, he had been so keen to use this phrase of himself (17:1; 18:15); he had prided himself on the fact that he stood before the Lord. But now he hid his face, an idiom often used by God for withholding fellowship. The fact we too are God’s covenant people can initially be a source of pride to us as we do our theological gladiatorship with others. But the implications are so far deeper; and through Angelic work in our lives, we too are brought to see this. The word for “mantle” is translated “glory” in Zech. 11:3; Elijah wrapped his presence in his own glory, rather than face up to the implications of God’s glory. A desire for our own glory prevents us perceiving God’s glory. Only at the very end does Elijah cast away his mantle (2 Kings 2:13), his human strength, allowing himself to merge with God’s glory. He should have cast away his mantle earlier, when he stood before the still small voice on Horeb. The question of :13 “Why are you still here, Elijah?” may imply that Elijah should have allowed himself to be carried away by the cherubim, he should have surrendered himself to the progress of God’s glory, rather than so obsessively insist upon his own personal rightness and the wrongness of others. And this was why God’s ultimate response to Elijah’s attitude on Horeb was to dismiss him from his prophetic ministry and instate Elisha as his successor (:16). Elijah seems to have finally learnt his lesson, for he calls Elisha to the ministry by ‘passing by’ Elisha as in a theophany, taking off his mantle and throwing it upon Elisha (:19). He realized that he had hidden behind that mantle, using it to resist participating in the selfless association with God’s glory [rather than his own] to which he was called. But he got there in the end; hence the enormous significance of Elijah giving up his mantle when he finally ascends to Heaven in the cherubim chariot (2 Kings 2:13).

here, Elijah? ¹⁴ He said, I have been very zealous for Yahweh, the God of Armies; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. ¹⁵ Yahweh said to him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

Elisha is Commissioned

¹⁶ You shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah to be prophet in your place. ¹⁷ It shall happen, that he who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and he who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. ¹⁸ Yet will I leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him. ¹⁹ So he departed to there, and found Elisha the son of

Shaphat, who was ploughing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed over to him, and threw his mantle on him. ²⁰ He left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me please kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you. He said to him, Go back again; for what have I done to you? ²¹ He returned from following him, and took the yoke of oxen, killed them and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave to the people and they ate. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and served him.

CHAPTER 20 Aug. 25

Conflict between Ahab and Ben Hadad

Ben Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his army together; and there were thirty-two kings with him, and horses and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it. ² He sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said to him, Thus says Ben

19:16 The call of God comes to us right in the midst of ordinary, mundane life. Christ called men in just the same way. This was what was and is so unusual and startling about the ministry of the Lord. His love sought men out. He didn't wait for them to come to Him; and He does the same today in calling us to live as Him, often unexpectedly and in the midst of life's repetitive course. Other examples in 2 Kings 9:1-13,18; Jud. 6:1; 1 Sam. 9:10; 11:5; Am. 7:14.

19:18 There is such a thing as feeling lonely when we needn't. Elijah is an example of this; he felt that he was "left alone" faithful in Israel – even though there were another 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:3). The Hebrew could mean that God reserved 7,000 of Elijah's brothers and sisters who potentially would not bow the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah didn't want to see the potential of his brethren. He set himself in a league above them, like the Psalmist, saying in his haste that all men are liars (Ps. 116:11).

19:20 Elisha bade farewell to his family before following Elijah, and Elijah allowed him to do this – but the Lord Jesus was more demanding (Lk. 9:59-61).

Hadad, ³ 'Your silver and your gold is mine. Your wives also and your children, even the best, are mine'.

⁴ The king of Israel answered, It is according to your saying, my lord, O king. I am yours, and all that I have.

⁵ The messengers came again and said, Ben Hadad says, 'I sent indeed to you, saying, You shall deliver me your silver, and your gold, and your wives, and your children; ⁶ but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house, and the houses of your servants; and it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away'. ⁷ Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, Please notice how this man seeks mischief; for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, my gold; and I didn't deny him. ⁸ All the elders and all the people said to him, Don't listen, neither consent.

⁹ Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben Hadad, Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant at the first I will do; but this thing I cannot do'. The messengers departed, and delivered the message.

¹⁰ Ben Hadad sent to him and said, The gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me. ¹¹ The king of Israel answered, Tell him, 'Don't let him who puts on his armour brag like he who takes it off'. ¹² It happened, when Ben Hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said to his servants,

Prepare to attack! They prepared to attack the city. ¹³ Behold, a prophet came near to Ahab king of Israel and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand this day; and you shall know that I am Yahweh'. ¹⁴ Ahab said, By whom? He said, Thus says Yahweh, 'By the young men of the princes of the provinces'. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? He answered, You.

¹⁵ Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two. After them, he mustered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. ¹⁶ They went out at noon. But Ben Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty-two kings who helped him. ¹⁷ The young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben Hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, Men are coming out from Samaria.

¹⁸ He said, If they have come out for peace, take them alive; or if they have come out for war, take them alive. ¹⁹ So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them. ²⁰ They each killed his opponent. The Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them. Ben Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with horsemen. ²¹ The king of Israel went out, and struck the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter. ²² The prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, Go, strengthen yourself,

and mark, and see what you do; for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against you. ²³ The servants of the king of Syria said to him, Their god is a god of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. ²⁴ Do this thing: take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their place. ²⁵ Muster an army, like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot. We will fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than them. He listened to their voice, and did so. ²⁶ It happened at the return of the year, that Ben Hadad mustered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. ²⁷ The children of Israel were mustered and were provisioned, and went against them. The children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of young goats; but the Syrians filled the country. ²⁸ A man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'Because the Syrians have said, Yahweh is a god of the hills, but He is not a god of the valleys; therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am Yahweh'. ²⁹ They encamped opposite one another seven days. So it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand

footmen of the Syrians in one day. ³⁰ But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who were left. Ben Hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner room. ³¹ His servants said to him, See now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please let us put sackcloth on our bodies, and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel. Maybe he will save your life. ³² So they put sackcloth on their bodies and ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Your servant Ben Hadad says, 'Please let me live'. He said, Is he still alive? He is my brother. ³³ Now the men observed diligently, and hurried to take this phrase; and they said, Your brother Ben Hadad. Then he said, Go, bring him. Then Ben Hadad came out to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. ³⁴ Ben Hadad said to him, The cities which my father took from your father I will restore. You shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. I, said Ahab, will let you go with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and let him go.

A Lesson in the Need for Obedience

³⁵ A certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow by the word of Yahweh, Please strike me! The man refused to strike him. ³⁶ Then he said to him, Because you

20:28 Sometimes God gives victory to unspiritual people because He wishes to justify Himself or teach others a lesson through that victory. The fact God uses us doesn't necessarily mean we are therefore acceptable with Him.

have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, behold, as soon as you are departed from me, a lion shall kill you. As soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and killed him. ³⁷ Then he found another man, and said, Please strike me. The man struck him, smiting and wounding him. ³⁸ So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with his headband over his eyes. ³⁹ As the king passed by, he cried to the king; and he said, Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man to me and said, ‘Guard this man! If by any means he be missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver’. ⁴⁰ As your servant was busy here and there, he was gone. The king of Israel said to him, So your judgment shall be; you yourself have decided it. ⁴¹ He hurried, and took the headband away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized that he was of the prophets. ⁴² He said to him, Thus says Yahweh, ‘Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people’. ⁴³ The king of Israel went to his house sullen and angry, and came to Samaria.

CHAPTER 21 Aug. 26

Ahab and Naboth's Vineyard

It happened after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, right next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ² Ahab spoke to Naboth saying, Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near to my house; and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money. ³ Naboth said to Ahab, May Yahweh forbid me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you! ⁴ Ahab came into his house sullen and angry because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. He laid himself down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. ⁵ But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, Why is your spirit so sad, that you eat no bread? ⁶ He said to her, Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it’. He answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard’. ⁷ Jezebel his wife said to him, Do you really now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be merry. I

20:40 *So your judgment shall be; you yourself have decided it* – Right now, men are justified by their words before the court of Heaven – for ‘justify’ means to pronounce righteous, and this pronouncement / justification is therefore given even now.

21:4 *Sullen and angry* – As in 20:43. Living with a bad conscience before God, endlessly seeking our own pleasure, doesn’t bring happiness but rather depression and anger (1 Tim. 6:9,10).

will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. ⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles who were in his city, who lived with Naboth. ⁹ She wrote in the letters saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. ¹⁰ Set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them testify against him saying, 'You cursed God and the king!' Then carry him out, and stone him to death. ¹¹ The men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. ¹² They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. ¹³ The two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him. The base fellows testified against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people saying, Naboth cursed God and the king! Then they carried him out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. ¹⁴ Then they sent to Jezebel saying, Naboth has been stoned, and is dead. ¹⁵ It happened, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jez-

reelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead. ¹⁶ It happened, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Ahab's Condemnation and Repentance

¹⁷ The word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite saying, ¹⁸ Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwells in Samaria. Behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. ¹⁹ You shall speak to him saying, 'Thus says Yahweh, Have you killed and also taken possession?'. You shall speak to him saying, 'Thus says Yahweh, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick your blood, even yours'. ²⁰ Ahab said to Elijah, Have you found me, my enemy? He answered, I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of Yahweh. ²¹ Behold, I will bring evil on you, and will utterly sweep you away and will cut off from Ahab every male, and him who is shut up and him who is left at large in Israel. ²² I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat,

21:21 *I will bring evil on you* – We expect this to be prefaced by a “Thus says Yahweh” – but Elijah was so close to God he assumed he was speaking directly from Him. And yet Elijah doesn't repeat what God had told him to say in :19. Was he too familiar with God? Assuming he knew God's will and words? But Elijah improved – in 2 Kings 1:6 he says that what he says is the word of Yahweh, and he repeats verbatim what he was told to say. We too know God's word. We know the Bible text well. But this can lead to a wrong assumption that we speak for God; that we must be right in all our attitudes and positions we adopt on issues.

and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah for the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and have made Israel to sin. ²³ Yahweh also spoke of Jezebel saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. ²⁴ The dogs will eat him who dies of Ahab in the city; and the birds of the sky will eat him who dies in the field. ²⁵ But there was none like Ahab, who sold himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. ²⁶ He did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel. ²⁷ It happened, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. ²⁸ The word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite saying, ²⁹ See how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil on his family.

CHAPTER 22 Aug. 27

Ahab's Alliance with Jehoshaphat

They continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. ² It happened in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. ³ The king of Israel said to his servants, You know that Ramoth Gilead is ours, and we are sitting still, and don't take it out of the hand of the king of Syria? ⁴ He said to Jehoshaphat, Will you go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead? Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses. ⁵ Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Please inquire first for the word of Yahweh. ⁶ Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? They said, Go up; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king. ⁷ But Jehoshaphat said, Isn't there here a prophet of Yahweh, that we may inquire of Him? ⁸ The

21:29 Before Me – Yet Elijah also lived a life “before Yahweh” (17:1); it's as if God was trying to get Elijah to see that he wasn't the only person in God's presence. Spiritual elitism is so wrong, and God works hard to bring people out of it.

22:15 Go up and prosper – Like the prophet Nathan in 2 Sam. 7:3, Micahiah initially said what he knew his audience wanted to hear. We who know God's word are tempted likewise; human nature has a strong ability to sense what our audience wants to hear, and to say it. This is where speaking according to God's word is at times counter-instinctive.

22:20 God deceived prophets to speak things in His Name which were actually false (see too Ez. 14:9). He chose Israel's delusions by making their idols answer them (Is. 66:3,4). Jeremiah feared God had deceived *him* (Jer. 20:7) – showing he knew such a thing was possible. God is constantly pushing people up an upward spiral of spirituality, or further down a downward spiral of unspirituality whereby He makes those who don't love His truth to believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:10,11).

king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Yahweh, Micaiah the son of Imlah; but I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. Jehoshaphat said, Don't let the king say so. ⁹ Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Quickly get Micaiah the son of Imlah. ¹⁰ Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, in an open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. ¹¹ Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'With these you shall push the Syrians, until they are consumed'. ¹² All the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; for Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king. ¹³ The messenger who went to call Micaiah spoke to him saying, See now, the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak good. ¹⁴ Micaiah said, As Yahweh lives, what Yahweh says to me, that I will speak. ¹⁵ When he had come to

the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? He answered him, Go up and prosper; and Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king. ¹⁶ The king said to him, How many times do I have to adjure you that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of Yahweh? ¹⁷ He said, I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. Yahweh said, 'These have no master. Let them each return to his house in peace'. ¹⁸ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Didn't I tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?

A Vision of God's Throne Room

¹⁹ Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, and all the army of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. ²⁰ Yahweh said, 'Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?' One said one thing; and another said another. ²¹ A spirit came out and stood before Yahweh, and said, 'I will entice him'. ²² Yahweh said to him, 'How?' He said, 'I will go out and will be a lying spirit in the

22:22 Here the Angels present their various plans of how to slay Ahab. God says to the one whose plan He accepts that he must go out and "prevail" or "struggle" to operationalize a command from God which they know is His will to perform. And we have to do likewise, not least in the preaching of the Gospel, both obeying and prevailing. We shouldn't think that God is unaware of our situations on earth. The Angels discuss their plans for us in the court of Heaven, coming up with various possibilities of how to act in our lives, discussing them with God. We will take over the roles of the Angels in administering God's future Kingdom (Lk. 20:35,36; Heb. 2:5). Their knowledge and power isn't total; they still have to go through a process of working out how to operationalize God's will, coming up with differing suggestions.

mouth of all his prophets'. He said, 'You will entice him, and will also prevail. Go out and do so'. ²³ Now therefore, behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and Yahweh has spoken evil concerning you. ²⁴ Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way did the Spirit of Yahweh go from me to speak to you? ²⁵ Micaiah said, Behold, you will see on that day when you go into an inner room to hide yourself. ²⁶ The king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son. ²⁷ Say, 'Thus says the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace'. ²⁸ Micaiah said, If you return at all in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me. He said, Listen, all you people!

The Battle at Ramoth Gilead

²⁹ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. ³⁰ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but you put on your robes. The king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. ³¹ Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots saying, Fight neither with small nor great,

except only with the king of Israel.

³² It happened, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely that is the king of Israel! And they turned aside to fight against him. Jehoshaphat cried out.

³³ It happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. ³⁴ A certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the armour. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn your hand, and carry me out of the battle; for I am severely wounded. ³⁵ The battle increased that day. The king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out of the wound into the bottom of the chariot. ³⁶ A cry went throughout the army about the going down of the sun saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his country! ³⁷ So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. ³⁸ They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood where the prostitutes washed themselves; according to the word of Yahweh which He spoke. ³⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ⁴⁰ So Ahab slept with his

22:32 Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life because of his alliance with Ahab. Even though Ahab was nominally one of God's people, he had no respect for Yahweh's word (:8). We have to chose our friendships and associations carefully even amongst those who are numbered amongst the body of believers.

fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

Jehoshaphat's Reign

⁴¹ Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³ He walked in all the way of Asa his father; he didn't turn aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh: however the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. ⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. ⁴⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ⁴⁶ The remainder of the sodomites, from the days of his father Asa, he put away out of the land. ⁴⁷ There

was no king in Edom: a deputy was king. ⁴⁸ Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they didn't go; for the ships were broken at Ezion Geber. ⁴⁹ Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with your servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not. ⁵⁰ Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; Jehoram his son reigned in his place. ⁵¹ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. ⁵² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, in which he made Israel to sin. ⁵³ He served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked to anger Yahweh, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

22:49 Jehoshaphat had learnt the lesson about not working together with the family of Ahab (:32). Sometimes God repeats situations in our lives so that we learn the lesson and have practice in it; this is why it's clear that our life situations tend to repeat, under God's providential hand. See on 2 Kings 3:7.

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 1 Aug. 28

Ahaziah Condemned by God

Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. ² Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper room that was in Samaria, and was sick. So he sent messengers and said to them, Go, inquire of Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover of this sickness. ³ But the angel of Yahweh said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and tell them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you go to inquire of Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron?' ⁴ Now therefore thus says Yahweh, You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die'. Elijah departed. ⁵ The messengers returned to him, and he said to them, Why is it

that you have returned? ⁶ They said to him, A man came up to meet us and said to us, 'Go, return to the king who sent you, and tell him, Thus says Yahweh, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you send to inquire of Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die'. ⁷ He said to them, What kind of man was he who came up to meet you, and told you these words? ⁸ They answered him, He was a hairy man, and wearing a leather belt around his waist. He said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

Elijah Calls Fire Down from Heaven

⁹ Then the king sent a captain of fifty with his fifty to him. He went up to him; and behold, he was sit-

1:2 This clearly tells us that Baal Zebub, or Beelzebub, was a false god of the Philistines. When the Jews of the first century accused Jesus of being in league with this god, Jesus did not say, 'Now look, 2 Kings 1:2 says Beelzebub was a false god, so your accusation cannot be true'. Rather He spoke as if Beelzebub existed, because He was interested in getting His message through to His audience. So in the same way Jesus talked about casting out demons – He did not keep saying, 'actually, they do not exist', He just preached the Gospel in the language of the day.

1:9, 10 When Elijah is ordered by the captain of 50 to "come down", Elijah responds by saying "let fire come down". Elijah sees himself as the fire sent from God; he associates himself directly with God and His judgments. He hadn't learnt the lesson that God wasn't in the fire but in the small voice. The captain wanted Elijah to come down from the high hill (cp. Heaven), so Elijah calls fire to come down from Heaven. He sees himself as the fire, as God coming down. The incident is specifically rebuked by the Jesus as not being of *His* Spirit (Lk. 9:54,55). And He rebukes His followers for assuming that their natural prejudice against others can be justified by an appeal to Elijah's example. Elijah failed to see the value of those 100 lives; the value and meaning of persons was lost on him. All he could think of was fighting apostasy and judging it. Elijah called the fire down in allusion to how fire came down from the Lord to destroy Nadab and Abihu and also Sodom (Lev. 10:2; Gen. 19:24). He did the

ting on the top of the hill. He said to him, Man of God, the king has said, ‘Come down!’¹⁰ Elijah answered to the captain of fifty, If I am a man of God, let fire come down from the sky, and consume you and your fifty! Fire came down from the sky, and consumed him and his fifty.¹¹ Again he sent to him another captain of fifty and his fifty. He answered him, Man of God, the king has said, ‘Come down quickly!’¹² Elijah answered them, If I am a man of God, let fire come down from the sky, and consume you and your fifty! The fire of God came down from the sky, and consumed him and his fifty.¹³ Again he sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. The third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and begged him and said to him, Man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty your servants, be precious in your sight.¹⁴ Behold, fire came down from the sky, and consumed the two former captains of fifty with their fifties. But now let my life be precious in your sight.¹⁵ The angel of Yahweh said to Elijah, Go down with him. Don’t be afraid of him. He

arose, and went down with him to the king.¹⁶ He said to him, Thus says Yahweh, ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die’.¹⁷ So he died according to the word of Yahweh which Elijah had spoken. Jehoram began to reign in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, aren’t they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

CHAPTER 2 Aug. 28

Elijah’s Public Ministry Ends

It happened, when Yahweh would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.² Elijah said to Elisha, Please wait here, for Yahweh has sent me as far as Bethel. Elisha said, As Yahweh lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel.³ The sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came

wrong thing from wrong motives and yet he Biblically justified it – for the prophets themselves saw an apostate Israel as being like Sodom (Is. 1:10). Elijah had the wrong attitude, lacking the spirit of Christ, and yet God still heard his prayers; God worked with Elijah as Elijah wanted. And so we perceive the subtleties of a man’s relationship with God. Prayer may be answered, and the extent of Elijah’s faith in ‘commanding’ the fire to come down is indeed awesome, but we may even then still be ‘playing God’ in a wrong way.

1:15 *Don’t be afraid of him* – Elijah may appear to have been a fearless aggressor, but underneath he was fearful, just as the Canaanites seemed so strong but in fact they were very fearful. Others’ aggression to us is sometimes simply because they fear us on some level.

out to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that Yahweh will take away your master from your head today? He said, Yes, I know it. Hold your peace. ⁴ Elijah said to him, Elisha, please wait here, for Yahweh has sent me to Jericho. He said, As Yahweh lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. So they came to Jericho. ⁵ The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came near to Elisha and said to him, Do you know that Yahweh will take away your master from your head today? He answered, Yes, I know it. Hold your peace. ⁶ Elijah said to him, Please wait here, for Yahweh has sent me to the Jordan. He said, As Yahweh lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. They both went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood opposite them at a distance; and they

both stood by the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his mantle, wrapped it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that they two went over on dry ground. ⁹ When they had gone over, Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you. Elisha said, Please let a double portion of your spirit be on me. ¹⁰ He said, You have asked a hard thing. If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so. ¹¹ It happened, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the sky. ¹² Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horseman! He saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes, and

2:11 *Into the sky* – This doesn't mean that Elijah went to get his reward in Heaven. Nobody has ascended to Heaven (Jn. 3:13). Jesus was the first person to be given immortality (1 Cor. 15:20), and was the only person who never sinned. Elijah therefore had to die, because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The Bible presents the Kingdom of God on earth as the reward for the righteous, not going to Heaven at death. The dramatic snatching away of Elijah was in order to openly demonstrate that his public ministry had ended and been passed on to Elisha. It seems Elijah was snatched away into the sky and returned to earth somewhere else – hence the men go searching for him (:16). It seems this happened often in Elijah's life (1 Kings 18:12). Some time after this, Elijah sent a letter (2 Chron. 21:12) – implying he was on earth.

2:12 The chariots and horseman of God appeared; and Elisha perceived that Elijah had finally become identified with them. For Elisha sees them and then describes Elijah as being them – the chariot and horseman of Israel. The Hebrew word for "mantle" is translated "glory" in Zech. 11:3. Elijah had earlier wrapped his presence in his own mantle / glory, rather than face up to the implications of God's glory. But he got there in the end; hence the enormous significance of Elijah giving up his mantle when he finally ascends to Heaven in the cherubim chariot. Finally, Elijah became part of God's glory; He merged into it rather than resisting it for the sake of his *own* glory. He was the charioteer of the cherubim; for his prayers had controlled their direction. This identification of ourselves with God's glory, this losing of ourselves and our own insistence upon our rightness, and our focus on others' wrongness... this is the end result of our lives if they are lived out after the pattern of Elijah's. See on 13:14.

tore them in two pieces. ¹³ He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and struck the waters, and said, Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah? When he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha went over. ¹⁵ When the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha. They came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁶ They said to him, See now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. Perhaps the spirit of Yahweh has taken him up, and put him on some mountain, or into some valley. He said, You shall not send them. ¹⁷ When they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, Send

them. They sent therefore fifty men; and they searched for three days, but didn't find him. ¹⁸ They came back to him while he stayed at Jericho; and he said to them, Didn't I tell you, 'Don't go?'

Elisha's First Miracles

¹⁹ The men of the city said to Elisha, Behold, please, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land miscarries. ²⁰ He said, Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it. They brought it to him. ²¹ He went out to the spring of the waters, and threw salt into it, and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'I have healed these waters. There shall not be from there any more death or miscarrying'. ²² So the waters were healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. ²³ He went up from there to Bethel. As he was going up by the way,

2:19 It could be that the people thought that the barren land was causing their women to be barren. This was evidently an incorrect superstition of the time; barren ground cannot make the women who live on it barren. But Elisha does not specifically rebuke them for believing such nonsense. Instead he performed the miracle of curing the barrenness of the land. The record says that there was no more barrenness of the land or women "*according to the saying of Elisha which he spake*". Normally the people would have resorted to wizards to drive away the relevant demon which they thought was causing the problem. But the miracle made it evident that ultimately God had caused the problem, and He could so easily cure it. This was a far more effective way of sinking the people's foolish superstition than a head-on frontal attack upon it. The way Jesus dealt with the demons issue in the first century is identical in principle. **2:21** Land and water were seen as barren and bad because they were salty (Dt. 29:23; Jud. 9:45; Jer. 17:6); to put salt into bad water to cure it was therefore counter-instinctive. But this is how God loves to operate; we have to recognize the badness and acknowledge that God can work through it. Hence in this case, salt was used to cure saltiness.

2:23 *Go up, you baldhead* – They were doubting that Elisha was really in Elijah's place, and were asking him to go up into the sky as Elijah had done; and they mocked the difference between hairy Elijah and Elisha's baldness.

some youths came out of the city and mocked him, and said to him, Go up, you baldy! Go up, you baldhead! ²⁴ He looked behind him and saw them, and cursed them in the name of Yahweh. Two female bears came out of the woods, and mauled forty-two of those youths. ²⁵ He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

CHAPTER 3 Aug. 29

War with Moab

Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. ² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, but not like his father or his mother; for he put away the pillar of Baal that his father had made. ³ Nevertheless he held to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin; he didn't depart from them. ⁴ Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder; and he rendered to the king of Israel the wool of one hundred thousand lambs, and of one hundred thousand rams. ⁵ But it happened, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. ⁶ King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that

time, and mustered all Israel. ⁷ He went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me against Moab to battle? He said, I will go up. I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses. ⁸ He said, Which way shall we go up? He answered, The way of the wilderness of Edom. ⁹ So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of seven days' journey. There was no water for the army, nor for the animals that followed them. ¹⁰ The king of Israel said, Alas! For Yahweh has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. ¹¹ But Jehoshaphat said, Isn't there here a prophet of Yahweh, that we may inquire of Yahweh by him? One of the king of Israel's servants answered, Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah. ¹² Jehoshaphat said, The word of Yahweh is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. ¹³ Elisha said to the king of Israel, What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father, and to the prophets of your mother. The king of Israel said to him, No; for Yahweh

3:7 Jehoshaphat had been taught in 1 Kings 22:32 the error of association with the wicked kings of Israel; he learnt the lesson when it was repeated in 1 Kings 22:49; but now he fails the test again. Thus Jehoshaphat found himself repeating his words of 1 Kings 22:7 when he says "Isn't there here a prophet of Yahweh, that we may inquire of Yahweh by him?" (:11). This is too often the pattern of our lives; God brings repeat situations, in essence, into our lives; sometimes we learn the lesson, other times we don't. But through it all, He seeks to patiently teach us His principles and obedience to His ways. See on 7:18.

has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. ¹⁴ Elisha said, As Yahweh of Armies lives, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I respect the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward you, nor see you. ¹⁵ But now bring me a minstrel. It happened, when the minstrel played, that the hand of Yahweh came on him. ¹⁶ He said, Thus says Yahweh, 'Make this valley full of trenches'. ¹⁷ For thus says Yahweh, 'You will not see wind, neither will you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, and you will drink, both you and your livestock and your animals. ¹⁸ This is but a light thing in the sight of Yahweh. He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. ¹⁹ You shall strike every fortified city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all springs of water, and spoil every good piece of land with stones'. ²⁰ It happened in the morning, about the time of making the offering, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

The Moabites Defeated

²¹ Now when all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, they gathered themselves together, all who were able to put on armour, young and older, and stood on the border. ²² They rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water over against them as red as blood. ²³ They said, This is blood. The kings are surely

destroyed, and they have struck each other. Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil! ²⁴ When they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land smiting the Moabites. ²⁵ They beat down the cities; and on every good piece of land they cast every man his stone, and filled it. They stopped all the springs of water, and felled all the good trees, until in Kir Hareseth only they left its stones; however the men armed with slings surrounded it, and struck it. ²⁶ When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too severe for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew sword, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not. ²⁷ Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall. There was great wrath against Israel, who departed from him, and returned to their own land.

CHAPTER 4 Aug. 30

Elisha Multiplies Oil

Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets to Elisha, saying, Your servant my husband is dead. You know that your servant feared Yahweh. Now the creditor has come to take for himself my two children to be slaves. ² Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? Tell me: what do you have in the house? She said, Your handmaid has nothing in the house, except a pot of oil. ³ Then he said, Go, borrow containers, empty

ones, from of all your neighbours. Don't borrow just a few. ⁴ You shall go in, and shut the door on yourself and on your sons, and pour out into all those containers; and you shall set aside that which is full. ⁵ So she went from him, and shut the door on herself and on her sons; they brought the containers to her, and she poured out. ⁶ It happened, when the containers were full, that she said to her son, Bring me another container. He said to her, There isn't another container. The oil stopped flowing. ⁷ Then she came and told the man of God. He said, Go, sell the oil, and pay your debt; and you and your sons shall live on the rest.

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman

⁸ It fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman; and she persuaded him to eat bread. So it was, that as often

as he passed by, he turned in there to eat bread. ⁹ She said to her husband, See now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God that passes by us continually. ¹⁰ Please let us make a little room on the wall. Let us set for him there a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp stand. It shall be, when he comes to us, that he shall turn in there. ¹¹ One day he came there, and he turned into the room and lay there. ¹² He said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. When he had called her, she stood before him. ¹³ He said to him, Say now to her, 'Behold, you have cared for us with all this care. What is to be done for you? Would you like to be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the army?' She answered, I dwell among my own people. ¹⁴ He said, What then is to be done for her? Gehazi answered, Most certainly she has no son, and her husband is old. ¹⁵ He said, Call her. When he

4:3 *Don't borrow just a few* – According to the level of our faith, so life will be unto us. The more and the larger the containers borrowed, the more oil they would have. God's power and ability is unlimited; it is us through our faith who control the extent of His activity (Mk. 9:23).

4:4 *Shut the door* – This is emphasized (:5). God's response to human faith is a very personal thing, not to be bragged about. Our relationship with Him is ultimately personal.

4:9 *I perceive that this is a holy man of God* – It seems Elisha said nothing of his ministry as a prophet; he simply stayed at the woman's house when travelling. But our relationship with God will be perceived by others in the end, even without our specific preaching (1 Pet. 3:1).

4:13 *This care* – The Hebrew word for "care" here also means "reverence". To reverence someone is to care for them. Care therefore comes out of a respect / reverence for the person. If we respect persons for who they are, we will care. Care in that sense can't in any sense be properly done or shown if it's simply from a sense of duty, because we're paid to do it, because we might get some benefit from doing so, etc. It arises out of a basic respect for the human person, made as we are in the image of God.

had called her, she stood in the door. ¹⁶ He said, At this season, when the time comes around, you will embrace a son. She said, No, my lord, you man of God, do not lie to your handmaid. ¹⁷ The woman conceived, and bore a son at that season, when the time came around, as Elisha had said to her. ¹⁸ When the child was grown, it happened one day that he went out to his father to the reapers. ¹⁹ He said to his father, My head! My head! He said to his servant, Carry him to his mother. ²⁰ When he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees until noon, and then died. ²¹ She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door on him, and went out. ²² She called to her husband and said, Please send me one of the servants, and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. ²³ He said, Why would you want go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. She said, It's alright. ²⁴ Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward! Don't slow down for me, unless I ask you to. ²⁵ So she went, and came to the man of God to Mount Carmel. It happened, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, there is the Shunammite. ²⁶ Please run now to meet

her, and ask her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' She answered, It is well. ²⁷ When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. Gehazi came near to thrust her away; but the man of God said, Leave her alone; for her soul is troubled within her; and Yahweh has hidden it from me, and has not told me. ²⁸ Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? Didn't I say, Do not deceive me? ²⁹ Then he said to Gehazi, Tuck your cloak into your belt, take my staff in your hand, and go your way. If you meet any man, don't greet him; and if anyone greets you, don't answer him again. Then lay my staff on the face of the child. ³⁰ The mother of the child said, As Yahweh lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. He arose, and followed her. ³¹ Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he returned to meet him, and told him, saying, The child has not awakened. ³² When Elisha had come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid on his bed. ³³ He went in therefore, and shut the door on them both, and prayed to Yahweh. ³⁴ He went up, and cast himself on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, and his eyes on his eyes,

4:29 Christ's command in Lk. 10:4 to go preach the Gospel and greet nobody by the way (greetings in the East can take a long time) clearly alludes here. We are all to have the urgent intensity of Gehazi in taking the hope of resurrection to others.

4:33 *Shut the door... and prayed* – Jesus as it were takes a snapshot of this moment and posts it as a pattern to each of us (Mt. 6:6). Biblical characters like Elisha thus cease to be distant figures, but are to be realistically followed by us as living examples.

and his hands on his hands. He lay upon him; and the flesh of the child grew warm. ³⁵ Then he returned, and walked in the house once back and forth; and went up, and cast himself on him. Then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ³⁶ He called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite! So he called her. When she had come in to him, he said, Take up your son. ³⁷ Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground; and she took up her son, and went out.

Elisha's Miracles

³⁸ Elisha came again to Gilgal. There was a famine in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him. He said to his servant, Set

on the great pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets. ³⁹ One went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered of it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and shred them into the pot of stew; for they didn't recognize them. ⁴⁰ So they poured out for the men to eat. It happened, as they were eating of the stew, that they cried out, and said, Man of God, there is death in the pot! They could not eat of it. ⁴¹ But he said, Bring meal, then. He cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. There was now no harm in the pot. ⁴² A man from Baal Shalishah came, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of grain in his sack.

4:34, 35 1 Kings 18:42 says that Elijah *cast himself* down in prayer. The Hebrew word occurs again only here, as if it was Elijah's example which inspired Elisha likewise to cast himself down upon the child. The implication is that Elisha did so in prayer; and we wonder whether this implies that Elijah's stretching himself upon another child, although a different Hebrew word, was also in prayer (1 Kings 17:21). Elijah's prayerful example inspired another. Our attitude to prayer is so easily influential upon others, and we ourselves are likewise easily influenced. It should be no shame nor embarrassment to us to instantly break into prayer, nor to kneel down to further our intensity in prayer, regardless of the social embarrassment this may involve in some cultures. But we have to ask: Do we *cast ourselves down* in prayer as Elijah and Elisha? Do we know that kind of intensity in prayer?

4:42, 43 This incident presents Elisha as a clear type of Christ, who did the same in His feeding miracles (Mk. 8:6-8). Those who know God's word will find encouragement there in their experiences of life – but that encouragement is dependent upon their appreciation of the word, and their ability to see the similarities between their situation and that of others who have gone before. An example is to be found in the way the Lord told the disciples to feed the crowd, when they had nothing to give them (Mk. 6:37). He was actually quoting from :42, where the man of God told his servant to do the same. He gave what bread he had to the people, and miraculously it fed them. The disciples don't seem to have seen the point; otherwise, they would have realized that if they went ahead in faith, another such miracle would likely be wrought. But it seems that God almost over-ruled them to make the response of the faithless servant of :43: "Shall we... give them to eat?" (Mk. 6:37). They were almost 'made' to do this to make them later see the similarity with the 2 Kings 4 incident. If they

He said, Give to the people, that they may eat. ⁴³ His servant said, What, should I set this before a hundred men? But he said, Give the people, that they may eat; for thus says Yahweh, 'They will eat, and will have some left over'. ⁴⁴ So he set it before them, and they ate, and left some of it, according to the word of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 5 Aug. 31

Elisha Heals Naaman

Now Naaman, captain of the Army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him Yahweh had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. ² The Syrians had gone out in companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden; and she waited on Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, I wish that my lord would visit the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would heal him of his leprosy. ⁴ Someone went in, and told his lord, saying, The maiden who is from the land of Israel said this. ⁵ The king of

Syria said, Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. He departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter has come to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy. ⁷ When the king of Israel had read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me to heal a man of his leprosy? Surely he is seeking a quarrel against me. ⁸ It was so, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king saying, Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean. ¹¹ But Naaman

had been more spiritually aware at the time, the Lord's quotation would have been an encouragement for their faith.

5:3 The girl said this in total faith; because at that time, no lepers had been healed by Elisha in Israel (Lk. 4:27). This girl had great spirituality; she had been taken captive by the Syrians (:2) and so had almost certainly been raped and abused, and now she was a domestic slave, possibly still liable to abuse. But she so loved her enemies that she wanted the army commander to be healed – when he was the visible figurehead of the organization (i.e. the Syrian army) which had abused her.

5:9, 10 Naaman was the chief of the Syrian army and could easily have killed Elisha or destroyed his home. But Elisha isn't courteous to him, doesn't open the door of his home, but just sends someone to Naaman to tell him to go and wash in Jordan. This wasn't rudeness, but rather a desire for Naaman to respond to God's word. Sometimes God presents His word to us in such a way, without any attractive packaging, just bald demands – to test and develop our obedience.

was angry, and went away, and said, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Yahweh his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy'. ¹² Aren't Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ His servants came near and spoke to him and said, My father, if the prophet had asked you do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? How much rather then, when he

says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?' ¹⁴ Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. ¹⁵ He returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and stood before him; and he said, See now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. Now therefore, please take a gift from your servant. ¹⁶ But he said, As Yahweh lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none. He urged him to take

5:14 The way Naaman was effectively born again by dipping in water looks forward to Christian baptism, which also requires humility to accept.

5:15, 16 Elisha was accustomed to thinking of himself in terms of a man who stood before Yahweh, in His presence, before His face (3:14 Hebrew). Naaman and his "company" 'stood before' Elisha. Remember that this was the Syrian army General, standing with a "company" in Israelite territory, at Elisha's house – at a time when 'companies' of Syrian soldiers carried out raids upon Israel (:2). Any Israelite would've been terrified. But Elisha responds that he 'stands before' *Yahweh* more than before Naaman (:16). Elisha was so aware of how we live in God's presence, before His very face, that he wasn't the least phased by this. If only we can share this sense, of standing in God's presence... the most frightening of human situations will have little effective 'presence' because we know we are ultimately in God's presence, 24/7. But how, concretely and actually, did Elisha come to have this serenity? A clue is to be found in how in 6:17, Elisha prays that God will open the eyes of his frightened servant to behold the Angelic horses and chariots around him. Elisha was *so* confident they were there, that he didn't ask to see them himself. He *knew* they were there; he simply asked that his servant be enabled to see the unseen reality which he calmly knew was there. He of course had had first hand experience of the Angelic horses and chariots (a kind of cherubim) when he had been parted from Elijah in 2:11. This must have left an abiding impression upon him – he knew that those Angelic horses and chariots were in fact permanently encamped around him (cp. Ps. 34:7). And so we see significance in the way that Naaman came to Elisha's house with *his* horses and chariot – for this is surely a development of a theme of connection between Elisha, horses and chariots (:9). Most other Israelites would've been petrified to have the horses and chariots of Naaman and a company of Syrians pull up at their door. But Elisha was quite unphased. He didn't even bother coming out to meet Naaman, knowing this was an insult to Naaman's pride, and was humanly certain to result in Naaman simply killing him and burning his house. Surely the horses-chariot-Elisha connection taught Elisha that in fact there were Angelic horses and chariots around him – he need

it; but he refused. ¹⁷ Naaman said, If not, then please let two mules' burden of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will from now on offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice to other gods, but to Yahweh. ¹⁸ In this thing may Yahweh pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon. When I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, may Yahweh pardon your servant in this thing. ¹⁹ He said to him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

Gehazi's Greed

²⁰ But Gehazi the servant of Elisha the man of God said, My master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that

which he brought. As Yahweh lives, I will run after him, and take something from him. ²¹ So Gehazi followed after Naaman. When Naaman saw one running after him, he came down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well? ²² He said, All is well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Behold, even now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing'. ²³ Naaman said, Please take two talents. He urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants; and they carried them before him. ²⁴ When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand, and stored them in the house. Then he let the men go, and

not fear any human horse and chariot. There is no hint that Angelic activity is any less for us today.

5:17 This shows that Naaman was influenced by the surrounding superstition that one could only worship a god of another nation whilst on their soil. But this is not explicitly corrected by Elisha; he simply but powerfully comments: "Go in peace". In other words, Elisha was saying that the peace experienced by Naaman in his daily life was so wondrous that it obviated the need for worshipping on Israeli soil. This is a similar approach to that taken by Jesus with regard to demons. See on 5:27.

5:18 This disproves the theory of guilt by association. God was willing to tolerate this believer in Him still being associated with a pagan religion. This concession to weakness shouldn't be used to justify us in living lives which are indistinguishable from those of unbelievers; we are the light of the world, and if we hide that light, then it will go out (Mt. 5:14). But there are times when our faith in the true God is a matter of the heart, and our external appearance may have to be otherwise because of the life situation we are in; and God is understanding of that, as we should be towards other believers. And yet Naaman chose a lower level of serving God than he could have chosen. The higher level would surely have been, as Daniel's friends, not to bow down to an idol. And when we ask what the rest of the Jews in Babylon did on that occasion, it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that they took the lower level which Naaman did – and bowed down. But when we choose a lower level of service, God works to inspire us to take higher levels – see on 6:11.

they departed. ²⁵ But he went in, and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, Where did you come from, Gehazi? He said, Your servant went nowhere. ²⁶ He said to him, Didn't my heart go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive money, to receive garments and olive groves and vineyards, sheep and cattle, and male servants and female servants? ²⁷ Therefore the leprosy of Naaman will cling to you and to your seed forever. He went out from his presence a leper, as white as snow.

CHAPTER 6 Sep. 1

The Iron Floats

The sons of the prophets said to Elisha, See now, the place where we dwell before you is too small for us. ² Please let us go to the Jordan, and every man take a beam from there, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. He answered, Go! ³ One said, Please go with your servants. He answered, I will go. ⁴ So

he went with them. When they came to the Jordan, they cut down wood. ⁵ But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water. Then he cried and said, Alas, my master! For it was borrowed. ⁶ The man of God asked, Where did it fall? He showed him the place. He cut down a stick, threw it in there, and made the iron float. ⁷ He said, Take it. So he put out his hand and took it.

Elisha Traps the Syrians

⁸ Now the king of Syria was warring against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying, My camp will be in such and such a place. ⁹ The man of God sent to the king of Israel saying, Beware that you not pass such a place; for the Syrians are coming that way. ¹⁰ The king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of; and he saved himself there, not once nor twice. ¹¹ The heart of the king of Syria was very troubled about this. He called his servants, and said to

5:27 The idea of transference of disease from one to another was a common Semitic perception, and it's an idea accommodated by God although it's incorrect. God threatened to make the diseases of the inhabitants of Canaan and Egypt to cleave to Israel if they were disobedient (Dt. 28:21,60). Here too, as with the curing of Legion, there is Divine accommodation to the ideas of disease transference which people had at the time. This explains why the New Testament can speak of 'demons' whilst also denying their actual existence – it's an accommodation to the ideas of the time. This is in harmony with similar accommodations in the Old Testament. See on 5:17.

6:11 Naaman wanted to be a secret believer, even bowing down to Rimmon to keep his boss happy. God seems to have allowed this, but He worked in Naaman's life, so that his faith was no longer secret. For soon after his conversion, his master got the hunch that one of his courtiers was "for the king of Israel". And Naaman would have been the obvious suspect, as he had gone to Israel and been cured of his leprosy by an Israeli prophet. We then read that the army of Syria came against Elisha the prophet and sought to surround him in order to capture him. They were then judged by God. Could it really be so that Naaman would have led that army? Surely the situation arose

them, Won't you show me which of us is for the king of Israel? ¹² One of his servants said, No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom. ¹³ He said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him. It was told him saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. ¹⁴ Therefore he sent horses, chariots and a great army there. They came by night, and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was around the city. His servant said to him, Alas, my master! What shall we do? ¹⁶ He answered, Don't be afraid; for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. ¹⁷ Elisha prayed and said, Yahweh, please open his eyes, that he may see. Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha. ¹⁸ When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to

Yahweh, and said, Please strike this people with blindness. He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. ¹⁹ Elisha said to them, This is not the way, neither is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. He led them to Samaria. ²⁰ It happened, when they had come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Yahweh, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. Yahweh opened their eyes, and they perceived that they were in the midst of Samaria. ²¹ The king of Israel said to Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I strike them? Shall I strike them? ²² He answered, You shall not strike them. Would you strike those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. ²³ He prepared a great feast for them. When they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. The bands of Syria stopped raiding the land of Israel.

so as to force Naaman to resign the job. Thus God worked to stop him being a secret believer, and to remove him from a position where he could not live with a free conscience before the Father. And so God will do in our lives – if we respond.

6:17 Elisha saw with the eyes of faith that the horses and chariots of their enemies were matched by the Angel cherubim around them. He was so certain they were there that he didn't need to physically see them for himself, but he asked that the eyes of his servant would be opened to see them. We imagine Peter walking confidently through the dark streets with his Angel next to him, and then perhaps phased for a moment by the Angel's disappearance. But the truth is that the Angel walked with him through every street he ever walked along (Acts 12:10). The actual presence of the Angels in our lives ought to motivate us to live as in the presence of God; the fact we don't physically see them doesn't mean they aren't literally present (1 Cor. 11:10; 1 Tim. 5:21; see on 1 Kings 18:15). See on 5:15,16.

6:23 The showing of such great grace, to the extent of making a feast for them, stopped the aggression recurring. Grace is ultimately the only way to conflict resolution.

Samaria Besieged

²⁴ It happened after this, that Ben Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. ²⁵ There was a great famine in Samaria. Behold they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver. ²⁶ As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him saying, Help, my lord, O king! ²⁷ He said, If Yahweh doesn't help you, how could I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress? ²⁸ The king said to her, What ails you? She answered, This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow'. ²⁹ So we boiled my son, and ate him. I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him,' and she has hidden her son. ³⁰ It happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes (now he was passing by on the wall); and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth underneath on his

flesh. ³¹ Then he said, God do so to me, and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stay on him this day. ³² But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Then the king sent a man from before him; but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent to take away my head? When the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold it shut against him. Isn't the sound of his master's feet behind him? ³³ While he was still talking with them, the messenger came down to him. Then he said, This evil is from Yahweh. Why should I wait for Yahweh any longer?

CHAPTER 7 Sep. 2***The Syrians Destroyed***

Elisha said, Hear the word of Yahweh. Thus says Yahweh, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria'. ² Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned

6:33 *This evil is from Yahweh* – Evil in the sense of disaster comes from God; it's not true that only good things come from God and all negative things from some cosmic 'Satan'; both good and "evil" come from God (Is. 45:5-7).

Why should I wait for Yahweh any longer? – Elisha here has an apparent roughness with the Almighty that could only surely come from his knowing that God fully viewed and knew his inner feelings; and so like David in some of the Psalms, he speaks his rough thoughts before God just as they are, because he knows God sees them anyway. Elisha's roughness with God isn't good, but it does reflect a level of intimacy with God which is commendable.

7:2 *If Yahweh made windows in heaven* – He forgot that there *are* windows in Heaven (Gen. 7:11; Mal. 3:10) through which blessing can be given. He believed in God's existence. But he didn't think this God could do much, and he doubted whether He would ever practically intervene in human affairs. We must be aware of this same tendency.

answered the man of God and said, Behold, if Yahweh made windows in heaven, could this thing be? He said, You shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat of it. ³ Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate. They said one to another, Why do we sit here until we die? ⁴ If we say, 'We will enter into the city', then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. If we sit still here, we also die. Now therefore come, and let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we will live; and if they kill us, we will only die. ⁵ They rose up in the twilight, to go to the camp of the Syrians. When they had come to the outermost part of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no man there. ⁶ For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great army. They said one to another, Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come on us. ⁷ Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their donkeys, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. ⁸ When these lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and ate

and drank, and carried from there silver, and gold, and clothing, and went and hid it. Then they came back and entered into another tent, and carried from there also, and went and hid it. ⁹ Then they said one to another, We aren't doing the right thing. This day is a day of good news, and we keep silent. If we wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household. ¹⁰ So they came and called to the porter of the city and said, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but the horses tied, and the donkeys tied, and the tents as they were. ¹¹ He called the porters; and they told it to the king's household within. ¹² The king arose in the night and said to his servants, I'll tell you what the Syrians are doing to us. They know that we are hungry. Therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field saying, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive, and get into the city'. ¹³ One of his servants answered, Please let some men take five of the horses that remain in the city. Behold, they are like all the multitude of Israel who are left in it. They would perish anyway, like all the many Israelites

7:4 These utterly desperate men were chosen by God to be the heralds of good news (:9) – the Gospel. He uses desperate people today, even middle class comfortable people who perceive their desperation, as the means of His witness.

7:8 Jesus used this as the basis for His parable about the man who finds the Gospel, as the treasure in a field, and hides it (Mt. 13:44). But surely He intended us to think of what those men did afterwards. They even felt that woe would be unto them if they did not share the good news of what they had found. The same joyful urgency must be ours; and there is a "woe" unto us if we don't share that good news (1 Cor. 9:16).

who have already died. Let us send and see. ¹⁴ They took therefore two chariots with horses; and the king sent after the army of the Syrians saying, Go and see. ¹⁵ They went after them to the Jordan; and behold, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. The messengers returned and told the king. ¹⁶ The people went out, and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of Yahweh. ¹⁷ The king appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to be in charge of the gate; and the people trod on him in the gate, and he died as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. ¹⁸ (It happened, as the man of God had spoken to the king saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria; ¹⁹ and that captain answered the man of God and said, Now, behold, if Yahweh should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat of it. ²⁰ It happened like that to him; for the people trod on him in the gate, and he died.)

CHAPTER 8 Sep. 3

A Divinely Arranged Coincidence

Now Elisha had spoken to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise and go, you and your household, and stay for a while wherever you can; for Yahweh has called for a famine. It shall also come on the land seven years. ² The woman arose, and did according to the word of the man of God. She went with her household, and lived in the land of the Philistines seven years. ³ It happened after the seven years, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines. Then she went forth to plead to the king for her house and for her land. ⁴ Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God saying, Please tell me all the great things that Elisha has done. ⁵ It happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored to life him who was dead, that the woman whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life. ⁶ When the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed to her a certain officer saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

7:18 Jehoshaphat was on balance a righteous man, but his association with the sinful family of Ahab (see on 3:7) led to his children going astray from God because of his weakness in that area, which they repeated (:28). Whilst we may retain the faith, our spiritual weaknesses can lead to our children losing it.

8:5 There are no coincidences in the lives of those with whom God is working; there is meaning attached to events, and perceiving this will preserve us from the sense of meaninglessness and pointlessness which afflicts so many unbelievers.

The Death of Ben Hadad

⁷ Elisha came to Damascus; and Ben Hadad the king of Syria was sick. It was told him saying, The man of God has come here. ⁸ The king said to Hazael, Take a present in your hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of Yahweh by him, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?' ⁹ So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him and said, Your son Ben Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?' ¹⁰ Elisha said to him, Go, tell him, 'You shall surely recover;' however Yahweh has shown me that he shall surely die. ¹¹ He settled his gaze steadfastly on him, until he was ashamed. Then the man of God wept. ¹² Hazael said, Why do you weep, my lord? He answered, Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel. You will set their strongholds on fire, kill their young men with the sword, dash in pieces their little ones and rip up their women with child. ¹³ Hazael said, But what is your servant, is he a dog, that he should do this awful thing? Elisha answered, Yahweh has shown me that you will be king over Syria. ¹⁴ Then he departed from Elisha, and

came to his master, who said to him, What did Elisha say to you? He answered, He told me that you would surely recover. ¹⁵ It happened on the next day, that he took a thick cloth, dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died. Then Hazael reigned in his place.

Jehoram Becomes King

¹⁶ In the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being king of Judah then, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign. ¹⁷ He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign. He reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ¹⁸ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab as wife. He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh. ¹⁹ However, Yahweh would not destroy Judah, for David His servant's sake, as He promised him to give to him a lamp for his children always. ²⁰ In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. ²¹ Then Joram passed over to Zair, and all his chariots with him. He rose up by night, and struck the Edomites who surrounded him, and the captains of the chariots; and the people fled to their tents. ²² So Edom revolted from under the hand

8:9 Even unbelievers in their extremity try to turn to God; there is in all people some level of conscience toward God, a sense of their need for Him, however deeply buried it is. The task of preaching is to reach down through their defences and connect with that sense.

8:10 Here we see how God is aware of multiple possible futures. To see individuals time and again messing up what He has made potentially possible must be so sad for Him (see too Mt. 11:21,22).

of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time. ²³ The rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ²⁴ Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place. ²⁵ In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. ²⁶ Twenty-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri king of Israel. ²⁷ He walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, as did the house of Ahab; for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab. ²⁸ He went with Joram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth Gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram. ²⁹ King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

CHAPTER 9 Sep. 4

Jehu Is Anointed

Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said

to him, Put your belt on your waist, take this vial of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead. ² When you come there, find Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brothers, and carry him to an inner room. ³ Then take the vial of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says Yahweh, I have anointed you king over Israel'. Then open the door, flee, and don't wait. ⁴ So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth Gilead. ⁵ When he came, behold, the captains of the army were sitting. Then he said, I have a message for you, captain. Jehu said, To which of us all here? He said, To you, O captain. ⁶ He arose, and went into the house. Then he poured the oil on his head and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'I have anointed you king over the people of Yahweh, even over Israel. ⁷ You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Yahweh, at the hand of Jezebel. ⁸ For the whole house of Ahab shall perish. I will cut off from Ahab every male, both him who is shut up and him who is left at large in Israel. ⁹ I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. ¹⁰ The dogs will eat Jezebel on the plot of

9:2 Jehu arising from amongst his brethren and being anointed pointed forward to how Christ was anointed with oil above His brethren – for He was of our nature, one of us (Heb. 1:9). Jehu could have been a Messiah figure, but his pride in later life stopped him realizing his potential.

ground of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her'. He opened the door, and fled. ¹¹ Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord; and one said to him, Is all well? Why did this mad fellow come to you? He said to them, You know the man and what his talk was. ¹² They said, That is a lie. Tell us now. He said, He told me, 'Thus says Yahweh, I have anointed you king over Israel'. ¹³ Then they hurried, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs and blew the trumpet, saying, Jehu is king.

Jehu Kills Joram, Ahaziah and Jezebel

¹⁴ So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram was keeping Ramoth Gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria; ¹⁵ but king Joram had returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria). Jehu said, If this is your thinking, then let no one escape and go out of the city to go to tell it in Jezreel. ¹⁶ So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram. ¹⁷ Now the watchman was standing on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company

of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. Joram said, Take a horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?' ¹⁸ So there went one on horseback to meet him and said, Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?' Jehu said, What do you have to do with peace? Fall in behind me! The watchman said, The messenger came to them, but he isn't coming back. ¹⁹ Then he sent out a second on horseback, who came to them, and said, Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?' Jehu answered, What do you have to do with peace? Fall in behind me! ²⁰ The watchman said, He came to them, and isn't coming back. The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he drives angrily. ²¹ Joram said, Get ready! They got his chariot ready. Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu, and found him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. ²² It happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? He answered, What peace, so long as the prostitution of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft abound? ²³ Joram turned around to flee, and said to Ahaziah, There is treason, Ahaziah! ²⁴ Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and struck Joram between his arms; and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down

9:19 *Fall in behind me* – The emphasis is on the word “me” (:18,32; 10:6). Jehu did God's work at this time, and yet he was very self-centred in doing it, seeking a personal following and glory to himself rather than to God. Our involvement in God's work doesn't automatically make our attitudes correct in all ways. Jehu seems to have used his service of God as an outlet for his anger (:20). See on 10:11.

9:20 Truly our style of driving often reflects our inner state of mind.

in his chariot. ²⁵ Then Jehu said to Bidkar his captain, Pick him up, and throw him in the plot of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember how, when you and I rode together after Ahab his father, Yahweh laid this burden on him: ²⁶ ‘Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons’, says Yahweh; ‘and I will repay you in this plot of ground’, says Yahweh. Now therefore take and cast him onto the plot of ground, according to the word of Yahweh. ²⁷ But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. Jehu followed after him, and said, Strike him also in the chariot! They struck him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. He fled to Megiddo, and died there. ²⁸ His servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his tomb with his fathers in the city of David. ²⁹ In the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah. ³⁰ When Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and attired her head, and looked out at the window. ³¹ As Jehu entered in at the gate she said, Do you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master? ³² He lifted up his face to the window and said, Who is on my side? Who? Two or three eunuchs looked out at him. ³³ He said, Throw her

down! So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses. Then he trampled her under foot. ³⁴ When he had come in, he ate and drank; and he said, See now to this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king’s daughter. ³⁵ They went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. ³⁶ Therefore they came back, and told him. He said, This is the word of Yahweh which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite saying, ‘The dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel on the plot of Jezreel, ³⁷ and the body of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel’.

CHAPTER 10 Sep. 5

Jehu Kills Ahab’s Family

Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. Jehu wrote letters and sent to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, even the elders, and to those who brought up the sons of Ahab, saying, ² Now as soon as this letter comes to you, since your master’s sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fortified city also, and armour: ³ Select the best and fittest of your master’s sons, set him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s house. ⁴ But

9:27 Ahaziah failed to learn from Biblical history – that association with the wicked kings of Israel would be to his own hurt (see on 3:7; 7:18). The Bible is largely history, specially selected for us to learn from and discern the relevance to our own lives (Rom. 15:4).

9:36 *This is the word of Yahweh* – God’s word is put for its fulfilment – so certain is it of fulfilment.

they were exceedingly afraid and said, Behold, the two kings didn't stand before him! How then shall we stand? ⁵ He who was over the household, and he who was over the city, the elders also, and those who raised the children, sent to Jehu saying, We are your servants, and will do all that you ask us. We will not make any man king. You do that which is good in your eyes. ⁶ Then he wrote a letter the second time to them saying, If you are on my side, and if you will listen to my voice, take the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by tomorrow this time. Now the king's sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city who brought them up. ⁷ It happened, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons and killed them, all seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to him to Jezreel. ⁸ A messenger came and told him, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. He said, Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until the morning. ⁹ It happened in the morning, that he went out and stood and said to all the people, You are righteous. Behold, I conspired against my master, and killed him; but who

struck all these? ¹⁰ Know now that nothing shall fall to the earth of the word of Yahweh, which Yahweh spoke concerning the house of Ahab. For Yahweh has done that which He spoke by His servant Elijah. ¹¹ So Jehu struck all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, with all his great men, his familiar friends, and his priests, until he left him none remaining. ¹² He arose and departed, and went to Samaria. As he was at the shearing house of the shepherds on the way, ¹³ Jehu met with the brothers of Ahaziah king of Judah and said, Who are you? They answered, We are the brothers of Ahaziah. We are going down to greet the children of the king and the children of the queen. ¹⁴ He said, Take them alive! They took them alive, and killed them at the pit of the shearing house, even forty-two men. He didn't leave any of them. ¹⁵ When he had departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him. He greeted him and said to him, Is your heart right, as my heart is with your heart? Jehonadab answered, It is. If it is, give me your hand. He gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot. ¹⁶ He said, Come with me, and see

10:11 This would seem unethical; Jehu was being wilfully aggressive and bloodthirsty, justifying it in the name of zeal for God. Likewise he killed Ahaziah simply on the basis of 'guilt by association' with Joram, and then killed 42 of Ahaziah's relatives by taking 'guilt by association' to yet another degree (:14). Defence of God's Truth must never become an outlet for our native anger and dysfunction; see on 9:19.

10:16 *See my zeal for Yahweh* – True zeal for God is never so overtly self projected. Pride in spirituality means we're not spiritual and simply 'don't get it'. Claiming to be obedient to God's word (:17) can never justify such spiritual pride; pride is utterly reprehensible to God and we likewise should turn away from it when we encounter it.

my zeal for Yahweh. So they made him ride in his chariot. ¹⁷ When he came to Samaria, he struck all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke to Elijah.

Jehu Kills the Baal Worshipers

¹⁸ Jehu gathered all the people together and said to them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu will serve him much. ¹⁹ Now therefore call to me all the prophets of Baal, all of his worshippers, and all of his priests. Let none be absent; for I have a great sacrifice to Baal. Whoever is absent, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtlety, intending that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal. ²⁰ Jehu said, Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal! They proclaimed it. ²¹ Jehu sent through all Israel; and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that didn't come. They came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other. ²² He said to him who was over the vestry, Bring out robes for all the worshippers of Baal! He brought robes out to them. ²³ Jehu went with Jehonadab the son of Rechab into the house of Baal. Then he said to the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that

there are here with you none of the servants of Yahweh, but the worshippers of Baal only. ²⁴ They went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had appointed him eighty men outside and said, If any of the men whom I bring into your hands escape, he who lets him go, his life shall be for the life of him. ²⁵ It happened, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and kill them! Let none escape. They struck them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went into the inner room of the house of Baal. ²⁶ They brought out the pillars that were in the house of Baal, and burned them. ²⁷ They broke down the pillar of Baal, and broke down the house of Baal and made it a latrine, to this day. ²⁸ Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

Jehu's Weakness

²⁹ However Jehu didn't depart from following the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin: the golden calves that were in Bethel, and in Dan. ³⁰ Yahweh said to Jehu, Because you have done well in executing that which is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to

10:18 This deceitful behaviour is surely unethical. We cannot justify unethical behaviour in the name of obeying God and defending His Truth against apostasy. So many sins have been committed in the name of this. Elijah gathered together all the Baal worshippers to a showdown on Carmel, but he did so on a transparent basis.

10:30 Hosea says that the blood of Jezreel would be visited upon the house of Jehu (Hos. 1:4). At Jezreel, Jehu had killed Ahab's family in a quite literal bloodbath. And God had commented that because Jehu had done this and thus fulfilled His word, Je-

all that was in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. ³¹ But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of Yahweh, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He didn't depart from the sins of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel to sin. ³² In those days Yahweh began to weaken Israel; and Hazael struck them in all the borders of Israel: ³³ from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of the Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan. ³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ³⁵ Jehu slept with his fathers;

and they buried him in Samaria. Jehoahaz his son reigned in his place.

³⁶ The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

CHAPTER 11 Sep. 6

Joash Is Crowned King

Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal. ² But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were slain, even him and his nurse, and put them in the bedroom. They hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not slain; ³ he was with her hidden

hu's family would reign for the next four generations. So why, then, does Hosea start talking about punishing the house of Jehu for what they did to the house of Ahab? Jehu became proud about the manner in which he had been the channel for God's purpose to be fulfilled, inviting others to come and behold his zeal for God (:16). Jehu and his children showed themselves to not really be spiritually minded, and yet they prided themselves in having physically done God's will. And because of this, Hosea talks in such angry terms about retribution for what they had done; the house of Jehu's act of obedience to God actually became something his family had to be punished for, because they had done it in a proud spirit. We see this all the time around us. Men and women who clearly are instruments in God's hand, like the Assyrians were, doing His will... but being proud about it and becoming exalted in their own eyes because of it. And God through Hosea is so sensitive to the awfulness of this.

10:31 *Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of Yahweh* – Jehu had been obedient to God's word about Ahab's family and Baal as an outlet for his own aggression, anger and pride. But Jehu clearly didn't really have a heart for God, because he only focused on those aspects of God's word which were convenient to him and reinforced his own personality type. An obsession with criticism of others for their doctrinal and moral weaknesses has often been passed off as zeal for God's word, when the whole spirit of God's word in other matters has been totally ignored. God asks for our devotion to His word in every part of our hearts and living, not just as a justification for what we naturally would like to do.

11:1 In response to the murder of her son, Athaliah murdered others. The cycle of hurt continues like this in so many lives, doing to others what was done to us. Only the gospel of grace in Christ can break this cycle.

in the house of Yahweh six years. Athaliah reigned over the land. ⁴ In the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the captains over hundreds of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him into the house of Yahweh. He made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of Yahweh, and showed them the king's son. ⁵ He commanded them saying, This is the thing that you shall do: a third part of you, who come in on the Sabbath, shall be keepers of the watch of the king's house; ⁶ a third part shall be at the gate Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard. So you shall keep the watch of the house, and be a barrier. ⁷ The two companies of you, even all who go out on the Sabbath, shall keep the watch of the house of Yahweh around the king. ⁸ You shall surround the king, every man with his weapons in his hand; and he who comes within the ranks, let him be slain. Be with the king when he goes out, and when he comes in. ⁹ The captains over hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded; and they took every man his men, those who were to come in on the Sabbath, with those who were to go out on the Sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. ¹⁰ The priest delivered to the captains over hundreds the spears and shields that had been king David's,

which were in the house of Yahweh. ¹¹ The guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, around the king. ¹² Then he brought out the king's son and put the crown on him, and gave him the testimony. They made him king and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, Long live the king! ¹³ When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the house of Yahweh. ¹⁴ She looked, and behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the tradition was, and the captains and the trumpets near the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, Treason! Treason! ¹⁵ Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds who were set over the army, and said to them, Bring her out between the ranks. Kill him who follows her with the sword. For the priest said, Don't let her be slain in the house of Yahweh. ¹⁶ So they made way for her; and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house. She was slain there. ¹⁷ Jehoiada made a covenant between Yahweh and the king and the people, that they should be Yahweh's people; also between the king and the people. ¹⁸ All the people of the land went to the house

11:17 The covenant between Yahweh and the king was related to the covenant between the king and the people. Our covenant relationship with God isn't just between Him and us. It demands that we are in covenant with His people; we can't love Him that begat without loving those others begotten by Him (1 Jn. 4:9).

11:18 This purge of Baal worship came soon after Jehu's purge of Baal worship

of Baal, and broke it down. They broke his altars and his images in pieces thoroughly, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. The priest appointed officers over the house of Yahweh. ¹⁹ He took the captains over hundreds, and the Carites, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of Yahweh, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. He sat on the throne of the kings. ²⁰ So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. Athaliah they had slain with the sword at the king's house. ²¹ Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign.

CHAPTER 12 Sep. 6

Josh Repairs the Temple

In the seventh year of Jehu began Jehoash to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. ² Jehoash did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. ³ However the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high

places. ⁴ Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of Yahweh, in current money, the money of the persons at which each man is rated, and all the money that it comes into any man's heart to bring into the house of Yahweh, ⁵ let the priests take it to them, every man from his acquaintance; and they shall repair the breaches of the house, wherever any breach shall be found. ⁶ But, in the twenty third year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. ⁷ Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the other priests, and said to them, Why don't you repair the breaches of the house? Now therefore take no more money from your treasurers, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. ⁸ The priests agreed that they should take no more money from the people, neither repair the breaches of the house themselves. ⁹ Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of Yahweh. The priests who kept the threshold put therein all the money that was brought into the

(10:18). The reforms were obviously never far reaching. We can remove the external appearance of sin from our lives, but it will come back quickly unless we replace sinful practices with dedication to the true God. Otherwise, the void created will again be filled by sin, in one form or another. Breaking sinful habits must be followed up by replacing them with something spiritual, or else we will revert again to sin.

12:2 Our spirituality can be dominated by others for a time, but in the end, God wants us to have a personal relationship with Him – and therefore He has a way of removing all the props which we have had holding up our faith, and then we are left alone to directly engage with Him totally on our own initiative. This may account for some of the midlife crises of faith which there are amongst believers who were raised in the Faith.

house of Yahweh. ¹⁰ It was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of Yahweh. ¹¹ They gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of Yahweh. They paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, who worked on the house of Yahweh, ¹² and to the masons and the stone cutters, and for buying timber and cut stone to repair the breaches of the house of Yahweh, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. ¹³ But there were not made for the house of Yahweh cups of silver, snuffers, basins, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of Yahweh; ¹⁴ for they gave that to those who did the work, and repaired therewith the house of Yahweh. ¹⁵ Moreover they didn't demand an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to give to those who did the work; for they dealt faithfully. ¹⁶ The money for the trespass offerings, and the money for the sin offerings, were not brought into the house of Yahweh: it was the priests'.

The Death of Jehoash

¹⁷ Then Hazael king of Syria went up and fought against Gath, and took it; and Hazael set his face to go

up to Jerusalem. ¹⁸ Jehoash king of Judah took all the holy things that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own holy things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and of the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria; and he went away from Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ²⁰ His servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and struck Joash at the house of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla. ²¹ For Jozacar the son of Shimeath, and Jehoabad the son of Shomer, his servants, struck him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David. Amaziah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 13 Sep. 7

Jehoahaz's Reign

In the twenty-third year of Joash son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria for seventeen years. ² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, in which he made Israel to sin. He didn't depart from it. ³ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben Hadad

12:18 *He went away from Jerusalem* – Sometimes our faithless actions appear to have worked out and bought us the deliverance we sought, but the parallel record in Chronicles makes it clear that Jehoash paid for this with the loss of his personal faith.

the son of Hazael, continually. ⁴ Jehoahaz begged Yahweh, and Yahweh listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, how that the king of Syria oppressed them. ⁵ Yahweh gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel lived in their tents as before. ⁶ Nevertheless they didn't depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel to sin, but walked therein. There remained the Asherah also in Samaria. ⁷ For the king of Syria didn't leave to Jehoahaz of the people any more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in threshing. ⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ⁹ Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his place.

Jehoash's Reign

¹⁰ In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel in Samaria for sixteen years. ¹¹ He did that which was evil in the sight of

Yahweh; he didn't depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin; but he walked therein. ¹² Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ¹³ Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat on his throne. Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. ¹⁴ Now Elisha contracted a sickness of which he would die. Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen! ¹⁵ Elisha said to him, Take bow and arrows; and he took to him bow and arrows. ¹⁶ He said to the king of Israel, Put your hand on the bow; and he put his hand on it. Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. ¹⁷ He said, Open the window eastward; and he opened them. Then Elisha said, Shoot! And he shot. He said, Yahweh's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria; for you shall strike the Syrians in Aphek, until you have consumed them. ¹⁸ He said, Take the arrows; and he took them. He said to the king of Israel, Strike the ground; and he struck three times,

13:14 Elijah's example clearly influenced Elisha, both in the nature of the miracles which he performed, and in how when Elisha died, he was likewise seen as "My father, the chariot of Israel, and the horseman thereof". How Elisha related to Elijah, was how people came to relate to Elisha. This is not only a neat cameo of the immense personal influence which we have upon each other; it reflects how Elisha learnt the lesson from Elijah, which we too must learn, of freely and totally absorbing ourselves in the progress of God's Angelic, cherubic work to bring about *His* glory and not our own. See on 2:12.

and stopped. ¹⁹ The man of God was angry with him and said, You should have struck five or six times. Then you would have struck Syria until you had consumed it, whereas now you shall strike Syria just three times.

The Death of Elisha and of Hazael

²⁰ Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. ²¹ It happened, as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a band; and they cast the man into the tomb of Elisha. As soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet. ²² Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. ²³ But Yahweh was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and had respect to them because of His cove-

nant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither did He cast them out from His presence at that time. ²⁴ Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben Hadad his son reigned in his place. ²⁵ Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben Hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Joash struck him three times, and recovered the cities of Israel.

CHAPTER 14 Sep. 8

Amaziah Becomes King of Judah

In the second year of Joash son of Joahaz king of Israel began Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah to reign. ² He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. ³ He

13:19 Yahweh in some ways and at some times allows Himself to be limited by the perceptions and faith of His people. If Joash had perceived deeper what Elisha meant and discerned the symbolism of the arrows, he would have smitten many times and the Syrian threat would have been eliminated entirely. But he didn't, and therefore Elishah was frustrated with him; the great potential victory was limited by a man's lack of spiritual perception. Whilst theoretical understanding alone can't save anyone, it plays a part in the quality and nature of a person's relationship with their God.

13:21 Jesus was the first person to be given immortality (1 Cor. 15:20,23); the people resurrected before His time must therefore have died again. God's plan is that all His people will be rewarded with immortality together, at the final resurrection and judgment (Heb. 11:39,40; 2 Tim. 4:8).

14:2 *His mother's name* – So often this is mentioned in the records of the kings, teaching us the huge spiritual influence of a mother upon her children throughout their lives.

14:3 There are levels of devotion to God, reflected in the different levels of reward at the last day (Lk. 19:17-19; 1 Cor. 15:41). If we have a heart for God, we won't be minimalists in His service; motivated by love for Him rather than any seeking of personal glory in the future, we will seek to always serve Him on the highest level we can. Amaziah served God on the same level as his father; our service of God shouldn't be a living out of parental expectation, nor should we feel content and self satisfied

did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, yet not like David his father: he did according to all that Joash his father had done. ⁴ However the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. ⁵ As soon as the kingdom was established in his hand, he killed his servants who had slain the king his father. ⁶ But the children of the murderers he didn't put to death; as written in the book of the law of Moses, that Yahweh commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin. ⁷ He killed

of Edom in the Valley of Salt ten thousand and took Sela by war, and called its name Joktheel to this day. ⁸ Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face. ⁹ Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon saying, 'Give your daughter to my son as wife. Then a wild animal that was in Lebanon passed by, and trampled down the thistle. ¹⁰ You have indeed struck Edom, and your heart has lifted you up. Enjoy the glory of it, and stay at home; for why should you

because we serve God on the level of our parents. We are to be motivated by our personal engagement with the fact God has loved us and His Son died for us, rather than comparing ourselves amongst ourselves; for Christ is to be for us the only standard of comparison (2 Cor. 10:12). The common phrase in the record of the Kings of Judah "he did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh", used here in :3 about both Joash and Amaziah, is hard to conclusively interpret. Many of the men of whom this was said were not very righteous, and some (e.g. Uzziah, 15:34) were punished for their later apostasy. Possible explanations are that they repented at the end, although unrecorded; or that they were initially righteous; or that God counted them as righteous although they did wrong things. Or perhaps a man can *do* (and maybe this is the word that needs emphasis) what is right in God's eyes, but still ultimately be condemned because his *heart* is far from God. Amaziah "*did* that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, yet not like (i.e. he didn't do his works like) David his father" must be paralleled with 2 Chron. 25:2: "he did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, but not with a perfect heart". Working for God as David did therefore involved doing the works with a perfect heart, the open conscience which David so often displayed in the Psalms. But Amaziah was deceived by the fact he was doing good works, and the real essence of his relationship with God was thereby overlooked. And we too can project a shadow-self to others, an image of spirituality, which eventually we come to believe ourselves; when our heart is far from God. This feature of human nature explains why a man or woman can reach such heights of devotion and then turn round and walk away from it all, out into the darkness of the world.

14:10 Success in the cut and thrust of worldly life shouldn't lead us to have the same attitude to our brethren, even if we consider ourselves stronger than them spiritually. We shouldn't treat our weaker brethren as if they are unbelieving worldlings; that was the mistake Amaziah made here.

meddle to your harm, that you should fall, even you, and Judah with you?"

¹¹ But Amaziah would not listen. So Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth Shemesh, which belongs to Judah. ¹² Judah was defeated by Israel; and they fled each man to his tent. ¹³ Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth Shemesh, and came to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

¹⁴ He took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of Yahweh and in the treasures of the king's house, with hostages also, and returned to Samaria. ¹⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ¹⁶ Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his place. ¹⁷ Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years. ¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, aren't

they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ¹⁹ They made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. ²⁰ They brought him on horses; and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David. ²¹ All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. ²² He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

Jeroboam's Reign

²³ In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria for forty-one years. ²⁴ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh: he didn't depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin. ²⁵ He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, which He spoke by His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was of Gath Hepher. ²⁶ For Yahweh saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter; for

14:12 *Each man to his tent* – Although by this time the people were living in houses, their home was described idiomatically as their 'tent' (8:21). This was a reflection of the fact that God always wants His people to live in recognition of the fact that this life isn't permanent, we are travellers on a journey towards His future Kingdom, which will be our permanent home (Heb. 13:14). We need to bear this in mind in how we perceive our room, apartment, house or mansion in which we live. All is temporary, a mere tent on the journey; and our resources of time and money should go towards the final destination rather than our temporary abode.

14:26 We must watch out for the tendency to think that because a man has dug a hole and then fallen into it, well, that's his problem. But we have all done this, hopelessly

there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for Israel. ²⁷ Yahweh didn't say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under the sky; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. ²⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered for Israel Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ²⁹ Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zechariah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 15 Sept. 9

The Reigns of Azariah and Zechariah

In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. ² Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of

Jerusalem. ³ He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. ⁴ However the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. ⁵ Yahweh struck the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death, and lived in a separate house. Jotham the king's son was over the household, judging the people of the land. ⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ⁷ Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David. Jotham his son reigned in his place. ⁸ In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. ⁹ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, as his fathers had done: he didn't depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin. ¹⁰ Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against

so. We only have ourselves to blame. And yet God has rushed to us in Christ. He was grieved for the affliction of Israel, even though it was purely due to their own sin and wilful rebellion. If a man has fallen into his own hole, he is still down there and needs help, however he got there.

15:3 *According to all that his father Amaziah had done* – See on 14:3.

15:9 *The sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin* – This phrase runs like a refrain throughout the record of Israel's kings. The sinfulness of sin is that it leads others into sin; Jeroboam's sin influenced many generations to sin in the same way. The Biblical record so strongly emphasizes this. Our behaviour has more influence upon others, for good or for bad, than we may realize; and it continues after our death, even if in this life we may consider ourselves insignificant to others. Jeroboam's sin was in creating another centre of worship apart from the temple; thus he divided God's people. It could be argued that this sin of division was what was so extremely serious to God. Our divisive behaviour, or upholding the divisions created by others, will have serious consequence to the next generation of believers.

him, and struck him before the people, and killed him, and reigned in his place. ¹¹ Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹² This was the word of Yahweh which He spoke to Jehu, saying, Your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. So it came to pass.

Wicked Kings of Israel

¹³ Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah; and he reigned for a month in Samaria. ¹⁴ Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and struck Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and killed him, and reigned in his place. ¹⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹⁶ Then Menahem struck Tiphshah, and all who were therein, and its borders, from Tirzah, because they didn't open to him. Therefore he struck it; and all the women therein who were with child he ripped up. ¹⁷ In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi began to reign over Israel for ten years in Samaria. ¹⁸ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh. He didn't depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin. ¹⁹ There came against the land Pul the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul one thousand talents of silver, that

he might help him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. ²⁰ Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and didn't stay there in the land. ²¹ Now the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ²² Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his place. ²³ In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria for two years. ²⁴ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh. He didn't depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin. ²⁵ Pekah the son of Remaliah, his captain, conspired against him and struck him in Samaria, in the castle of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah; and with him were fifty men of the Gileadites. He killed him, and reigned in his place. ²⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ²⁷ In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria for twenty years. ²⁸ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh. He didn't depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin. ²⁹ In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath Pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah,

Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. ³⁰ Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him, and killed him, and reigned in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. ³¹ Now the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

Jotham's Reign

³² In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. ³³ He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. ³⁴ He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. ³⁵ However the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of Yahweh. ³⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ³⁷ In those days Yahweh began to send against Judah Rezin the king

of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah. ³⁸ Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 16 Sep. 10

Ahaz's Reign

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. ² Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He didn't do that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh his God, like David his father. ³ But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yes, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations, whom Yahweh cast out from before the children of Israel. ⁴ He sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills, and under every green tree. ⁵ Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war; and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. ⁶ At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath; and the Syrians came to Elath, and lived there, to this day. ⁷ So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath Pileser king of As-

16:2 *In the eyes of Yahweh* – This could be a reference to the Angels. Although God can see and know and do all things directly of Himself, it seems He always prefers to work through some kind of mechanism. The Angels are perhaps the mechanism by which He is aware of all things in the lives of people on earth; we are continually in their presence, with them feeding back to God the situations on earth, and perhaps discussing them in the court of Heaven (1 Kings 22:22).

16:7 *I am your servant and your son* – Ahaz ought to have been aware that he was

syria saying, I am your servant and your son. Come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.⁸ Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of Yahweh, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.⁹ The king of Assyria listened to him. The king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.¹⁰ King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath Pileser king of Assyria, and saw the altar that was at Damascus; and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and its pattern, according to all its workmanship.¹¹ Urijah the priest built an altar: according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so Urijah the priest made it for the coming of king Ahaz from Damascus.¹² When the king had come from Damascus, the king saw the altar, and the king drew near to the altar, and offered on it.¹³ He burnt his burnt offering and his meal offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar.¹⁴ The

bronze altar, which was before Yahweh, he brought from the forefront of the house, from between his altar and the house of Yahweh, and put it on the north side of his altar.

¹⁵ King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest saying, On the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meal offering, and the king's burnt offering, and his meal offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meal offering and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice; but the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by.¹⁶ Urijah the priest did so, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.¹⁷ King Ahaz cut off the panels of the bases, and removed the basins from off them, and took down the sea from off the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pavement of stone.

¹⁸ The covered way for the Sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry outside the house of Yahweh, he changed because of the king of Assyria.¹⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?²⁰ Ahaz

Yahweh's servant and son, and that Yahweh's claims upon us are total. We can't serve two masters. Ahaz likely justified himself by arguing that this was merely a form of words which was common at the time; but words have meanings and power, and by them we shall be judged at the last day (Mt. 12:37). We use so many of them each day that we can forget their colossal significance to God.

16:13 He offered a peace offering, when actually he was not at peace with God at all (other examples in 1 Sam. 13:9; Prov. 7:14; Am. 5:22). We must examine ourselves to know whether we are at peace with God before offering the "peace offering" of the breaking of bread service.

16:20 Wicked kings usually had wicked sons, but good king Hezekiah demonstrates that bad parents don't have to have bad children; the power of God's word is such that

slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 17 Sep. 11

Israel Are Taken Captive into Assyria

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel for nine years. ² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. ³ Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute. ⁴ The king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. ⁵ Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah,

and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ⁷ It was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had feared other gods, ⁸ and walked in the statutes of the kings of Israel which they had made, and of the nations, whom Yahweh cast out from before the children of Israel. ⁹ The children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Yahweh their God. They built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city; ¹⁰ and they set them up pillars and Asherim on every high hill, and under every green tree. ¹¹ There they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Yahweh carried away before them; and they worked wicked things to provoke Yahweh to anger; ¹² and they served idols, of which Yahweh had said to them, You shall not do this thing. ¹³ Yet Yahweh testified to Israel and to Judah, by every prophet and every seer, saying, Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My stat-

the vicious circle can be broken. For in God's word and for those baptized into Christ, there is the power of new creation whereby we can be genuinely born again (Jn. 3:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:17).

17:13-18 Sinfulness is sometimes attached to people apart from the things which they currently do wrong. Sin is serious. The last generation of Israel were judged for their sins not because they had sinned more than any other generation, but because the collective, unforgiven sin of Israel had accumulated with God to such an extent that His judgments fell (:2,13-18; Ez. 9:9). God is not passive and overlooking of unrepented sin, even though His patience and the high threshold level He sets before releasing judgment may make it look like this. The Amorites were likewise only judged once the cup of their iniquities reached a certain level (Gen. 15:16). The passage of time doesn't work some kind of atonement for our sins.

utes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. ¹⁴ Notwithstanding, they would not listen, but stiffened their neck, like the neck of their fathers, who didn't believe in Yahweh their God. ¹⁵ They rejected His statutes and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified to them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom Yahweh had commanded them that they should not do like them. ¹⁶ They forsook all the commandments of Yahweh their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the army of the sky, and served Baal. ¹⁷ They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger. ¹⁸ Therefore Yahweh was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight. There was none left but the tribe of Judah only. ¹⁹ Also Judah didn't keep the commandments of Yahweh their God, but walked in the

statutes of Israel which they made. ²⁰ Yahweh rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight. ²¹ For He tore Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Jeroboam drove Israel from following Yahweh, and made them sin a great sin. ²² The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they didn't depart from them; ²³ until Yahweh removed Israel out of His sight, as He spoke by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria to this day. ²⁴ The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and lived in the cities of it. ²⁵ So it was, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they didn't fear Yahweh; therefore Yahweh sent lions among them, which killed some of them. ²⁶ Therefore they spoke to the king of Assyria saying, The nations which you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria, don't know the law of the god of the land. Therefore

17:15 *They followed vanity, and became vain* – The idols are referred to as ‘vanities’; those who served them became like them (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). Whilst we may not worship pieces of wood and stone, modern society is full of vain things such as never before. The internet has encouraged this to a huge extent, so that by the end of many modern lives all a person has done is to click a mouse and hit some keys millions of times in vain entertainment and frivolous social commentary, and watched thousands of hours of movies flickering on a screen. Yet the service of the true God provides us with opportunities to use our lives with ultimate, eternal significance and purpose. If we serve Him, the God of ultimate purpose, the antithesis of vanity, we shall become like Him.

he has sent lions among them, and behold, they kill them, because they don't know the law of the god of the land. ²⁷ Then the king of Assyria commanded saying, Carry there one of the priests whom you brought from there; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the law of the god of the land. ²⁸ So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear Yahweh. ²⁹ However every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities in which they lived. ³⁰ The men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, ³¹ the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burnt their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. ³² So they feared Yahweh, and made to them from among themselves priests of the high places, who sac-

rificed for them in the houses of the high places. ³³ They feared Yahweh, and served their own gods, after the ways of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.

The Broken Covenant

³⁴ To this day they do what they did before: they don't fear Yahweh, neither do they follow their statutes, or their ordinances, or the law or the commandment which Yahweh commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel. ³⁵ Yahweh had made a covenant with them and commanded them saying, You shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; ³⁶ but you shall fear Yahweh, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm, and you shall bow yourselves to Him, and you shall sacrifice to Him. ³⁷ The statutes and the ordinances, the law and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall observe to do for evermore. You shall not fear other

17:33, 34 *They feared Yahweh... they don't fear Yahweh* – To serve God and also other gods isn't serving God at all – because we simply can't serve two masters (Mt. 6:24). There is no third way – devotion to God must be total, for anything less than that is effectively not serving Him at all. This explains the apparently exaggerated language of :15,16 – that Israel rejected all God's laws and broke every one of His commandments. It's clear they didn't become atheists, they didn't formally reject Yahweh, they kept some of His laws. But because their obedience was so incomplete, God counted them as effectively not being obedient at all. Clearly enough, our relationship with God can't be a mere hobby, an intellectual assent, an occasional fascination, a Sundays only affair. It has to be of the heart.

17:37 *The commandment which He wrote for you* – God's word is personally written to each generation; the words of the Bible aren't of merely historical interest. God's word is a living word, speaking to and written for each generation in a way which human words and documents can never be. Because the Bible is literature, we can too

gods. ³⁸ You shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you; neither shall you fear other gods. ³⁹ But you shall fear Yahweh your God; and He will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. ⁴⁰ However they did not listen, but they did what they did before. ⁴¹ So these nations feared Yahweh, and served their engraved images. Their children likewise, and their children's children, as their fathers did, so they do to this day.

CHAPTER 18 Sep. 12

Hezekiah Becomes King of Judah

Now it happened in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. ² He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. ³ He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that David his father had done. ⁴ He removed the high places, and broke the pillars, and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for in those days the children

of Israel burned incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan. ⁵ He trusted in Yahweh the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. ⁶ For he joined with Yahweh; he didn't depart from following Him, but kept His commandments which Yahweh commanded Moses. ⁷ Yahweh was with him; wherever he went forth he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and didn't serve him. ⁸ He struck the Philistines to Gaza and its borders, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city. ⁹ It happened in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. ¹⁰ At the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. ¹¹ The king of Assyria carried Israel away to Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, ¹² because they didn't obey the voice of Yahweh their God,

easily assume it is *only* literature. As a genre of communication, it is unique; such is the wonder of the inspired Bible.

18:4 The bronze serpent had become a totem and idol, it was worshipped for what it physically was rather than there being any perception of the salvation in Christ which it had prefigured. The cross has been likewise abused in many Christian traditions.

18:6 *He joined with Yahweh* – This is what God seeks – that we should intertwine our life and spirit with His. The Hebrew idea of ‘joining’ suggests marriage (Mt. 19:6), and by entering covenant relationship with God through joining to Christ in baptism, this is effectively what we have done. This is an amazing concept – that the God of the universe would join in such intimate relationship with tiny people on this earth. The difference between us is huge beyond words; no wonder we have such difficulty in understanding and responding to His love.

but transgressed His covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.

The Assyrian Invasion

¹³ Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them.

¹⁴ Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish saying, I have offended; return from me. That which you put on me, I will bear. The king of Assyria appointed to Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵ Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of Yahweh, and in the treasures of the king's house. ¹⁶ At that time, Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of Yahweh's temple, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria. ¹⁷ The king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsharis and Rab-

shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great army to Jerusalem. They went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field. ¹⁸ When they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

Rabshakeh's Speech

¹⁹ Rabshakeh said to them, Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this in which you trust? ²⁰ You say (but they are but vain words), 'There is counsel and strength for war'. Now on whom do you trust, that you have rebelled against me? ²¹ Now, behold, you trust in the staff of this bruised reed, even in Egypt. If a man leans on it, it will go into his hand, and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all

18:13 This stands in intended contrast to the chapter so far, which has described Hezekiah's obedience in such stellar language. The point simply is that bad things happen to good people; commitment to God doesn't shield us from disaster.

In the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah – Hezekiah was mortally sick but then healed by God and given an extra 15 years to live (2 Kings 20:6). He reigned 29 years (:2); therefore this sickness was also in the fourteenth year of his reign. The invasion and his sickness were at the same time. Sometimes the coincidence of serious trials in our lives is such that we are left with no other conclusion but that this has to be God's hand; of itself this destroys any possibility that God gives only the good and there is some cosmic 'Satan' being bringing the evil. Hezekiah's sickness may explain his uncharacteristic lack of faith displayed in :14-16 and :21; or it could be that those decisions were taken in his name by others due to his sickness.

18:20 In the face of overwhelming human odds against him, Hezekiah trusted in the more abstract things of faith in God's word; to the eyes of the world, this is simply laughable. But in life after life, situation after situation, such faith is justified – not only in Biblical history but in examples of faithful believers all around us.

who trust on him. ²² But if you tell me, 'We trust in Yahweh our God'; isn't that He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?' ²³ Now therefore, please give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. ²⁴ How then can you turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? ²⁵ Have I now come up without Yahweh against this place to destroy it? Yahweh said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it'. ²⁶ Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, Please speak to your servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it. Don't speak with us in the Jews' language, in the hearing of the people who are on the wall. ²⁷ But Rabshakeh said to them, Has my master sent me to your master, and to you, to speak these words? Hasn't he sent me to the men who sit on the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own water with you? ²⁸ Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a

loud voice in the Jews' language, and spoke, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria: ²⁹ Thus says the king, 'Don't let Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you out of his hand. ³⁰ Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Yahweh saying, Yahweh will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. ³¹ Don't listen to Hezekiah'. For thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and every one of you will eat of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and everyone will drink the waters of his own cistern; ³² until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and of honey, that you may live, and not die. Don't listen to Hezekiah when he persuades you saying, Yahweh will deliver us. ³³ Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? ³⁴ Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? ³⁵ Who are they among all the gods of the

18:26 The fact Rabshakeh spoke Hebrew suggests he was a Jew who had turned traitor. Hence he was aware of the prophet Micah's words (see on :31).

18:31 Eating from one's own vine and fig tree is the very language which the contemporary prophet Micah had used to describe God's Kingdom on earth (Mic. 4:4). Rabshakeh was presenting the kingdom of Assyria as being the promised Kingdom of God on earth. The kingdoms of this world stand as an imitation Kingdom of God; the subliminal message of advertising and much human reasoning is that if we go the way of the world, we can have our promised Kingdom here and now. This was the very temptation with which Jesus struggled and overcame in the wilderness (Mt. 4:8).

countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" ³⁶ But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, Don't answer him. ³⁷ Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, came with Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

CHAPTER 19 Sep. 13

Isaiah Prophesies Deliverance

It happened, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh. ² He sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. ³ They said to him, Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a

day of trouble, of rebuke, and of rejection; for the children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to deliver them. ⁴ It may be Yahweh your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Yahweh your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left'. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. ⁶ Isaiah said to them, Thus you shall tell your master, 'Thus says Yahweh, Don't be afraid of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. ⁷ Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he will hear news, and will return to his own land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land'. ⁸ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he had departed from Lachish. ⁹ When

19:1, 2 Our response to crisis should be like Hezekiah's – to turn to God in prayer, and to His word and His people, rather than to desperate worldly alternatives.

19:3 *A day of trouble* – The phrase in the Greek Septuagint version is that also used in Dan. 12:1 and Mt. 24:21 about the latter day "time of trouble" for Israel. There will therefore be an equivalent of the Assyrian invader in the last days, and Jerusalem's deliverance will be by means of God's dramatic intervention in the return of Christ to earth to save Israel from their Middle Eastern invaders. The whole incident can be read as a detailed type of the latter day invasion of Israel before Christ returns.

19:4 *The words which Yahweh your God has heard* – God hears every word and is fully aware of the detail of every situation which we face. Isaiah picks up this sentence and rephrases it by telling Hezekiah to not "be afraid of the words that *you* have heard" (:6). The words *we* hear which so frighten us are in fact heard by *God*.

19:7 *I will put a spirit in him* – The Hebrew word translated "spirit" in the Old Testament has a wide range of meaning, but here it refers to the mind. God can give people an attitude of mind; He can give us a holy spirit or mindset if we seek it. And He can just as easily give people a spirit of fear, making them turn away from doing what is the humanly obvious thing to do, as He did here with Rabshakeh.

he heard it said of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he has come out to fight against you, he sent messengers again to Hezekiah saying, ¹⁰ Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah saying, Don't let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying, Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. ¹¹ Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly. Will you be delivered? ¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph and the children of Eden that were in Telassar? ¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena and Ivvah?

Hezekiah's Prayer and God's Response

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it. Then Hezekiah went up to

the house of Yahweh, and spread it before Yahweh. ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed before Yahweh and said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, Who sits above the cherubim, You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. ¹⁶ Incline Your ear, Yahweh, and hear. Open your eyes, Yahweh, and see. Hear the words of Sennacherib, with which he has sent to defy the living God. ¹⁷ Truly, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, ¹⁸ and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them. ¹⁹ Now therefore, Yahweh our God, save us, I beg You, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, Yahweh, are God alone. ²⁰ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Whereas you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib

19:14 Whilst God sees and knows all things, it can be psychologically good for us to place the documents which are causing us grief 'before the Lord' and pray over them. God hears and reads those words just as much as we do (see on :4).

19:16 *Hear the words of Sennacherib* – On one level, Hezekiah knew that Yahweh had heard those words (:4), but he still asks God to hear them and respond to them. And God patiently assures him, that He has indeed heard (:20). Our faith is rarely if ever total; we know of God's possibilities on one level, and yet doubt them in practice. When the disciples prayed "Look upon their threatenings..." (Acts 4:29), they were surely inspired by the praying of Hezekiah here, and used the same words. Daniel seems to also have paraphrased Hezekiah's prayer in his prayer of Dan. 9:18. And these examples ought to specifically fire our prayer life, too, quoting words of Biblical prayers as part of *our* prayers. And yet Hezekiah's prayer had been inspired by the prayers of those who had in turn gone before *him* – he is alluding to the prayers of repentant Israel (1 Kings 18:39), Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:6) and Solomon (2 Chron. 6:40).

19:19 *That all the kingdoms of the earth may know* – The motivation for our prayer requests should always be the ultimate glory of God.

king of Assyria, I have heard you.
²¹ This is the word that Yahweh has spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and ridiculed you. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you. ²² Whom have you defied and blasphemed? Against whom have you exalted your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. ²³ By your messengers you have defied the Lord, and have said, ‘With the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down its tall cedars, and its choice fir trees; and I will enter into His deepest dwelling place, the forest of His fruitful field. ²⁴ I have dug and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt’. ²⁵ Haven’t you heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? Now have I brought it to pass, that it should be yours to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. ²⁶ Therefore their inhabitants were of small power. They were dismayed and confounded. They were like the grass of

the field, and like the green herb, like the grass on the housetops, and like grain blasted before it has grown up. ²⁷ But I know your sitting down, and your going out, and your coming in, and your raging against Me. ²⁸ Because of your raging against Me, and because your arrogance has come up into My ears, therefore will I put my hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way by which you came. ²⁹ This shall be the sign to you: You shall eat this year that which grows of itself, and in the second year that which springs of the same; and in the third year sow, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat its fruit. ³⁰ The remnant that has escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. ³¹ For out of Jerusalem a remnant will go out, and out of Mount Zion those who shall escape. The zeal of Yahweh will perform this’. ³² Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the king of Assyria, ‘He shall not come to this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. ³³ By the way that he came, by

19:21 The “daughter of Zion” refers to the faithful remnant within Jerusalem, centred around Hezekiah. But they hardly appeared to be confidently ridiculing the Assyrians; they were scared and doubting whether God really could save them (see on :16). But because they did have some faith, God counted this as total faith, in the same way as He imputes righteousness to those in Christ. Their weak faith was counted by God as utter confidence.

19:22 That attitudes are read as prayers is reflected in the way that Rabshakeh’s arrogance against Yahweh is described as him lifting up his eyes against God. By contrast, Hezekiah prayed at the same time: “Unto you do I lift up my eyes” (Ps. 123:1). ‘Lifting up eyes’ is therefore an idiom for prayer. Rabshakeh didn’t consciously pray blasphemous words to God, but his attitude was counted as a prayer.

the same shall he return, and he shall not come to this city', says Yahweh. ³⁴ 'For I will defend this city to save it, for My own sake and for My servant David's sake'. ³⁵ It happened that night, that the angel of Yahweh went out and struck one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. When men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁶ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and lived at Nineveh. ³⁷ It happened, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Esar Haddon his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 20 Sep. 14

Hezekiah's Illness

In those days was Hezekiah sick to death. Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, 'Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live'. ² Then he turned his face

to the wall, and prayed to Yahweh saying, ³ Remember now, Yahweh, I beg You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Your sight. Hezekiah wept bitterly. ⁴ It happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle part of the city, that the word of Yahweh came to him saying, ⁵ Turn back and tell Hezekiah the prince of My people, 'Thus says Yahweh the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. On the third day, you shall go up to the house of Yahweh. ⁶ I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake'. ⁷ Isaiah said, Take a cake of figs. They took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. ⁸ Hezekiah said to Isaiah, What shall be the sign that Yahweh will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of Yahweh the third day? ⁹ Isaiah said, This

20:1-3 Here we see how God can state an intended purpose of His in very definite terms, as if there is no changing it – and yet such is His sensitivity to human prayer and love for Him, that He is willing to change it. He did the same when Moses persuaded Him not to destroy Israel as He planned (Ex. 32). There is often a gap between God's statement of His purpose and the fulfilment of it, and during that gap period we can reason with Him to act otherwise. His purpose is perhaps structured this way so that we can learn to pray more intensely and connect with Him more intimately than would otherwise be the case. It also inspires us to be spiritually ambitious enough to think of changing God's intended plan of action.

20:5 Prayer isn't always specific words; God understands situations as prayers. Thus here we see Hezekiah's tears paralleled with his words. God interpreted his tears as a prayer. Hezekiah had earlier requested for God to both hear and see the words of Sennacherib (19:26), as if these too were to be read as a prayer for Divine intervention.

20:8 Like Gideon wanting a sign, Hezekiah's faith wasn't total; and yet God still counted it as faith.

shall be the sign to you from Yahweh, that Yahweh will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps? ¹⁰ Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go forward ten steps. Nay, but let the shadow return backward ten steps. ¹¹ Isaiah the prophet cried to Yahweh; and He brought the shadow ten steps backward, by which it had gone down on the dial of Ahaz.

Hezekiah's Failure

¹² At that time Berodach Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. ¹³ Hezekiah listened to them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, the house of his armour and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah didn't show them. ¹⁴ Then Isaiah the prophet came to king Hezekiah and said to him, What did these men say? From where did they come to you? Hezekiah said, They have come from a far country, even from Babylon. ¹⁵ He said, What have they seen in your house? Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. ¹⁶ Isaiah

said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Yahweh. ¹⁷ 'Behold, the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have laid up in store to this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left', says Yahweh. ¹⁸ 'Of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you shall father, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon'. ¹⁹ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, The word of Yahweh which you have spoken is good. He said moreover, Isn't it so, if peace and truth shall be in my days? ²⁰ Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ²¹ Hezekiah slept with his fathers; and Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 21 Sep. 15

Manasseh's Reign

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, after the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel. ³ For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for

20:19 This seems a very selfish and short termist thing to say. It seems Hezekiah overcame so much – bad parental background, apostasy in his nation, terminal sickness, invasion – and yet failed to get through the hoop of materialism, acclaim, acceptance and the soft life. Many modern disciples are challenged likewise. We must realize the massive power of these temptations. See on 23:3.

Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshiped all the host of the sky, and served them. ⁴ He built altars in the house of Yahweh, of which Yahweh said, I will put My name in Jerusalem. ⁵ He built altars for all the host of the sky in the two courts of the house of Yahweh. ⁶ He made his son to pass through the fire, and practised sorcery, used enchantments and dealt with those who had familiar spirits and with wizards. He worked much evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger. ⁷ He set the engraved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which Yahweh said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever; ⁸ neither will I cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them. ⁹ But they didn't listen: and

Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations did whom Yahweh destroyed before the children of Israel. ¹⁰ Yahweh spoke by His servants the prophets saying, ¹¹ Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, and has done wickedly above all that the Amorites did who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols; ¹² therefore thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, 'Behold, I bring such evil on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle. ¹³ I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ I will cast off the remainder of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies. They will become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; ¹⁵ because they have done that which is evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt even to this day'. ¹⁶ Moreover Manasseh shed

21:4, 7 Because the Name was called upon the temple, therefore it should have been simply impossible that those who realized this could worship idols in it; whatever has God's Name called upon it, whatever bears His image, must be devoted to Him alone. We who are baptized into His Name, who have that Name called upon us, cannot have idols in our lives.

21:14 *I will cast off* – God has cast off His people (see too Zech. 10:6); and yet, because a minority of them will always accept Christ, it is not true that God has cast off His people in a total sense (Rom. 11:1). It was only because of this remnant that Israel have not become like Sodom (Rom. 9:29) – even though Old Testament passages such as Ezekiel 16 clearly liken Jerusalem to Sodom. Yet they are not as Sodom ultimately, for the sake of the remnant who will believe. In all this we see the very real tension within God, reflective of His extreme love for His wayward people.

21:16 2 Chron. 33:13,23 describe Manasseh's repentance and humbling of himself; but that isn't mentioned in the record here in 2 Kings. We learn from this the impor-

very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh. ¹⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ¹⁸ Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza; and Amon his son reigned in his place.

Amon's Reign

¹⁹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. ²⁰ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, as Manasseh his father did. ²¹ He walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them; ²² and he forsook Yahweh the God of his fathers, and didn't walk in the way of Yahweh. ²³ The servants of Amon conspired against him and put the king to death in his own house. ²⁴ But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place. ²⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, aren't they written in the book of

the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

²⁶ He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza; and Josiah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 22 Sep. 16

Josiah's Reign

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ² He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and walked in all the way of David his father, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³ It happened in the eighteenth year of king Josiah that the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of Yahweh, saying, ⁴ Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the money which is brought into the house of Yahweh, which the keepers of the threshold have gathered of the people. ⁵ Let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of Yahweh; and let them give it to the workmen who are in the house of Yahweh, to repair the breaches of the house, ⁶ to the carpenters, to the builders and to the masons, and for buying timber and cut stone to repair the house. ⁷ However there was no accounting made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand; for they dealt faithfully.

tance of comparing Scripture with Scripture in order to build up a more complete picture. Perhaps God wrote the Bible in this way in order to reveal things in truth to those who humbly and sensitively read *all* His word, and to confuse those who read partially without due reverence toward it.

The Book of the Law Is Found

⁸ Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahweh. Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it. ⁹ Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again and said, Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of Yahweh. ¹⁰ Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, Hilkiah the priest has delivered a book to me. Shaphan read it before the king. ¹¹ It happened, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he tore

his clothes. ¹² The king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, ¹³ Go inquire of Yahweh for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of Yahweh that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that which is written concerning us. ¹⁴ So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Je-

22:11 Josiah lived a life pleasing to God, as did others of his generation, and yet he was in ignorance of all the details of God's law. Full knowledge, even of some quite important things, didn't stop Josiah from being credited with doing what was right before God and not 'turning aside to the right hand or to the left' (:2). He was judged according to how well he responded to that which he *did* know. And this may be a helpful window for us into how we should feel towards those who sincerely seek to follow the Lord and yet with imperfect knowledge. Time and again the prophets judged Israel according to their "ways", rather than according to their theological or academic knowledge (Ez. 18:30). We must bear this in mind in considering the status of those who only have partial access to or understanding of God's word. And yet once Josiah knew these words of God, he eagerly obeyed them as far as he could and asked for forgiveness for his disobedience to them – thus recognizing that sins of ignorance are still a felt offence against God. Our ignorance doesn't stop Him being hurt by our disobedience, just as others' ignorance doesn't mean they don't hurt us by their inappropriate words or actions. Hence sins of ignorance still required atonement under the Law of Moses.

22:13 It would seem that the part of the book of the law which was found included God's threatened judgments against Israel for their disobedience; it was "the book of the covenant" (23:2) and likely included the curses of Lev. 26 and Dt.28. Yet Jeremiah comments that when this was discovered, this word of God was for him the joy and rejoicing of his heart and he fed on it with joy (Jer. 15:16). All of God's word, including those parts of the Old Testament which some may consider as repetitive judgments which we'd rather not read, should be fed on by us and be some source of joy to us.

22:14 The fact that a woman was a prophetess at this time shows that women aren't always disqualified from speaking forth God's word.

rusalem in the second quarter); and they talked with her. ¹⁵ She said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, ¹⁶ Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched. ¹⁸ But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Yahweh, thus you shall tell him, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Concerning the words which you have heard, ¹⁹ because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before Yahweh when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and have torn your clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard you, says Yahweh. ²⁰ There-

fore behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place'. They brought back this message to the king.

CHAPTER 23 Sep. 16

Josiah's Reforms

The king sent, and they gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. ² The king went up to the house of Yahweh, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great. He read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of Yahweh. ³ The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before Yahweh, to walk after Yahweh and to keep His commandments, His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book; and all the people stood to the covenant. ⁴ The king

22:19 *Your heart was tender* – How is our response when a new understanding of the word's teaching in practical, everyday issues stares us in the face from the pages of Scripture?

23:3 God had promised Josiah that all would be well in his lifetime, but He would judge the next generation for their sins. Josiah learnt the lesson of Hezekiah, who appeared to be satisfied with that (see on 20:19); for Josiah launches a major campaign to return Judah to Yahweh and to re-enter covenant with Him. It seems that Josiah believed that Judah's repentance could really change the intention of God to destroy Israel in the next generation. We too should have this kind of concern for the body of believers in the next generation, rather than being merely content that we ourselves remain in fellowship with God.

23:4 When last did you read / understand something from Scripture, and then get up and *do something real, concrete and actual about it*? Josiah discovered the book of the Law – and he then went on to do something about it in practice. Reflect through what he did: Passover kept in Jerusalem (23:21–23) = Dt. 16:1–8; removed Asherahs

commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the threshold, to bring forth out of Yahweh's temple all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the Asherah, and for all the host of the sky; and he burned them outside of Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. ⁵ He put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, the moon, to the planets and to all the host of the sky. ⁶ He brought out the Asherah from the house of Yahweh, outside of Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and beat it to dust, and cast its dust on the graves of the common people. ⁷ He broke down the houses of the sodomites that were in the house of Yahweh, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah. ⁸ He brought all

the priests out of the cities of Judah and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; and he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. ⁹ Nevertheless the priests of the high places didn't come up to the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers. ¹⁰ He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. ¹¹ He took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of Yahweh, by the room of Nathan Melech the officer, who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. ¹² The king broke down the altars that were on the roof of the upper room of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and

(23:4,6,14) = Dt. 12:3; 16:21; star worship (23:4,11) = Dt. 17:3; the 'high places' and cults (23:8-20) = Dt. 12; child sacrifice (23:10) = Dt. 12:31; 18:10; the cultic stones (23:14) = Dt. 12:3; 16:22; conjuring up the dead (23:24) = Dt. 18:11. It would seem that Josiah was motivated by Deuteronomy 12-18, perhaps this was part of the book of the covenant which was discovered. Here we have a man who allowed Scripture to live in his life, and who was immediately motivated by it to tangible action. His was not a religion of fine Sunday morning words, intellectually admired and aesthetically pleasing. The word should likewise be made flesh in us as it was in Christ. What is required is passionate, real, actual, tangible, concrete action and re-action to what we read and understand.

23:7 The fact these sexual abominations were committed within the temple of God suggests that they had become part of the ritual of Yahweh worship, in the same way as the letters of Paul and Christ to the churches suggest that sexual immorality became part of apostate Christian worship in the first century. The tendency to mix spirituality with illicit sexuality has always been a temptation for the people of God and one of their most persistent weaknesses; we must beware of it.

the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of Yahweh, and beat them down from there, and cast their dust into the brook Kidron. ¹³ The king defiled the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mountain of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon. ¹⁴ He broke in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherim, and filled their places with the bones of men. ¹⁵ Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and beat it to dust, and burned the Asherah. ¹⁶ As Josiah turned himself, he spied the tombs that were there in the mountain; and he sent, and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar and defiled it, according to the word of Yahweh which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. ¹⁷ Then he said, What monument is that which I see? The men of the city told him, It is the tomb of the man of God, who came

from Judah, and proclaimed these things that you have done against the altar of Bethel. ¹⁸ He said, Let him be! Let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. ¹⁹ All the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke Yahweh to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel. ²⁰ He killed all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

Josiah's Passover

²¹ The king commanded all the people saying, Keep the Passover to Yahweh your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant. ²² Surely there was not kept such a Passover from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; ²³ but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this Passover kept to Yahweh in Jerusalem. ²⁴ Moreover Josiah removed those who had familiar spirits, and the wizards, the teraphim, the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might con-

23:21 The Law of Moses stated that Israel must keep the Passover, and if they didn't, or kept it incorrectly, then their covenant relationship with God would be fractured (Num. 9:13). But it seems that whilst the legislation about the Passover had been lost, they hadn't kept the Passover properly, if at all. And yet there were many faithful individuals who lived during that time when the book was lost who still retained relationship with God. This is no reason to conclude that obedience to God's covenant is irrelevant, or that it's all simply a matter of the heart and conscience; but it does show the extent of God's eager acceptance of people despite their ignorance of His word.

firm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of Yahweh. ²⁵ Like him was there no king before him, who turned to Yahweh with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. ²⁶ Notwithstanding, Yahweh didn't turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocation with which Manasseh had provoked Him. ²⁷ Yahweh said, I will remove Judah also out of My sight as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there'. ²⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ²⁹ In his days Pharaoh Necoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went against him; and Pharaoh Necoh killed him at Megiddo when he had seen him. ³⁰ His servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

The Reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim

³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years

old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ³² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his fathers had done. ³³ Pharaoh Necoh put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ³⁴ Pharaoh Necoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim; but he took Jehoahaz away; and he came to Egypt, and died there. ³⁵ Jehoiakim gave silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of each one according to his taxation, to give it to Pharaoh Necoh. ³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. ³⁷ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his fathers had done.

CHAPTER 24 Sep. 17

The Last Kings of Judah

In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years, then rebelled against him. ² Yahweh sent against him bands of the Chaldeans,

24:1 *Three years* – During which time the attacks of :2 occurred. This corresponds exactly with other indications that in the latter day judgment of Israel there will be an

the Syrians, Moabites and of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of Yahweh, which He spoke by His servants the prophets. ³ Surely at the commandment of Yahweh came this on Judah, to remove them out of His sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did, ⁴ and also for the innocent blood that he shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which Yahweh would not pardon. ⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ⁶ So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers; and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place. ⁷ The king of Egypt didn't come again out of his land any more; for the king of Babylon had taken, from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt. ⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. ⁹ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his father had done. ¹⁰ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the

city while his servants were besieging it; ¹² and Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, his mother, his servants, his princes and his officers; and the king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign. ¹³ He carried out from there all the treasures of the house of Yahweh and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold, which Solomon king of Israel had made in Yahweh's temple, as Yahweh had said. ¹⁴ He carried away all Jerusalem, all the princes and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, except the poorest sort of the people of the land. ¹⁵ He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; and the king's mother, the king's wives, his officers and the chief men of the land, he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. ¹⁶ All the men of might, even seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths one thousand, all of them strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. ¹⁷ The king of Babylon made Mataniah, Jehoiachin's father's brother, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. ¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was

extended period of Arab raiding and desolation of Israel (for three and a half years?), culminating in the final invasion of the land by 'Babylon' and her smaller Arab allies in order to take Jerusalem.

24:3 *For the sins of Manasseh* – A whole community can be damaged by the long term influence and consequence of one man's sin, even if he later repents as Manasseh did.

Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹ He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ For through the anger of Yahweh, it happened in Jerusalem and Judah, until He had cast them out from His presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

CHAPTER 25 Sep. 17

The Fall of Jerusalem

It happened in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they built forts against it around it.

² So the city was captured, by the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. ³ On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was severe in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. ⁴ Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden (now the Chaldeans were against the city around it); and the king went by the way of the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. ⁶ Then they took the king, and carried him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment on

24:20 God's anger was such that He propelled Zedekiah and Judah further down the downward spiral they had chosen. He has the ability to give people mindsets and to make decisions which are humanly unwise; and we see Him doing this here, by making Zedekiah rebel against the king of Babylon, when this was political suicide. And yet as the book of Jeremiah makes clear, God at the same time was pleading with Zedekiah through the prophet Jeremiah to repent. So whilst God confirms people in the downward spiral in which they chose to go, He still earnestly seeks their repentance and doesn't abandon them totally until they themselves have totally broken away from Him and He can do no more without excessively controlling their own freewill.

25:2 *The city was entered into* – Judging Israel like this wasn't done by God in a flash of anger, but after huge internal turmoil. He had passionately declared in an outburst of love for His wayward people "I will not enter into the city" (Hos. 11:9 – the same Hebrew word is used as here). His condemnation of His people is very hard for Him, and is a result of much thinking, re-thinking and struggle about it (Hos. 11:8). Those believers who fear God will condemn them should take comfort from this – that He reveals Himself as struggling within Himself about doing this, and it is not something He wishes to do.

25:5 *Overtook him in the plains of Jericho* – The parable of the good Samaritan speaks about a man taking this same journey, from Jerusalem to Jericho, and being attacked and overcome on the way – and yet restored by grace (Lk. 10:30). The injured man of the parable represents each of us; and yet he is based upon Zedekiah, who had been given every opportunity to heed God's word through Jeremiah and yet through human weakness and peer pressure had not done so. Zedekiah in all his pathetic weakness represents each of us; Christ, the good Samaritan, really does save each of us by grace alone.

him. ⁷ They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

⁸ Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, to Jerusalem. ⁹ He burnt the house of Yahweh and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burnt he with fire. ¹⁰ All the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem.

¹¹ Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the residue of the people who were left in the city, and those who fell away, who fell to the king of Babylon, and the remainder of the multitude of the people. ¹² But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to work the vineyards and fields.

¹³ The Chaldeans broke up the pillars of brass that were in the house of Yahweh and the bases and the bronze sea that were in the house of Yahweh, and carried the brass pieces to Babylon. ¹⁴ They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the spoons, and all the vessels of brass with which they ministered. ¹⁵ The captain of the guard took away the fire pans, the

basins, whatever was of gold, and of silver. ¹⁶ The two pillars, the one sea and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of Yahweh, the brass of all these things was without weight. ¹⁷ The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a capital of brass was on it; and the height of the capital was three cubits, with network and pomegranates on the capital around it, all of brass, similarly the second pillar with its network.

¹⁸ The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the threshold; ¹⁹ and out of the city he took an officer who was set over the men of war; and five men of those who saw the king's face, who were found in the city; and the scribe, the captain of the army, who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the city. ²⁰ Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. ²¹ The king of Babylon struck them, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away captive out of his land. ²² As for the people who were left in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor.

25:19 *Those who saw the king's face* – This is a technical term describing the king's inner circle. Yet we are promised that we shall see God's face at Christ's return (Job 19:25-27; Rev. 22:4). The prospect is wonderful, almost beyond our grasp to comprehend – that we shall be as it were in God's inner circle, at the very hub of all existence, His special friends. We who are so weak, dysfunctional, often disinterested and limited; we shall be His special people, forever and ever. See on :29.

God's Grace

²³ Now when all the captains of the bands of soldiers, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men. ²⁴ Gedaliah swore to them and to their men and said to them, Don't be afraid because of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. ²⁵ But it happened in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal seed, came with ten men and struck Gedaliah so that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldeans

that were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶ All the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces, arose and came to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans. ²⁷ It happened in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison. ²⁸ He spoke kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon, ²⁹ and changed his prison garments. Jehoiachin ate bread before him continually all the days of his life. ³⁰ For his allowance, there was a continual allowance given him of the king, every day a portion, all the days of his life.

25:25 The fact Ishmael, one of the royal family of Judah still at large, killed the Chaldean garrison would have suggested that the response of the Chaldeans would have been to destroy all the Jews who were left in the land. But strangely there's no record of this. Coupling this with the information in :28 that the king of Babylon for no apparent reason showed great kindness to the king of Judah, we are left with the impression that despite all Judah's sin and the inevitable punishment, God's grace shone through and He didn't punish them as their iniquities deserved, but in wrath remembered mercy and grace (Ezra 9:13), perhaps in specific response to Habakkuk's prayer for this to be the case (Hab. 3:2).

25:29 To eat bread at the king's table was a sign of special favour. And yet Jesus, King of the cosmos, invites us to do this weekly, as if we are His specially favoured inner circle of friends; to refuse the table is strange indeed, and rejecting an amazing grace. See on :19.

THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

CHAPTER 1 Sep. 18

Israel's Roots

Adam, Seth, Enosh, ² Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, ³ Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, ⁴ Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ⁵ The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. ⁶ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Diphath and Togarmah. ⁷ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim and Rodanim. ⁸ The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. ⁹ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba, and Dedan. ¹⁰ Cush became the

father of Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one in the earth. ¹¹ Mizraim became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹² Pathrusim, Casluhim (where the Philistines came from) and Caphtorim. ¹³ Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, Heth, ¹⁴ the Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite, ¹⁵ the Hivite, the Arkite, the Sinite, ¹⁶ the Arvadite, the Zemarite and the Hamathite. ¹⁷ The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech. ¹⁸ Arpachshad became the father of Shelah, and Shelah became the father

It seems the genealogies of 1 Chron. 1-9 were completed at the time of the restoration from Babylon, when there was a problem in finding a High Priest and priesthood because it was hard to prove who was descended from Aaron, presumably because the genealogies were destroyed when the temple was burnt. The genealogies give much emphasis to the descendants of Aaron, far more than to the other tribes. There are a number of references to faithless men being punished by invasions (e.g. 5:6). Ezra 8 contains a genealogy recorded in similar style and language to these in Chronicles. Nehemiah made a special study of the genealogies in order to find an acceptable priesthood (Neh. 7:5,64). So there were Israel returning from captivity, led by a faithful remnant of the priests, looking back through their history, right back to Abraham and beyond, and seeing that their history was shot through with failure. Such self-examination extended even to considering the names parents gave their children, which frequently included the names of false gods like Baal. Marriage out of the faith was a problem at the time of the restoration (Ezra 9:1,2), and therefore the records of the genealogies stress how this had been a problem in the past – and had still not been forgotten by God. The prophets foretold that Israel's restoration would only come once they achieved a suitable recognition of their sinfulness. The priests who wrote those records in Chronicles were writing down the result of their national self-examination. This was the record of their lessons from Chronicles. Ezra 2:62 records Judah being 'reckoned by genealogies', using the same Hebrew word which is the hallmark of 1 Chronicles (4:33; 5:1,7,17; 7:5,7,9,40; 9:1,22). And in this context, Is. 40:26 compares God's 'bringing out' of Judah from Babylon with His 'bringing out' the stars by their individual names, all wonderfully known to Him. Ps. 87:6 had prophesied something similar about the restoration of Zion's fortunes: "Yahweh shall count, when He writes up the people, that this man was born there". Each individual was and is significant to God.

of Eber. ¹⁹ To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg; for in his days the land was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁰ Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²¹ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²² Ebal, Abimael, Sheba, ²³ Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. ²⁴ Shem, Arpachshad, Shealah, ²⁵ Eber, Peleg, Reu, ²⁶ Serug, Nahor, Terah, ²⁷ Abram (the same is Abraham). ²⁸ The sons of Abraham: Isaac, and Ishmael. ²⁹ These are their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ³⁰ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, ³¹ Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael. ³² The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan. ³³ The sons of Midian: Ephah, Ephraim, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah. ³⁴ Abraham became the father of Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel. ³⁵ The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam

and Korah. ³⁶ The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna and Amalek. ³⁷ The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. ³⁸ The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. ³⁹ The sons of Lotan: Hori, and Homam; and Timna was Lotan's sister. ⁴⁰ The sons of Shobal: Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. ⁴¹ The son of Anah: Dishon. The sons of Dishon: Hamran, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran. ⁴² The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Jaakan. The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

The Kings of Edom

⁴³ Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel: Bela the son of Beor; and the name of his city was Dinhabah. ⁴⁴ Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. ⁴⁵ Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. ⁴⁶ Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who struck Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place;

1:19 *The land was divided* – This doesn't refer to any movement of the earth's plates. Rather is it a reference to the division of languages at the time of Babel, as recorded in Gen. 11. It seems that any revival of God's Truth has given way to apostasy within two or three generations. Gen. 11:11-16 shows that from the time of Shem (living after the flood) to Peleg was three generations. Thus in the three generations from the time of the flood to Babel, the revival of God's people had faded away again.

1:43 The point is being made that Israel's desire for a king was influenced by the fact the surrounding peoples had kings. The world is always trying to conform us into its mould, whereas we are to be transformed by the Spirit (Rom. 12:1,2).

1:44, 45 The Septuagint states that Job was the "Jobab" of :44,45, who lived five generations after Abraham. Job lived in the land of Uz (1:1) mentioned in :17,42. The books of the Bible aren't always in chronological order, and it's likely that the book of Job is set quite early on in Biblical history.

and the name of his city was Avith.⁴⁷ Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place.⁴⁸ Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth by the River reigned in his place.⁴⁹ Shaul died, and Baal Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place.⁵⁰ Baal Hanan died, and Hadad reigned in his place; and the name of his city was Pai: and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.⁵¹ Hadad died. The chiefs of Edom were: chief Timna, chief Aliah, chief Jetheth,⁵² chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon,⁵³ chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar,⁵⁴ chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom.

CHAPTER 2 Sep. 19

These are the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun,² Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

The Children of Judah

³ The sons of Judah: Er, Onan and Shelah; which three were born to him

of Shua's daughter the Canaanitess. Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Yahweh; and He killed him.⁴ Tamar his daughter-in-law bore him Perez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah were five.⁵ The sons of Perez: Hezron, and Hamul.⁶ The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Dara; five of them in all.⁷ The sons of Carmi: Achar the troubler of Israel, who committed a trespass in the devoted thing.⁸ The son of Ethan: Azariah.⁹ The sons also of Hezron, who were born to him: Jerahmeel, Ram and Chelubai.

The Children of Ram

¹⁰ Ram became the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah;¹¹ and Nahshon became the father of Salma, and Salma became the father of Boaz,¹² and Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed became the father of Jesse;¹³ and Jesse became the father of his firstborn Eliab, Abinadab the second, Shimea the third,¹⁴ Nethanel the

2:4 Israel's sinfulness seems to be emphasized in the various 'interruptions' in the flowing list of names. Thus it is sometimes stressed that a man did not have many children (e.g. :4,6,16), as if to indicate that God's blessing was not with him (there seems an undoubted connection in Old Testament times between blessing and number of sons). Thus information such as that Jether died without children, Sheshan had no sons but daughters, Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers had few children (2:32,34; 4:27) ... all this would have been read as highly significant in spiritual terms. Some outstanding weaknesses amongst the patriarchs are recorded (e.g. 5:1), and the fact that the duty of the priests was to make an atonement for Israel (6:49) appears to be an obvious detail added in passing – until it is appreciated that these genealogies are highlighting the historical weakness of Israel. This is one of the major lessons from Chronicles.

2:12 Boaz's marriage to a Gentile is not highlighted; simply "Boaz begat Obed", whereas others' marriage out of the faith is recorded in the same chapter (2:3,34). The same action – in this case, marriage to a Gentile – can be done by different people

fourth, Raddai the fifth, ¹⁵ Ozem the sixth, David the seventh; ¹⁶ and their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. The sons of Zeruiah: Abishai, Joab and Asahel, three. ¹⁷ Abigail bore Amasa; and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite.

The Children of Caleb

¹⁸ Caleb the son of Hezron fathered children by Azubah his wife, and by Jerioth; and these were her sons: Jeshur, Shobab and Ardon. ¹⁹ Azubah died, and Caleb took to him Ephrath, who bore him Hur. ²⁰ Hur became the father of Uri, and Uri became

the father of Bezalel. ²¹ Afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he took as wife when he was sixty years old; and she bore him Segub. ²² Segub became the father of Jair, who had twenty-three cities in the land of Gilead. ²³ Geshur and Aram took the towns of Jair from them, with Kenath, and its villages, even sixty cities. All these were the sons of Machir the father of Gilead. ²⁴ After that Hezron was dead in Caleb Ephrathah, then Abijah Hezron's wife bore him Ashhur the father of Tekoa.

with different motives. For one it may be an act of righteousness, for another – a sin. Thus when Uzziah acted as a priest he was condemned for it (2 Chron. 26:17-21), but when David (as a non-Levite also) did the same, it was a reflection of his spirituality. Seeing the inner motives and spirituality of others are hidden to us, we must be very careful not to judge by outward appearances; and we must resign all ultimate judgment to God, not least because of our total inability to make it.

2:16 Zeruiah was a sister of David, and David laments how her sons were very “hard” (2 Sam. 3:39; 16:10; 19:22). The fact that the hardness of those three men seems to be associated with their mother would lead us to conclude that David's sister Zeruiah was an extremely hard woman. Inevitably there must have been strands of hardness in David too (consider his treatment of Uriah, his intended massacre of Nabal's encampment, torturing the Ammonites etc.); and yet more often than not, we get the impression that David was a real softy. His experience of life made him progressively more soft, whilst his sister and nephews went the other way. Truly could he comment towards the end of it all that God's gentleness had made him great (2 Sam. 22:36).

2:18 It's unusual for the name of the wives or mothers to be recorded as we have here and in :24; perhaps the idea is to show the significance of women in Caleb's family.

2:22 Some Jews reject our belief that Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham and David by claiming that Hebrew genealogy wasn't reckoned through women in Biblical times. But that isn't the case. We see here that Jair's father was of the tribe of Judah, yet in Num.32:41 he is described as “the son of Manasseh”, showing that his mother must have been of the tribe of Manasseh. His descent was reckoned through his mother rather than his father. Likewise :34 records that Sheshan “had no sons, but daughters”. According to the objection that genealogy cannot be reckoned through the woman, Sheshan would have no subsequent genealogy. However, he is described in :31 as having a son, presumably from the fact that he gave his daughter in marriage to his Egyptian servant (:34). Thus his seed was still reckoned through a woman. Note that Hiram is described as “the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan” (2 Chron.2:14).

The Children of Jerahmeel

²⁵ The sons of Jerahmeel the first-born of Hezron were Ram the first-born, Bunah, Oren, Ozem and Ahi-jah. ²⁶ Jerahmeel had another wife, whose name was Atarah; she was the mother of Onam. ²⁷ The sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel were Maaz, Jamin and Eker. ²⁸ The sons of Onam were Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur. ²⁹ The name of the wife of Abishur was Abihail; and she bore him Ahban and Molid. ³⁰ The sons of Nadab: Seled and Appaim; but Seled died without children. ³¹ The sons of Appaim: Ishi. The sons of Ishi: Sheshan. The sons of Sheshan: Ahlai. ³² The sons of Jada the brother of Shammai: Jether and Jonathan; and Jether died without children. ³³ The sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel. ³⁴ Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. ³⁵ Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant as wife; and she bore him Attai. ³⁶ Attai became

the father of Nathan, and Nathan became the father of Zabad, ³⁷ Zabad became the father of Ephlal, Ephlal became the father of Obed, ³⁸ Obed became the father of Jehu, Jehu became the father of Azariah, ³⁹ Azariah became the father of Helez, Helez became the father of Eleasah, ⁴⁰ Eleasah became the father of Sismai, Sismai became the father of Shallum, ⁴¹ Shallum became the father of Jekamiah and Jekamiah became the father of Elishama. ⁴² The sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel were Mesha his firstborn, who was the father of Ziph. The son of Mareshah was Hebron. ⁴³ The sons of Hebron: Korah, Tap-puah, Rekem and Shema. ⁴⁴ Shema became the father of Raham, the father of Jorkeam; and Rekem became the father of Shammai. ⁴⁵ The son of Shammai was Maon; and Maon was the father of Beth Zur. ⁴⁶ Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bore Haran, Moza and Gazez; and Haran became the father of Gazez. ⁴⁷ The sons of Jahdai: Regem, Jothan, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah and Shaaph. ⁴⁸ Maacah, Caleb's con-

2:46 Some of the names given to children seem to hint at a weakness in the parents. One wonders why Caleb called his illegitimate son "Haran", after the city which Abraham left behind in order to attain God's promises.

2:48 *Caleb's concubine* – The genealogies seem to stress the weakness and occasional strength of the people of God. Occasionally the list of names is interrupted by a piece of information which indicates God's awareness of their spirituality. For example, the fact some men had more than one wife or a wife from a nation other than Israel is often recorded (as here and also in 1:32; 2:3,26,35; 4:18; 5:1; 7:14; 8:8). The way these interruptions occur in the lists of names stands out. This is surely to indicate two things: that many faithful men made mistakes in this area of life, and secondly that all down the centuries God has not forgotten that they married out of the faith, or that they allowed the pressures of their surrounding world to influence them to break away from the ideal one man: one woman standard of Eden. These two facts provide us with both warning and comfort, in that although God is sensitive to failure, He is still able to justify men, to count them as if they are righteous for the sake of their cov-

cubine, bore Sheber and Tirhanah.

⁴⁹ She bore also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbena, and the father of Gibeai; and the daughter of Caleb was Achsah. ⁵⁰ These were the sons of Caleb, the son of Hur, the firstborn of Ephraim: Shobal the father of Kiriath Jearim, ⁵¹ Salma the father of Bethlehem, Hareph the father of Beth Gader. ⁵² Shobal the founder of Kiriath Jearim was the ancestor of the people Haroeh and half of the people of Menuthoth. ⁵³ The families of Kiriath Jearim: The Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites and the Mishraitites; of them came the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites. ⁵⁴ The sons of Salma: Bethlehem and the Netophathites, Atroth Beth Joab, and half of the Manahathites, the Zorites. ⁵⁵ The families of scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came of Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.

CHAPTER 3 Sep. 20

The Children of David

Now these were the sons of David, who were born to him in Hebron: the firstborn, Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second, Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess; ² the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmi king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; ³ the fifth, Shephatiah of Abital; the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. ⁴ Six were born to him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months. In Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. ⁵ These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon, four, of Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel; ⁶ and Ithar, Elishama, Eliphelet, ⁷ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁸ Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet, nine. ⁹ All these were the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was

enant relationship with Him, even though (e.g.) their married life was not completely in order.

2:54 Bethlehem clearly refers to the city rather than a person of that name. Chronicling which Israelite families came from which towns in Judah confirms the suggestion made on 1:1 that these records were written up in the context of the return from exile clarifying who came from which town (see too 4:28-34).

3:3 Solomon wished to imitate his father David; his own real personality only came out in the Ecclesiastes years, when he took to alcohol, materialism, women and idolatry. It took the influence of his parents many years to wear off. David had weaknesses for horses (2 Sam. 8:4) and many wives; and Solomon followed in these steps too. Note here that David had six sons in seven years by six different women, including Gentiles. And in addition to these, David had children by "the concubines" (:9). Doubtless Solomon reasoned, albeit deep within his psyche, that such behaviour was legitimate because David his father had done it.

3:9 The repeated reference to the possession of concubines can be read as an indication of Israel's weakness in abandoning the ideal standards of God regarding marriage. Yet we read that even David had concubines – as if to show the extent of Israel's weakness in the area of marriage.

their sister. ¹⁰ Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, ¹¹ Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, ¹² Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, ¹³ Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, ¹⁴ Amon his son, Josiah his son. ¹⁵ The sons of Josiah: the firstborn Johanan, the second Jehoikim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. ¹⁶ The sons of Jehoikim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. ¹⁷ The sons of Jeconiah the captive: Shealtiel his son, ¹⁸ and Malchiram, and Pedaiiah, and Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. ¹⁹ The sons of Pedaiiah: Zerubbabel, and Shimei. The sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam, and Hananiah; and Shelomith was their sister; ²⁰ and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah and Jushab Hessed, five. ²¹ The sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Jeshaiah; the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shecaniah. ²² The sons of Shecaniah: Shemaiah. The sons of Shemaiah: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah and Shaphat, six. ²³ The sons of Neariah: Elioenai, Hizkiah and Azrikam, three. ²⁴ The sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah and Anani, seven.

CHAPTER 4 Sep. 21

The Children of Judah

The sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur and Shobal. ² Reaiah

the son of Shobal became the father of Jahath; and Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These are the families of the Zorathites. ³ These were the sons of the father of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazzelelponi; ⁴ and Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah, the founder of Bethlehem. ⁵ Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. ⁶ Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hephher, Temeni and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. ⁷ The sons of Helah were Zereth, Izhar and Ethnan. ⁸ Hakkoz became the father of Anub, Zobeab, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum. ⁹ Jabez was more honourable than his brothers: and his mother named him Jabez saying, Because I bore him with sorrow. ¹⁰ Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, Oh that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that it not be to my sorrow! God granted him that which he requested. ¹¹ Chelub the brother of Shuhah became the father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. ¹² Eshton became the father of Beth Rapha, Paseah and Tehinnah the father of Ir Nahash. These are the men of Recah. ¹³ The sons of Kenaz: Othniel, and Seraiah. The son of Othniel: Hathath. ¹⁴ Meonothai became the father of Ophrah: and Seraiah

4:10 This is an example of spiritual ambition, requesting that their border be enlarged, at the expense of driving out neighbouring Canaanite tribes. Jesus uses Jabez's phrase "Keep me from evil" and inserts it into His model prayer, "deliver us from evil" (Mt. 6:13).

became the father of Joab the father of Ge Harashim; for they were craftsmen. ¹⁵ The sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah and Naam; and the son of Elah: Kenaz. ¹⁶ The sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria and Asarel. ¹⁷ The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Ephraim and Jalon; and she bore Miriam, Shammai and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. ¹⁸ His wife the Jewess bore Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Soco and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. These are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took. ¹⁹ The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite. ²⁰ The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Ben Hanan and Tilon. The sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben Zoheth. ²¹ The sons of Shelah the son of Judah: Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of those who worked fine linen, of the house of Ashbea; ²² and Jokim, the men of Cozeba, Joash and Saraph, who had dominion in Moab, and Jashubilehem. The records are ancient. ²³ These were the potters, and the inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah where they lived and worked for the king.

The Children of Simeon

²⁴ The sons of Simeon: Nemuel,

Jamin, Jarib, Zerah and Shaul; ²⁵ Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. ²⁶ The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur his son, Shimei his son. ²⁷ Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers didn't have many children, neither did all their family multiply like the children of Judah. ²⁸ They lived at Beersheba, Moladah and Hazarshual, ²⁹ and at Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, ³⁰ Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, ³¹ Beth Marcaboth and Hazar Susim, Beth Biri and at Shaaraim. These were their cities to the reign of David. ³² Their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen and Ashan, five cities; ³³ and all their villages that were around the same cities, to Baal. These were their habitations, and they have their genealogy. ³⁴ Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah the son of Amaziah, ³⁵ Joel, Jehu the son of Joshibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel, ³⁶ and Elieonai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, ³⁷ Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah— ³⁸ these mentioned by name were princes in their families; and their fathers' houses increased greatly. ³⁹ They went to the entrance of Gedor, even to the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. ⁴⁰ They found fat pasture and

4:24 *The sons of Simeon were Nemuel, Jamin... and Shaul* – But Gen. 46:10 shows that Shaul was Simeon's son by a wrong, casual relationship. Yet this is not recorded in Chronicles, even though so many other weaknesses are. Perhaps this is to demonstrate how if God imputes righteousness for a repented of sin, there really is no record of this kept by Him.

4:32 See on 6:61.

good, and the land was wide, quiet and peaceable; for those who lived there before were of Ham. ⁴¹ These written by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and attacked their tents, and the Meunim who were found there, and destroyed them utterly to this day, and lived in their place; because there was pasture there for their flocks. ⁴² Some of them, even of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to Mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. ⁴³ They struck the remnant of the Amalekites who escaped, and have lived there to this day.

CHAPTER 5 Sep. 22

The Children of Reuben

The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but, because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. ² For Judah prevailed above his brothers, and of him came the prince; but the birthright was Joseph's): ³ the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. ⁴ The sons of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog his

son, Shimei his son, ⁵ Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, ⁶ and Beerah his son, whom Tiglath Pileser king of Assyria carried away captive: he was prince of the Reubenites. ⁷ His brothers by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, ⁸ and Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who lived in Aroer, even up to Nebo and Baal Meon: ⁹ and eastward he lived even to the entrance of the wilderness from the river Euphrates, because their livestock were multiplied in the land of Gilead. ¹⁰ In the days of Saul, they made war with the Hagrites, who fell by their hand; and they lived in their tents throughout all the land east of Gilead.

The Children of Gad

¹¹ The sons of Gad lived over against them, in the land of Bashan to Salecah: ¹² Joel the chief, Shapham the second, Janai and Shaphat, in Bashan. ¹³ Their brothers of their fathers' houses: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia and Eber, seven. ¹⁴ These were the sons of Abihail, the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz; ¹⁵ Ahi the

5:4 Gog is mentioned in Ez. 38 as leading a latter day invasion of Israel. The background to 'Gog' given here is that he was an apostate Jew who went away from the God of Israel, attracted by the grazing grounds to the north east of Israel, and who eventually ended up living permanently in the land of Israel's enemies, the land of the Hagarenes (sons of Hagar) and Assyria. The Gog of Ez. 38 may well be an apostate Jew (after the pattern of Rabshakeh) who leads an invasion of his ancient homeland. He attacks because he loves cattle (Ez. 38:11,12) – which was a characteristic of the Gog of 1 Chron. 5.

son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of their fathers' houses. ¹⁶ They lived in Gilead in Bashan, and in its towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, as far as their borders. ¹⁷ All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel. ¹⁸ The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty, that were able to go forth to war. ¹⁹ They made war with the Hagrites, with Jetur, Naphish and Nodab. ²⁰ They were helped against them, and the Hagrites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them; for they cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him. ²¹ They took away their livestock; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of donkeys two thousand, and of men one hundred thousand. ²² For there fell many slain, because the war was of God. They lived in their place until the captivity.

The Children of Manasseh

²³ The children of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land: they

increased from Bashan to Baal Hermon, Senir and Mount Hermon. ²⁴ These were the heads of their fathers' houses: even Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, heads of their fathers' houses. ²⁵ They trespassed against the God of their fathers, and played the prostitute after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God destroyed before them. ²⁶ The God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tiglath Pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor and Hara, and to the river of Gozan, to this day.

CHAPTER 6 Sep. 23

The Children of Levi

The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. ² The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. ³ The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ⁴ Eleazar became the father of Phinehas, Phinehas became the father of Abishua, ⁵ Abishua became the father of Bukki, Bukki became the father of Uzzi, ⁶ Uzzi became the father of Zerachiah, Zerachiah became

5:26 *God... stirred up the spirit of Pul* – God is able to work directly on the mind or spirit of people, even of unbelievers. What we are desperate for is spiritual mindedness, strength of mind / spirit against the flesh; and surely God is willing to give this to us if we ask Him.

To this day – This implies the Chronicles were written whilst Judah were in captivity; the genealogical records therefore had primary relevance to the exiles returning to Judah.

the father of Meraioth, ⁷ Meraioth became the father of Amariah, Amariah became the father of Ahitub, ⁸ Ahitub became the father of Zadok, Zadok became the father of Ahimaaz, ⁹ Ahimaaz became the father of Azariah, Azariah became the father of Johanan, ¹⁰ Johanan became the father of Azariah (he it is who executed the priest's office in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem), ¹¹ Azariah became the father of Amariah, Amariah became the father of Ahitub, ¹² Ahitub became the father of Zadok, Zadok became the father of Shallum, ¹³ Shallum became the father of Hilkiah, Hilkiah became the father of Azariah, ¹⁴ Azariah became the father of Seraiah, Seraiah became the father of Jehozadak. ¹⁵ Jehozadak went into captivity when Yahweh carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁶ The sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath and Merari. ¹⁷ These are the names of the sons of Gershom: Libni and Shimei. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' households. ²⁰ Of Gershom: Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, ²¹ Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeatherai his son. ²² The sons of Kohath: Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, ²³ Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son and Assir his son, ²⁴ Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uziah his son and Shaul his son. ²⁵ The sons of Elkanah: Amasai and Ahimoth. ²⁶ As for Elkanah,

the sons of Elkanah: Zophai his son, and Nahath his son, ²⁷ Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. ²⁸ The sons of Samuel: the firstborn Joel and the second Abijah. ²⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzzah his son, ³⁰ Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son.

The Temple Musicians

³¹ These are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of Yahweh, after that the ark had rest. ³² They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon had built the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order. ³³ These are those who waited, and their sons. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman the singer, the son of Joel, son of Samuel, ³⁴ son of Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Eliel, son of Toah, ³⁵ son of Zuph, son of Elkanah, son of Mahath, son of Amasai, ³⁶ son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son of Azariah, son of Zephaniah, ³⁷ son of Tahath, son of Assir, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, ³⁸ son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, the son of Israel. ³⁹ His brother Asaph, who stood on his right hand, even Asaph the son of Berechiah, son of Shimea, ⁴⁰ son of Michael, son of Baaseiah, son of Malchijah, ⁴¹ son of Ethni, son of Zerah, son of Adaiah, ⁴² son of Ethan, son of Zimmah, son of Shimei, ⁴³ son of Jahath, son of Gershom, the son of Levi. ⁴⁴ On the left hand were their brothers the sons of Merari: Ethan the son of

Kishi, son of Abdi, son of Malluch, ⁴⁵ son of Hashabiah, son of Amaziah, son of Hilkiah, ⁴⁶ son of Amzi, son of Bani, son of Shemer, ⁴⁷ son of Mahli, son of Mushi, son of Merari, the son of Levi. ⁴⁸ Their brothers the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle of God's house. ⁴⁹ But Aaron and his sons offered on the altar of burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, for all the work of the most holy place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. ⁵⁰ These are the sons of Aaron: Eleazar, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, ⁵¹ Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerariah his son, ⁵² Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, ⁵³ Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son. ⁵⁴ Now these are their dwelling places according

to their encampments in their borders: to the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites (for theirs was the first lot), ⁵⁵ to them they gave Hebron in the land of Judah, and its suburbs around it; ⁵⁶ but the fields of the city, and its villages, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. ⁵⁷ To the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of refuge: Hebron; Libnah also with its suburbs, Jattir, Eshtemoa with its suburbs; ⁵⁸ Hilen with its suburbs; Debir with its suburbs; ⁵⁹ Ashan with its suburbs and Beth Shemesh with its suburbs; ⁶⁰ and out of the tribe of Benjamin, Geba with its suburbs; Allemeth with its suburbs and Anathoth with its suburbs. All their cities throughout their families were thirteen cities. ⁶¹ To the rest of the sons of Kohath were given by lot, out of the family of the tribe, out of

6:57, 58 The cities of refuge represented Christ as the ultimate place of refuge for those like us who have sinned, deserve to die, and yet didn't wilfully sin (Heb. 6:18). It should be noted that these cities were generally in areas which required some effort to get to – in the wilderness, in the mountains (:67) etc. This teaches that there must be some conscious effort on our side in fleeing to Christ; repentance and entry into Christ aren't momentary actions, they are highly deliberate and conscious acts from us. Jesus likewise went up into a mountain and invited those seriously interested in Him to come to Him there (Mk. 3:13).

6:61 *Ten cities* – The parable of the pounds describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities (Lk. 19:17). This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to recall the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting “ten cities” occurs here and in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26, all in the context of the priests receiving their cities, and “five cities” in 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the New Testament is alluding to this Old Testament background of the land being prepared by the Angels for each person amongst God's people to specifically inherit (Ex. 15:17; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10). Our promised inheritance is not *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inap-

the half-tribe, the half of Manasseh, ten cities.⁶² To the sons of Gershom, according to their families, out of the tribe of Issachar, out of the tribe of Asher, out of the tribe of Naphtali and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.⁶³ To the sons of Merari were given by lot, according to their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, out of the tribe of Gad and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.⁶⁴ The children of Israel gave to the Levites the cities with their suburbs.⁶⁵ They gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, out of the tribe of the children of Simeon and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, these cities which are mentioned by name.⁶⁶ Some of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their borders out of the tribe of Ephraim.⁶⁷ They gave to them the cities of refuge: Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim with its suburbs; Gezer also with its suburbs;⁶⁸ Jokmeam with its suburbs; Beth Horon with its suburbs;⁶⁹ Aijalon with its suburbs and Gath Rimmon with its suburbs;⁷⁰ and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Aner with its suburbs and Bileam with its suburbs, for the rest of the family of the sons of Kohath.⁷¹ To the sons of Gershom were given, out of the family of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan with its suburbs, and Ashtaroth with its suburbs;⁷² and out of the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh with its suburbs; Daberath with its suburbs;⁷³ Ramoth with its suburbs; Anem with its sub-

urbs;⁷⁴ and out of the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its suburbs; Abdon with its suburbs;⁷⁵ Hukok with its suburbs and Rehob with its suburbs;⁷⁶ and out of the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its suburbs; Hammon with its suburbs and Kiriathaim with its suburbs.⁷⁷ To the rest of the Levites, the sons of Merari, were given, out of the tribe of Zebulun: Rimmono with its suburbs; Tabor with its suburbs;⁷⁸ and beyond the Jordan at Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan, were given them, out of the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the wilderness with its suburbs; Jahzah with its suburbs,⁷⁹ Kedemoth with its suburbs and Mephaath with its suburbs;⁸⁰ and out of the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its suburbs; Mahanaim with its suburbs;⁸¹ Heshbon with its suburbs and Jazer with its suburbs.

CHAPTER 7 Sep. 24

The Children of Issachar

Of the sons of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron, four.² The sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam and Shemuel, heads of their fathers' houses, of Tola; mighty men of valour in their generations. Their number in the days of David was twenty-two thousand six hundred.³ The son of Uzzi: Izrahiah. The sons of Izrahiah: Michael, Obadiah, Joel and Isshiah, five; all of them chief men.⁴ With them, by their generations, after their fathers' houses, were bands of

proprate if our reward is simply eternal life; it is the nature of that life which is of the essence.

the army for war, thirty-six thousand; for they had many wives and sons. ⁵ Their brothers among all the families of Issachar, mighty men of valour, reckoned in all by genealogy, were eighty-seven thousand.

The Children of Benjamin

⁶ The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher and Jediah, three. ⁷ The sons of Bela: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth and Iri, five; heads of fathers' houses, mighty men of valour. They were reckoned by genealogy twenty-two thousand and thirty-four. ⁸ The sons of Becher: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth and Alemeth. All these were the sons of Becher. ⁹ They were reckoned by genealogy, after their generations, heads of their fathers' houses, mighty men of valour, twenty thousand two hundred. ¹⁰ The son of Jediah: Bilhan. The sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish and Ahishahar. ¹¹ All these were sons of Jediah, according to the heads of their fathers' households, mighty men of valour, seventeen thousand and two

hundred, who were able to go forth in the army for war. ¹² Shupim also, and Hupim, the sons of Ir, Hushim, the sons of Aher.

The Children of Naphtali

¹³ The sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah.

The Children of Manasseh

¹⁴ The sons of Manasseh: Asriel, whom his concubine the Aramitess bore. She bore Machir the father of Gilead. ¹⁵ Machir took a wife of Hupim and Shupim, whose sister's name was Maacah; and the name of the second was Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. ¹⁶ Maacah the wife of Machir bore a son, and she named him Peresh; and the name of his brother was Shersesh; and his sons were Ulam and Rakem. ¹⁷ The son of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. ¹⁸ His sister Hammolecheth bore Ishhod, and Abiezer, and Mahlah. ¹⁹ The sons of Shemida were Ahian, and Shechem, and Likhi, and Aniam.

7:14 *His concubine the Aramitess* – Here and so often in the genealogies we have evidence that from earliest times, the Jews weren't ethnically pure. And intermarriage with Gentiles has continued to be a feature of the community throughout the millennia. Jewishness is therefore cultural more than genetic; which provides another perspective on Paul's argument that fleshly descent from Abraham counts for nothing.

7:15 Zelophehad had only daughters; usually, in his context, a man would have taken concubines in order to produce sons. The record of his only having daughters is presented in the context of genealogies which show that many Israelite men had more than one wife. But Zelophehad wasn't dragged down by this; God inspired him to maintain the higher level which he had chosen to live by. We too must seek to do what is ultimately right before God and not be influenced by the standards of our brethren who surround us in the body of believers.

he Children of Ephraim

²⁰ The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah, Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eleadah his son, Tahath his son, ²¹ Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath who were born in the land killed, because they came down to take away their livestock. ²² Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him. ²³ He went in to his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and he named him Beriah, because it went evil with his house. ²⁴ His daughter was Sheerah, who built Beth Horon the lower and the upper, and Uzzen Sheerah. ²⁵ Rephah was his son, and Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son, ²⁶ Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, ²⁷ Nun his son, Joshua his son. ²⁸ Their possessions and habitations were Bethel and its towns, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, with its towns; Shechem also and its towns, to Azzah and its towns; ²⁹ and by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth Shean and its towns, Taanach and its towns, Megiddo and its towns, Dor and its towns. In these lived the children of Joseph the son of Israel.

The Children of Asher

³⁰ The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ish-

vah, Ishvi, Beriah, and Serah their sister. ³¹ The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel, who was the father of Birzaith. ³² Heber became the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham and Shua their sister. ³³ The sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal and Ashvath. These are the children of Japhlet. ³⁴ The sons of Shemer: Ahi, Rohgah, Jehubbah and Aram. ³⁵ The sons of Helem his brother: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh and Amal. ³⁶ The sons of Zophah: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, ³⁷ Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran and Beera. ³⁸ The sons of Jether: Jephunneh, Pispah and Ara. ³⁹ The sons of Ulla: Arah, Hanniel and Rizia. ⁴⁰ All these were the children of Asher, heads of the fathers' houses, choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. The number of them reckoned by genealogy for service in war was twenty-six thousand men.

CHAPTER 8 Sep. 25*More Children of Benjamin*

Benjamin became the father of Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third, ² Nohah the fourth and Rapha the fifth. ³ Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud, ⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, ⁵ Gera, Shephuphan and Huram. ⁶ These are the sons of Ehud, who are the heads

7:24 One feature of these genealogies is that they mention the significance of women as mothers and wives by naming them; and the achievements of women like Sherah, who built Beth-Horon. This sharply contrasts with contemporary king lists of the time, which mention only the males and their exploits. This indicates that the Bible isn't as it were anti-women, as has been ignorantly claimed, but rather God's perception of the value and meaning of the human person is such that His word is very positive about women.

of fathers' households of the inhabitants of Geba, and they carried them captive to Manahath: ⁷ Naaman, Ahijah and Gera. He carried them captive, and he became the father of Uzza and Ahihud. ⁸ Shaharaim divorced his two wives, Hushim and Baara. Later, when he lived in the country of Moab, he married Hodesh ⁹ his wife and had seven sons: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, ¹⁰ Jeuz, Shachia and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of fathers' households. ¹¹ By Hushim he became the father of Abitub and Elpaal. ¹² The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns; ¹³ and Beriah and Shema, who were heads of fathers' households of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who put to flight the inhabitants of Gath; ¹⁴ and Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth, ¹⁵ Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, ¹⁶ Michael, Ishpah and Joha, the sons

of Beriah, ¹⁷ and Zebadiah, Meshulam, Hizki, Heber, ¹⁸ Ishmerai, Izliah and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal, ¹⁹ and Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, ²⁰ Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, ²¹ Adaiah, Beraiah and Shimrath, the sons of Shimei, ²² and Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, ²³ Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, ²⁴ Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, ²⁵ Iphdeiah, and Penuel the sons of Shashak, ²⁶ and Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, ²⁷ Jaareshiah, Elijah and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham. ²⁸ These were heads of fathers' households throughout their generations, chief men: these lived in Jerusalem. ²⁹ In Gibeon there lived the father of Gibeon, whose wife's name was Maacah; ³⁰ and his firstborn son Abdon, and Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab, ³¹ Gedor, Ahio and Zecher. ³² Mikloth became the father of Shimeah. They also lived with their brothers in Jerusalem, over against their brothers. ³³ Ner became the father of

8:8 It would seem that the genealogies of the books of Chronicles, with all their emphasis on the priesthood and temple service under Solomon, were produced at the time of the restoration – in order to encourage the people to restore the Kingdom of God as it had been, and thereby bring in the Kingdom. References to “Jecooniah the captive” (3:17) make sense in the context of the records being written up in the captivity. And we can understand why the story of Shaharaim is mentioned here – a Jewish refugee in Moab, who sent away his two Gentile wives [cp. what was done in Ezra 10:44] but ended up being blessed with more children. “Seven sons” would’ve been understood as a completeness of blessing. Note that God still recognized his later wife as just that – his wife, even though he had been married previously. No sin or failure leads to a position whereby someone is intrinsically unable to be accepted by God.

8:30-34 When a passage is repeated twice, surely God wishes us to perceive something. 8:30-34 is repeated in 9:36-40. The reason may be that the name ‘Baal’ was used by the leaders of Israel. Gibeon’s children included Kish and *Baal*, Kish’s son was king Saul, Saul had a son called *Eshbaal* as well as Jonathan, David’s beloved friend; and Jonathan had a son called Merib *Baal*. These are not the names as recorded elsewhere; the Chronicles record is highlighting the fact that there was a strand of weakness for idols in the family of Saul, including in faithful Jonathan. We note that his love of God, of David, his appreciation of David’s righteousness, his belief that

Kish; and Kish became the father of Saul; and Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab and Eshbaal. ³⁴ The son of Jonathan was Merib Baal; and Merib Baal became the father of Micah. ³⁵ The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz. ³⁶ Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah; and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth and Zimri; and Zimri became the father of Moza. ³⁷ Moza became the father of Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. ³⁸ Azel had six sons, whose names are these: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel. ³⁹ The sons of Eshek his brother: Ulam his first-born, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third. ⁴⁰ The sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, one hundred and fifty. All these were of the sons of Benjamin.

CHAPTER 9 Sep. 26

The Exiles Who Returned

So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies — they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. Judah was carried away captive to Babylon for their disobedience. ² Now the first inhabitants who lived in their posses-

sions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites and the Nethinim.

³ In Jerusalem lived of the children of Judah, of the children of Benjamin and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh: ⁴ Uthai the son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, of the children of Perez son of Judah. ⁵ Of the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons. ⁶ Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel, and their brothers, six hundred and ninety. ⁷ Of the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah, ⁸ and Ibneiah son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of Ibnijah; ⁹ and their brothers, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty-six. All these men were heads of fathers' households by their fathers' houses. ¹⁰ Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin, ¹¹ and Azariah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the ruler of God's house; ¹² and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, and Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah, son of Meshullam, son of Meshillemith, son of Immer; ¹³ and their brothers, heads of their fathers' houses, one thousand seven

David would have the future Kingdom, struggled against the fact that the worldly influence of his father and great-grandfather still rubbed off upon him. We find ourselves so often in similar situations.

8:33 In all close friendships there are some aspects which just could not have been contrived by human arrangement, and which add to the closeness and sense of specialness which those relationships have. There were such aspects with David and Jonathan, intensifying the love of David for Jonathan. For example, it was a beautiful coincidence that they both happened to have a brother called Abinadab (1 Sam. 16:8).

hundred and sixty; very able men for the work of the service of God's house. ¹⁴ Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari; ¹⁵ and Bakkakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zichri, son of Asaph, ¹⁶ and Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites. ¹⁷ The porters: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon and Ahiman, and their brothers (Shallum was the chief), ¹⁸ who previously served in the king's gate eastward: they were the porters for the camp of the children of Levi. ¹⁹ Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brothers, of his father's house, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent. Their fathers had been

over the camp of Yahweh, keepers of the entry. ²⁰ Phinehas the son of Eleazar was ruler over them in time past, and Yahweh was with him. ²¹ Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was porter of the door of the Tent of Meeting. ²² All these who were chosen to be porters in the thresholds were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the prophet ordained in their office of trust. ²³ So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of Yahweh, even the house of the tent, as guards. ²⁴ On the four sides were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south. ²⁵ Their brothers, in their villages, were to come in every seven days from time to time to be with them; ²⁶ for the four chief porters, who were Levites, were in an office of trust, and were over the rooms and over the treasur-

9:17-19 The genealogy of the sons of Korah is significant in that Korah was the ringleader of the rebellion against Moses which led to his destruction. His children however obeyed the command to leave the tents of their father Korah when he was consumed in the earthquake. Num. 16:27 mentions Dathan and Abiram's children standing outside their tents at this time, but there is the pointed omission of Korah's children; they had left the tents, in recognition of Korah's sin and dissociation from it. The descendants of Korah wrote at least 11 of the Psalms and protected the purity of temple worship. Conscious dissociation from sin is required of us; and it's often very hard, especially when it concerns family members. We also learn from this family that the spiritual failure of a father figure doesn't have to mean that the rest of the family likewise fail; in fact, they can learn from the tragedy and become strengthened spiritually by responding to God's judgment of sin as He intends.

9:22 *Their office of trust* – As any employer soon learns, delegation is a risk. We have been “entrusted with the Gospel” (Tit. 1:3); the world God so wants to love, the world God is appealing to, do not directly see Him; for He makes His appeal through us. We are all that many people will ever see of Christ; for we are His body. God has trusted us with representing Him, and put His work into our hands. Those who did God's work in the Old Testament temple were similarly given a “trust”, they were entrusted with God's work.

ies in God's house. ²⁷ They lodged around God's house, because that duty was theirs. To them pertained its opening morning by morning. ²⁸ Certain of them were in charge of the vessels of service; for by count were these brought in and by count were these taken out. ²⁹ Some of them also were appointed over the furniture, and over all the vessels of the sanctuary, and over the fine flour, the wine, the oil, the frankincense and the spices. ³⁰ Some of the sons of the priests prepared the mix of the spices. ³¹ Mattithiah, one of the Levites, who was the firstborn of Shalum the Korahite, had the office of trust over the things that were baked in pans. ³² Some of their brothers, of the sons of the Kohathites, were over the show bread, to prepare it every Sabbath. ³³ These are the singers, heads of fathers' households of the Levites, who lived in the rooms and were free from other service; for they were employed in their work day and night. ³⁴ These were heads of fathers' households of the Levites, throughout their generations, chief men. They lived at Jerusalem.

The Children of Jeiel

³⁵ In Gibeon there lived the father of Gibeon, Jeiel, whose wife's name was Maacah. ³⁶ His firstborn son Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, ³⁷ Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah

and Mikloth. ³⁸ Mikloth became the father of Shimeam. They also lived with their brothers in Jerusalem, over against their brothers. ³⁹ Ner became the father of Kish; and Kish became the father of Saul; and Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab and Eshbaal. ⁴⁰ The son of Jonathan was Merib Baal; and Merib Baal became the father of Micah. ⁴¹ The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tahrea and Ahaz. ⁴² Ahaz became the father of Jarah; and Jarah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth and Zimri; and Zimri became the father of Moza; ⁴³ and Moza became the father of Binea, and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. ⁴⁴ Azel had six sons, whose names are: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

CHAPTER 10 Sep. 27

The Death of Saul

Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines followed hard after Saul and after his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. ³ The battle went hard against Saul, and the archers overtook him; and he was badly wounded by the archers. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armour

9:40 There are clear connections between Jonathan and Gideon; compare 1 Sam. 14:10–20 with Jud. 7:3, 10, 11, 14, 22. Jonathan's son was called Merib Baal, meaning 'rebellion against Baal', an epithet for 'Gideon'. It's not wrong to have Biblical heroes, and to be inspired by their examples in the life decisions we make, even to the naming of our children.

bearer, Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armour bearer would not; for he was terrified. Therefore Saul took his sword and fell on it. ⁵ When his armour bearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell on his sword and died. ⁶ So Saul died, and his three sons; and all his family died together. ⁷ When all the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled; and the Philistines came and lived in them. ⁸ It happened on the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ They stripped him, and took his head, and

his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines all around, to carry the news to their idols, and to the people. ¹⁰ They put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the house of Dagon. ¹¹ When all Jabesh Gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant men arose and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days. ¹³ So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against Yahweh, against the word of Yahweh, which he didn't keep; and also because he asked counsel of one who had a familiar spirit, to inquire, ¹⁴ and didn't inquire of Yahweh. Therefore He

10:4 Although the armour bearer was one of Saul's men, in the anti-David camp, yet David's example of not killing Saul must have deeply influenced him. We do make a difference. We have more influence upon others than we may think. It can be that an illiterate sister in a male dominated society can think that her attendance at church meetings cannot encourage anyone. It can be that the Christian stockbroker feels that it is impossible for him to influence those he works with. But we do have influence. We have become so humiliated by a shame based society that we can underestimate the value and power of our own personhood.

10:13 *Against Yahweh, against the word of Yahweh* – God and His word are here paralleled; for “the word was [and is] God” (Jn. 1:1). Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to Him.

10:13, 14 Just before his final fight with the Philistines, “Saul enquired of Yahweh (but) Yahweh answered him not” (1 Sam. 28:6), and therefore he went to a witch. But in God's final analysis of Saul, Yahweh says that He smote Saul because Saul sinned against God's word by *not* enquiring of God, but of a witch. But Saul *did* enquire of God (see 1 Sam. 14:27 s.w.; 28:6), but God didn't answer him (note how often in the records it is stated by contrast that David enquired successfully of Yahweh). The point is that although Saul prayed to God and enquired of His word on the surface, in his heart, he did nothing of the sort; and therefore his prayer and enquiry was reckoned never to have happened. And we must ask how much of our prayer and Bible study is seen by God as being only spoken and read on a surface level. This was exactly the problem of natural Israel. “They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled (in prayer) upon their beds” (Hos. 7:14). “Though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him” (Hos. 11:7).

killed him, and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse.

CHAPTER 11 Sep. 28

David Is Made King

Then all Israel gathered themselves to David to Hebron saying, Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. ² In times past, even when Saul was king, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. Yahweh your God said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of My people Israel, and you shall be prince over My people Israel’. ³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Yahweh; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of Yahweh by Samuel. ⁴ David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (the same is Jebus). The Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, were there. ⁵ The inhabitants of Jebus said to David, You shall not come in here. Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion. The same is the city of David. ⁶ David said, Whoever strikes the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, and was made

chief. ⁷ David lived in the stronghold; therefore they called it the city of David. ⁸ He built the city all around, from Millo and all around; and Joab repaired the rest of the city. ⁹ David grew greater and greater; for Yahweh of Armies was with him.

David’s Mighty Men

¹⁰ Now these are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who showed themselves strong with him in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of Yahweh concerning Israel. ¹¹ This is the number of the mighty men whom David had: Jashobeam, the son of a Hachmonite, the chief of the thirty; he lifted up his spear against three hundred and killed them at one time. ¹² After him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighty men. ¹³ He was with David at Pasdammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where there was a plot of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines. ¹⁴ They stood in the midst of the plot, and defended it, and killed the Philistines; and

11:1 *We are your bone and your flesh* – An idiom meaning that they were in every sense his brethren. Here and in 2 Sam. 19:12 the phrase is used in the context of human beings wanting to have someone exactly like them, of their ‘bone and flesh’, as their leader. We find the same term used in Eph. 5:30, where we are told that those who are baptized into the body of Christ have in Him someone of their own bone and flesh; He urges His disciples to physically touch His bones and flesh after His resurrection to make the same point, that despite His changed nature, we can totally identify with Him and He with us because He too was totally human (Lk. 24:39). Hence Hebrews 2 labours the point that because Jesus was of our nature, therefore and thereby is He our inspiration and spiritual leader. In this we see the importance of understanding the nature of Christ properly, and the practical spiritual advantage of rejecting the Trinitarian view of Jesus.

Yahweh saved them by a great victory. ¹⁵ Three of the thirty chief men went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the army of the Philistines were encamped in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁶ David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. ¹⁷ David was thirsty and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! ¹⁸ The three broke through the army of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David. David would not drink of it, but poured it out to Yahweh, ¹⁹ and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this! Shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy? For they risked their lives to bring it. Therefore he would not drink it. The three mighty men did these things. ²⁰ Abishai, the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three; for he lifted up his spear against three hundred and killed them, and had a name among the three. ²¹ Of the three, he was more honourable than the two, and was made their

captain: however he didn't attain to the three. ²² Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, had done mighty deeds. He killed two lion-like men of Moab. He went down also and killed a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. ²³ He killed an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. ²⁴ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did these things, and had a name among the three mighty men. ²⁵ Behold, he was more honourable than the thirty, but he didn't attain to the three; and David set him over his guard. ²⁶ Also the mighty men of the armies: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, ²⁷ Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite, ²⁸ Ira the son of Ikesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Anathothite, ²⁹ Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, ³⁰ Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite, ³¹ Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeath of the children of Benjamin, Benai-

11:18 David is a type of Christ; the loyalty he inspired amongst his men was a foretaste of the effect Christ should have upon us. See on :23.

11:19 That water came to represent the lives or blood of those men. We see here a basis for understanding the wine at the communion service; it represents life, the life of Christ; the water here was just water, and the wine we drink is just wine, but it represents the life of another.

11:22 Benaiah killed a lion in order to prepare him for killing two lionlike men. God often works like this, using one experience in life to prepare us for another one.

11:23 This act of bravery was clearly inspired by how David had killed Goliath, which speaks of Christ's victory over sin on the cross. This should be repeated in essence by us in our spiritual battles. See on :18.

ah the Pirathonite, ³² Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, ³³ Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliabba the Shaalbonite, ³⁴ the sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shagee the Hararite, ³⁵ Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphai the son of Ur, ³⁶ Hephher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, ³⁷ Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai, ³⁸ Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Hagri, ³⁹ Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armour-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, ⁴⁰ Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ⁴¹ Uriah the Hittite, Zabab the son of Ahlai, ⁴² Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a chief of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, ⁴³ Hanan the son of Maacah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, ⁴⁴ Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite, ⁴⁵ Jediel the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, ⁴⁶ Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, ⁴⁷ Eliel, and Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

CHAPTER 12 Sep. 29

The Names of David's Followers

Now these are those who came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself in secret because of Saul the son of Kish; and they were

among the mighty men, his helpers in war. ² They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in slinging stones and in shooting arrows from the bow. They were of Saul's brothers of Benjamin. ³ The chief was Ahiezer; then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite, and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth, and Beracah, and Jehu the Anathothite, ⁴ and Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty, and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Jozabad the Gederathite, ⁵ Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite, ⁶ Elkanah, and Isshiah, and Azarel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites, ⁷ and Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor. ⁸ Of the Gadites there separated themselves to David to the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valour, men trained for war, that could handle shield and spear; whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes on the mountains: ⁹ Ezer the chief, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, ¹⁰ Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, ¹¹ Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, ¹² Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, ¹³ Jeremiah the tenth, Machbannai the eleventh. ¹⁴ These of the sons of Gad were captains of the

12:1 Those who followed David in his wilderness years were remembered by God by name for millennia afterwards. They became leaders in David's Kingdom after the death of Saul. We who follow Christ now, even though at times it may seem we are supporting a humanly hopeless case, will finally be rewarded in the future Kingdom.

12:14 This alludes to how one faithful man would chase one thousand unbelievers (Dt. 32:30). We could infer that those who followed David in the wilderness years

army: he who was least was equal to one hundred, and the greatest to one thousand. ¹⁵ These are those who went over the Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. ¹⁶ There came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the stronghold to David. ¹⁷ David went out to meet them and responded to them: If you have come peaceably to me to help me, my heart shall be knit to you; but if you have come to betray me to my adversaries, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. ¹⁸ Then the Spirit came on Amasai, who was chief of the thirty, and he said, We are yours, David, and on your side, you son of Jesse. Peace, peace be to you, and peace be to your helpers; for your God helps you. Then David received

them, and made them captains of the band. ¹⁹ Of Manasseh also there fell away some to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle; but they didn't help them; for the lords of the Philistines sent him away after consultation, saying, He will fall away to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads. ²⁰ As he went to Ziklag, there joined him of Manasseh, Adnah, Jozabad, Jedaiel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu and Zillethai, captains of thousands who were of Manasseh. ²¹ They helped David against the band of rovers; for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the army. ²² For from day to day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army, like the army of God.

The Numbers of David's Supporters

²³ These are the numbers of the heads of those who were armed for

came to faith in God although perhaps they initially came to him more because of their own dissatisfaction with life (1 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 57:4). Some start their spiritual journey with one motivation and yet become more spiritual over time, influenced by Godly examples like David.

12:17 *There is no wrong in my hands* – Saul had falsely accused David of many things, but he refused to take false guilt because of them. When we are under false accusation, we tend to become very self-justificatory and refuse to accept true guilt before God (as opposed to before men) for our real sins, for which we should feel guilty. David sets a great example to us here and in his Psalms about these matters; he refuses to accept he had done anything wrong to Saul, and yet openly confesses his real sins to God.

12:22 David's army increased, until it became "a great army, like the army of God". The parallel between David's men and the Angelic hosts is clear. Significantly, the Angelic armies that destroyed the Syrians are called 'a great army' in 2 Kings 7:6. Asa and his army defeated the Ethiopians – and it's described as them being "destroyed before Yahweh and before His army" (2 Chron. 14:13). Again, the hosts of Israel become the hosts of God. Significantly in this context, 11:9 speaks of David's God as Yahweh of Armies. As the cherubim visions demonstrated, we on earth are to be reflective of God's heavenly armies, and if we walk in step with them, victory is assured. See on 14:15.

war, who came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of Yahweh. ²⁴ The children of Judah who bore shield and spear were six thousand eight hundred, armed for war. ²⁵ Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour in war, seven thousand one hundred. ²⁶ Of the children of Levi four thousand six hundred. ²⁷ Jehoiada was the leader of the household of Aaron; and with him were three thousand seven hundred, ²⁸ and Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty-two captains. ²⁹ Of the children of Benjamin, the brothers of Saul, three thousand; for hitherto the majority of them had kept their allegiance to the house of Saul. ³⁰ Of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous men in their fathers' houses. ³¹ Of the half-tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, who were mentioned by name, came and made David king. ³² Of the children of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their heads were two hundred; and all their brothers were under their command. ³³ Of Zebulun, such as were able to go out in the army, who could set the battle in array, with all kinds of instruments of war, fifty thousand, who could command and were not of double heart. ³⁴ Of Naphtali one

thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty-seven thousand. ³⁵ Of the Danites who could set the battle in array, twenty-eight thousand six hundred. ³⁶ Of Asher, such as were able to go out in the army, who could set the battle in array, forty thousand. ³⁷ On the other side of the Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half-tribe of Manasseh, with all kinds of instruments of war for the battle, one hundred and twenty thousand. ³⁸ All these being men of war, who could order the battle array, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel. All the rest of Israel were also of one heart to make David king. ³⁹ They were there with David three days, eating and drinking; for their brothers had made preparation for them. ⁴⁰ Moreover those who were near to them, as far as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on donkeys, and on camels, mules and oxen, food of meal, cakes of figs, and clusters of raisins, and wine and oil, and cattle and sheep in abundance; for there was joy in Israel.

CHAPTER 13 Sep. 30

David Takes the Ark of God

David consulted with the captains of thousands and of hundreds, even with every leader. ² David said to all the assembly of Israel, If it

12:23 Those who supported David at this time were very significant to God, and their numbers have been recorded for millennia in His word. Our support for Christ's cause in this world is highly significant to God, and He likewise remembers all the moments when we have in one way or another stood up for His cause in an unbelieving and spiritually hostile world.

seems good to you, and if it is of Yahweh our God, let us send abroad everywhere to our brothers who are left in all the land of Israel, with whom the priests and Levites are in their cities that have suburbs, that they may gather themselves to us. ³ Let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we didn't seek it in the days of Saul. ⁴ All the assembly said that they would do so; for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. ⁵ So David assembled all Israel together, from Shihor the brook of Egypt even to the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim. ⁶ David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath Jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of Yahweh God who dwells between the cherubim, that is called by the Name. ⁷ They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. ⁸ David and all Israel played before God with all their might, even with songs, harps, stringed instruments, tambourines, cymbals and

trumpets. ⁹ When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. ¹⁰ The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzza, and He struck him, because he put forth his hand to the ark; and there he died before God. ¹¹ David was displeased, because Yahweh had broken forth on Uzza; and he called that place Perez Uzza, to this day. ¹² David was afraid of God that day saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? ¹³ So David didn't move the ark to him into the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹⁴ The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months; and Yahweh blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that he had.

CHAPTER 14 Sep. 30

David Defeats the Philistines

Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and masons, and carpenters, to build him a house. ² David perceived that Yahweh had established him king

13:2 *If it seems good to you, and if it is of Yahweh our God* – Alluded to in Acts 15:25,28, where the elders of the new Israel, the church, said that it ‘seemed good unto them and to the Holy Spirit’ to bring Gentiles into the church. We see that in both cases, decisions weren’t taken just because it seemed right to a majority; they weren’t pure democrats. They recognized another, Divine, element in decision making which was over and above the simple will of men, even if they were believers.

13:10 Uzza was a Levite but not a priest; and the Law clearly emphasized that the sons of Kohath were to carry the ark on staves on their shoulders, not on a cart as David was doing (Num. 4:15). David almost boasted in Ps. 119 that he studied God’s law day and night, but he obviously didn’t see the obvious; he blanked off those commands in his mind, assuming the spirit of serving God would make the details of God’s requirements superfluous. Because of our inattention to God’s word, others may die; and we also see that God’s holiness is never to be simply disregarded because we in one sense love Him and are joyful before Him. See on 15:2.

over Israel; for his kingdom was exalted on high, for His people Israel's sake. ³ David took more wives at Jerusalem; and David became the father of more sons and daughters. ⁴ These are the names of the children whom he had in Jerusalem: Sham-mua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ⁵ Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, ⁶ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁷ Elishama, Beel-ada and Eliphelet. ⁸ When the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David. David heard of it, and went out against them. ⁹ Now the Philistines had come and made a raid in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁰ David inquired of God saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand? Yahweh said to him, Go up; for I will deliver them into your hand. ¹¹ So they came up to Baal Perazim, and David struck them there; and David said, God has broken my enemies by my hand, like the breach of waters. Therefore they called the name of that place Baal Perazim. ¹² They left their gods there; and David

gave commandment, and they were burned with fire. ¹³ The Philistines yet again made a raid in the valley. ¹⁴ David inquired again of God; and God said to him, You shall not go up after them. Turn away from them, and come on them opposite the mulberry trees. ¹⁵ It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall go out to battle; for God has gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines. ¹⁶ David did as God commanded him; and they struck the army of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gezer. ¹⁷ The fame of David went out into all lands; and Yahweh brought the fear of him on all nations.

CHAPTER 15 Oct. 1

The Ark Is Brought to Zion

David made himself houses in the city of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it. ² Then David said, No one ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for Yahweh has chosen them to carry the ark of

14:2 Any exaltation we may receive in life is ultimately for the benefit of God's people, and not to be selfishly enjoyed just by ourselves.

14:14 God varied the pattern here as a test to David's obedience, rather like He did to Moses in asking Him to speak to the rock rather than striking it. And He does the same in our lives too. Often God's battle plans involved an initial turning away from the face of enemies, and then giving victory. To turn away from enemies was an indication of unworthiness and suffering for sin (Dt. 28:25). God wished to teach that victory can only come if we accept our unworthiness of that victory, and how as sinners we deserve only defeat.

14:15 The "sound of marching" was of the Angel cherubim. David was being taught that victory only comes through walking in step with the armies of Heaven which are above; see on 12:22.

15:2 It took some time for David to repent over his failure in transporting the ark of God in disobedience to God's commands (see on 13:10). The lag time between sin

God, and to minister to Him forever.

³ David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of Yahweh to its place, which he had prepared for it. ⁴ David gathered together the sons of Aaron and the Levites: ⁵ of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, and his brothers one hundred and twenty; ⁶ of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, and his brothers two hundred and twenty; ⁷ of the sons of Gershon, Joel the chief, and his brothers one hundred and thirty; ⁸ of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, and his brothers two hundred; ⁹ of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, and his brothers eighty; ¹⁰ of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, and his brothers one hundred and twelve. ¹¹ David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab, ¹² and said to them, You are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites. Sanctify yourselves,

both you and your brothers, that you may bring up the ark of Yahweh, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. ¹³ For because you didn't carry it at first, Yahweh our God broke out against us, because we didn't seek Him according to the ordinance. ¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of Yahweh, the God of Israel. ¹⁵ The children of the Levites bore the ark of God with its poles on their shoulders, as Moses commanded according to the word of Yahweh. ¹⁶ David spoke to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brothers the singers, with instruments of music, stringed instruments and harps and cymbals, sounding aloud and lifting up the voice with joy. ¹⁷ So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brothers, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brothers, Ethan the son of Kushaiah; ¹⁸ and with them their brothers of the sec-

and repentance ought to be as short as possible; we see a similar lag time in the gap between David's sin with Bathsheba and his repentance for it. God will work in our lives to bring us to repentance, but this often involves much suffering to ourselves and others; that can all be avoided if we have a sensitive conscience to God's word and the humility to repent immediately. Yet even here, David appears to shift the blame from himself onto others (:13). Repentance has various shades and degrees, and God seeks totality of repentance and acceptance of the fact we personally have sinned.

15:12 *The place that I have prepared for it* – David's bringing the ark to the place which he had prepared is the basis of Christ's words in Jn. 14:1-3. Clearly Christ saw David as Himself, and us as the ark. The 'bringing up' or 'lifting up' of the ark (Heb.) to a permanent dwelling place has reference to the resurrection. And when the ark was finally brought or lifted up to Zion, David / Jesus dealt bread and wine to the people (16:3). One practical encouragement from this typology is that the memorial feast is a celebration that in fact we, the ark, have in prospect already been brought or lifted up into the eternal place prepared for us in the Kingdom.

15:13 David's commission of good didn't outweigh his omission; we must take sins of omission seriously.

ond degree, Zechariah, Ben, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel, the doorkeepers.¹⁹ So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were given cymbals of brass to sound aloud;²⁰ and Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah, with stringed instruments set to Alamoth;²¹ and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azariah, with harps tuned to the eight-stringed lyre, to lead.²² Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was over the song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful.²³ Berechiah and Elkanah were doorkeepers for the ark.²⁴ Shebaniah, and Joshaphat, and Nethanel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, blew the trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-Edom and Jehiah were doorkeepers for the ark.²⁵ So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy.²⁶ It happened, when God helped the Levites who bore

the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, that they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams.²⁷ David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites who bore the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers; and David wore an ephod of linen.²⁸ Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, sounding aloud with stringed instruments and harps.²⁹ As the ark of the covenant of Yahweh came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw king David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart.

CHAPTER 16 Oct. 2

David's Song of Praise

They brought in the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it. They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.² When David had made an end of offering the burnt offering and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh.³ He dealt to each

15:21 *Obed-Edom* – He was the one who had faithfully looked after the ark when others feared to have anything to do with it (13:14). He may have expected some great recognition for that, but he is listed along with many others as simply having a relatively small role in looking after it. If we are genuinely motivated by wishing to simply serve God's people and maintain His presence amongst His people, we will not seek for recognition or status for it.

15:29 *Despised him in her heart* – The feelings we have about our brethren and their service of God are recorded indelibly by God.

16:2, 3 Here and in 15:27 David acts as a priest, even though he was from the tribe of Judah and not Levi. On one hand, our understanding of the spirit and essence of God frees us from the need for literalistic obedience; but as David experienced at the

one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, a portion of meat and a cake of raisins. ⁴ He appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of Yahweh, and to celebrate and to thank and praise Yahweh, the God of Israel: ⁵ Asaph the chief, and second to him Zechariah, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel, with stringed instruments and with harps; and Asaph with cymbals, sounding aloud; ⁶ and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually, before the ark of the covenant of God. ⁷ Then on that day David led the giving of thanks to Yahweh, by the hand of Asaph and his brothers: ⁸ Oh give thanks to Yahweh! Call on His name. Make His deeds known among the peoples. ⁹ Sing to Him, sing praises to Him. Tell of all His marvellous works. ¹⁰ Glory in His holy name. Let the heart of those who seek Yahweh rejoice. ¹¹ Seek Yahweh and His strength. Seek His face for evermore. ¹² Remember His marvellous works that He has done, His wonders, and

the judgments of His mouth, ¹³ you seed of Israel His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones. ¹⁴ He is Yahweh our God. His judgments are in all the earth. ¹⁵ Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, ¹⁶ the covenant which He made with Abraham, His oath to Isaac. ¹⁷ He confirmed the same to Jacob for a statute, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant ¹⁸ saying, 'I will give you the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance;' ¹⁹ when you were but a few men in number, yes, very few, and foreigners were in it. ²⁰ They went about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people. ²¹ He allowed no man to do them wrong. Yes, He reproved kings for their sakes, ²² Don't touch My anointed ones! Do My prophets no harm! ²³ Sing to Yahweh, all the earth! Display His salvation from day to day. ²⁴ Declare His glory among the nations, and His marvellous works among all the peoples. ²⁵ For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised. He also is to be feared

time of the breach upon Uzza (13:10) and his sin with Bathsheba, this can lead us to disregard His principles to a point where it is counted as sin. On the other hand, when Uzziah acted as a priest he was condemned for it (2 Chron. 26:19-21). The same actions can be righteousness for one person and sin for another. In this lies the impossibility of our ultimately judging the outward actions of others; we simply must leave it to God.

16:3 Raisins were made from grapes, so we have here a prefigurement of the bread and wine of the communion service. It is a celebration of the blessing we have received from our high priest, the Lord Jesus.

16:21 *He reproved kings for their sakes* – This is a reference to the rebuking of Abimelech in Gen. 20; yet in this case Abimelech was in the right and is portrayed as the honourable one, and Abraham and Sarah as less than honourable and in need of reproof (Gen. 20:16). David is therefore asking Israel to glory in God's undeserved kindness, His grace, towards them (:34,41).

above all gods. ²⁶ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens. ²⁷ Honor and majesty are before Him. Strength and gladness are in His place. ²⁸ Ascribe to Yahweh, you relatives of the peoples, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength! ²⁹ Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name. Bring an offering, and come before Him. Worship Yahweh in holy array. ³⁰ Tremble before Him, all the land. The world also is established that it can't be moved. ³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! Let them say among the nations, Yahweh reigns! ³² Let the sea roar, and its fullness! Let the field exult, and all that is therein! ³³ Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before Yahweh, for He comes to judge the earth. ³⁴ Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever. ³⁵ Say, 'Save us, God of our salvation! Gather us together and deliver us from the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise'. ³⁶ Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting. All the people said, 'Amen', and praised Yahweh. ³⁷ So he left there, before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, Asaph and his brothers, to minister

before the ark continually, as every day's work required; ³⁸ and Obed-Edom with their brothers, sixty-eight; Obed-Edom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be doorkeepers; ³⁹ and Zadok the priest, and his brothers the priests, before the tabernacle of Yahweh in the high place that was at Gibeon, ⁴⁰ to offer burnt offerings to Yahweh on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of Yahweh, which He commanded to Israel. ⁴¹ With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest who were chosen, who were mentioned by name, to give thanks to Yahweh, because His grace endures forever; ⁴² and with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those that should sound aloud, and with instruments for the songs of God; and the sons of Jeduthun to be at the gate. ⁴³ All the people departed each man to his family; and David returned to bless his family.

CHAPTER 17 Oct. 3

The Covenant with David

It happened that as David lived in this house, David said to Nathan the prophet, Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Yahweh is under cur-

16:26 The Truth of the Gospel is the only way to come to salvation. All other religions apart from true Christianity will not give salvation nor a relationship with God. Realising this, David pleads with his people to be a missionary nation (:8,25,26). The more we realise the pathetic fallacy of human religion, indeed the whole and utter vanity of life under this sun, the more we will preach Yahweh's Truth to a tragically wandering, aimless world.

16:33 The prospect of God 'coming' to judge the earth should be a source of joy to us rather than of endless fear.

tains. ² Nathan said to David, Do all that is in your heart; for God is with you. ³ It happened the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan saying, ⁴ Go and tell David My servant, 'Thus says Yahweh, You shall not build Me a house to dwell in; ⁵ for I have not lived in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tent to another. ⁶ In all places in which I have walked with all Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to be shepherd of My people saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'" ⁷ Now therefore, you shall tell My servant David, 'Thus says Yahweh of Armies, I took you from the sheep pen, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people Israel. ⁸ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all

your enemies from before you. I will make you a name, like the name of the great ones who are in the earth. ⁹ I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more. Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the first, ¹⁰ and from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover I tell you that Yahweh will build you a house. ¹¹ It shall happen, when your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. ¹² He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be his father, and he shall be My son. I will not take My sure mercies away from him, as I took it from him that was before you;

17:2 Nathan replied too quickly, assuming that he knew God's will and what God's word ought to say in response to such a desire. But he was wrong. We see here a lesson in our need to base our response to situations strictly upon God's revealed word rather than our assumption of what He probably meant.

17:10 *I tell you that Yahweh will build you a house* – God's grace is reflected in all this; David wanted to build God a physical house, and God responds by saying He doesn't need that but rather He will build David an eternal house in the sense of a family, based around David's descendant who would be Yahweh's own Son (Lk. 1:31-35). God loves to do for us above all we can ask or imagine of asking (Eph. 3:20); He delights to lavish grace upon us and we should delight to do the same to others, thinking what we could do for them that would make them say "Wow!" to God's grace.

17:11 *Set up your seed* – The Greek LXX version of the Old Testament uses the word elsewhere translated 'resurrect' for "set up".

17:13 *I will be his father, and he shall be My son* – The only way for this to be fully fulfilled would be that a woman who was a direct descendant of David would have a child whose father was God. The account of the virgin birth shows how it all came to pass. It's impossible therefore that Christ physically pre-existed before His birth. Notice the future tenses here. We note too that Jesus was therefore the direct descendant of David and the rightful king of Israel. Yet He lived as a poor, despised working man

¹⁴ but I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever. His throne shall be established forever’.

¹⁵ According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

David’s Response to the Covenant

¹⁶ Then David the king went in and sat before Yahweh; and he said, Who am I, Yahweh God, and what is my house, that You have brought me thus far? ¹⁷ This was a small thing in Your eyes, O God; but You have spoken of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and have respected me according to the estate of a man of high degree, Yahweh God. ¹⁸ What can David say yet more to You concerning the honour which is done to Your servant? For You know Your servant.

¹⁹ Yahweh, for Your servant’s sake, and according to Your own heart, You have worked all this greatness, to make known all these great things.

²⁰ Yahweh, there is none like You, neither is there any God besides You,

according to all that we have heard with our ears. ²¹ What single nation in the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem to Himself for a people, to make You a name by great and awesome things, in driving out nations from before Your people, whom You redeemed out of Egypt? ²² For Your people Israel You made Your very own people forever; and You, Yahweh, became their God. ²³ Now, Yahweh, let the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house be established forever, and do as You have spoken. ²⁴ Let Your name be established and magnified forever, saying, ‘Yahweh of Armies is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel. The house of David Your servant is established before You’. ²⁵ For You, my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build him a house. Therefore Your servant has found courage to pray before You. ²⁶ Now, Yahweh, You are God, and have promised this good thing to

and died the death of a rejected criminal. We who are in Him by baptism into Him will likewise not be discerned for who we really are by the unbelieving society in which we live.

Sure mercies – “The sure mercies of David” result in the wicked man forsaking his way (Is. 55:3); they therefore inspire us in forsaking sinful thoughts and wicked ways (Is. 55:7).

17:16 *Who am I* – This should be our response also, for the covenants of promise have been made with us too in that we are in Christ and they therefore concern us (Gal. 3:27-29). It was because David was truly humble that he could immediately respond in genuine humility to God’s promises to him; whereas Solomon became proud because of them. Note how “David *the king... sat* before Yahweh, and said, Who am I...?”. Grace produces quite different responses in different people; some it humbles, others misinterpret it to justify continuing in sin.

17:17 *Respected me according to the estate of a man of high degree* – This could be rendered: “You have seen me as a type of the man on high”. David understood himself as a type of Christ.

Your servant. ²⁷ Now it has pleased You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You; for You, Yahweh, have blessed, and it is blessed forever.

CHAPTER 18 Oct. 4

David's Prosperity

After this, it happened that David struck the Philistines and subdued them, and took Gath and its towns out of the hand of the Philistines. ² He struck Moab; and the Moabites became servants to David, and brought tribute. ³ David struck Hadadezer king of Zobah to Hamath, as he went to establish his dominion by the river Euphrates. ⁴ David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand horsemen and twenty thousand footmen; and David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them enough for one hundred chariots. ⁵ When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck of the Syrians twenty-two thousand men. ⁶ Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought tribute. Yahweh gave victory

to David wherever he went. ⁷ David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ From Tibhath and from Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took very much brass, with which Solomon made the bronze laver, the pillars and the vessels of brass. ⁹ When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had struck all the army of Hadadezer king of Zobah, ¹⁰ he sent Hadoram his son to king David to greet him and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and struck him (for Hadadezer had wars with Tou); and he had with him all kinds of vessels of gold and silver and brass. ¹¹ King David also dedicated these to Yahweh, with the silver and the gold that he carried away from all the nations; from Edom, Moab, the children of Ammon, the Philistines and from Amalek. ¹² Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah struck of the Edomites in the Valley of Salt eighteen thousand. ¹³ He put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became servants to David. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went. ¹⁴ David reigned over all Israel; and he ex-

18:1-3 After David received the promises about the future Messianic Kingdom, he went out and established his Kingdom, attacking Israel's enemies and driving them out of the land. Our response to the future Hope of the Kingdom, which we too have through the very same promises, should also be to try to live the Kingdom life now, as far as we can.

18:4 *But reserved of them for one hundred chariots* – The king of Israel was not supposed to multiply horses and chariots but rather trust in God (Dt. 17:16). David allowed himself a little weakness in this matter; and his son Solomon used it as an excuse to multiply so many horses and chariots that he had to build cities to store them in. The problem with allowing ourselves a 'little' sin is that sin by its nature spreads and multiplies, and is repeated in others for whom we are an example (like our children) to a far greater extent.

ecuted justice and righteousness to all his people. ¹⁵ Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁶ Zadok son of Ahitub and Abimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Shavsha was scribe; ¹⁷ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and the sons of David were chief around the king.

CHAPTER 19 Oct. 4

David's Conflict with Ammon

It happened after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his place. ² David said, I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. So David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him. ³ But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Do you think that David honours your father, in that he has sent comforters to you? Haven't his servants come to you to search, to overthrow, and to spy out the land? ⁴ So Hanun took David's servants, shaved them, cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks,

and sent them away. ⁵ Then there went certain persons and told David how the men were served. He sent to meet them; for the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return. ⁶ When the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent one thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Arammaacah, and out of Zobah. ⁷ So they hired for themselves thirty-two thousand chariots, and the king of Maacah and his people, who came and encamped before Medeba. The children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle. ⁸ When David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the army of the mighty men. ⁹ The children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the gate of the city. The kings who had come were by themselves in the field. ¹⁰ Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians. ¹¹ The rest of the people he committed into the hand of Abishai his brother; and

19:2 *I will show kindness to Hanun... because his father showed kindness to me* – Jesus in Lk. 6:32-34 may have this incident in mind when He taught that kindness to those who love us isn't at all the radical love and grace which He taught. Loving those who love us doesn't always work out well, as David's experience here shows.

19:4 Earlier in his life, David had had a similar experience with Nabal; he sent messengers to him, who were abused. But David at that time over-reacted, and was only saved from destruction by the wisdom of Nabal's wife Abigail (1 Sam. 25). There are times when God arranges for circumstances to repeat in our lives to test whether we have learnt a lesson, or to reinforce the lesson we learnt.

they put themselves in array against the children of Ammon. ¹² He said, If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you are to help me; but if the children of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will help you. ¹³ Be courageous, and let us be strong for our people, and for the cities of our God. May Yahweh do that which seems good to Him. ¹⁴ So Joab and the people who were with him drew near before the Syrians to the battle; and they fled before him. ¹⁵ When the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians had fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ When the Syrians saw that they were defeated by Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians who were beyond the River, with Shophach the captain of the army of Hadadezer at their head. ¹⁷ It was told David; and he gathered all Israel together, passed over the Jordan and came on them, and set the battle in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him. ¹⁸ The Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed of the Syr-

ians seven thousand charioteers, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the army. ¹⁹ When the servants of Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with David, and served him. From then on, the Syrians would not help the children of Ammon.

CHAPTER 20 Oct. 5

At the time of the return of the year, at the time when kings go out, Joab led forth the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. Joab struck Rabbah and overthrew it. ² David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it; and it was set on David's head; and he brought forth the spoil of the city, a great amount. ³ He brought forth the people who were therein, and cut them with saws, and with iron picks, and with axes. David did so to all the cities of the children of Ammon. David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

19:13 *May Yahweh do that which seems good to Him* – There is an element of predestination in our lives; but the fact that God will do His will shouldn't lead us to complacency nor resignation to fatalism, but rather to zeal to do His will as far as we can perceive it, knowing that He will bless the doing of His will. In Joab's case, understanding this led him to a zealous attempt to fight for the Lord, which God blessed with victory.

20:1 *But David stayed at Jerusalem* – 2 Sam. 11 fills in the significant detail that during this period, David had an affair with Bathsheba and arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed. Simple lesson: to properly understand the Bible we must read it all and compare it against itself in order to get the full picture.

20:3 This seems an unnecessarily cruel way of punishing enemies. This is the period in between David's sin with Bathsheba and his repentance. His own bad conscience

The Sons of the Giant Are Killed

⁴ After this, there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, of the sons of the giant; and they were subdued. ⁵ There was again war with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. ⁶ There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes were twenty-four, six on each hand, and six on each foot; and he also was born to the giant. ⁷ When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother killed him. ⁸ These were born to the giant in Gath; and

they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

CHAPTER 21 Oct. 5***David Numbers Israel***

Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. ² David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring me word, so that I may know the sum of them. ³ Joab said, May Yahweh make His people a hundred times as many as they are; but, my lord the king, aren't they all my lord's servants? Why does my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of guilt for Israel? ⁴ Nevertheless the king's word prevailed

with God led him to such excessive punishment of God's enemies. Psychologically, it's understandable; he realized he had sinned and deserved to be punished. But instead of confessing his sin and accepting the consequences as rightful and just, he psychologically transferred the sin onto others, and punished them instead of seeing himself punished. Judgmentalism and aggressive attitudes toward others often arise from a bad conscience within a person; the answer is to confess our sins to God, repent before Him and accept any consequences. We are thereby made free from the need to transfer sin and guilt onto others and judge them for our own sin.

20:5-8 These battles with giant Philistines have many similarities with David's victory over Goliath in 1 Sam. 17. His victory there inspired his men, just as Christ's victory on the cross ['Golgotha' = 'skull of Goliath'] should inspire us and be replicated by us in our spiritual struggles.

21:1 'Satan' is a Hebrew word meaning 'adversary'. It has no evil connotation of itself. The parallel 2 Sam. 24:1 says that God provoked David to number Israel. God therefore worked as a satan, an adversary, to David. Good people like Peter can be termed 'satan' (Mt. 16:21-23); the greatest adversary to us is our own internal tendency to sin. There's no sinful cosmic being called 'Satan'.

21:3 It wasn't a sin to take a census of the people, but each time they were numbered, they had to pay a tax to the tabernacle; if they refused, they would be plagued (Ex. 30:12-15). David's desire to know how many soldiers he had was a trusting in human strength. But it was also wrong in that Joab knew that the people likely wouldn't pay the tax, and therefore they would be plagued. David could've argued that this would be Israel's problem, not his, if they chose to be disobedient. But we ought to be sensitive to the likely spiritual failures of others and not lead them into sin by forcing them into positions where they have to take choices which they will probably fail in. God

against Joab. Therefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. ⁵ Joab gave up the sum of the numbering of the people to David. All those of Israel were one million one hundred thousand men who drew sword; and in Judah were four hundred and seventy thousand men who drew sword. ⁶ But he didn't count Levi and Benjamin among them; for the king's word was abominable to Joab. ⁷ God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel. ⁸ David said to God, I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, put away, I beg You, the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly. ⁹ Yahweh spoke to Gad, David's prophet, saying, ¹⁰ Go and speak to David saying, 'Thus says Yahweh, I offer you three things. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you'. ¹¹ So Gad came to David and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, 'Take your choice: ¹² either three years of famine; or three months to be consumed before your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you; or else three days' suffering the sword

of Yahweh, even plague in the land, and the angel of Yahweh destroying throughout all the borders of Israel'. Now therefore consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me. ¹³ David said to Gad, I am in distress. Let me fall, I pray, into the hand of Yahweh; for His mercies are very great. Let me not fall into the hand of man. ¹⁴ So Yahweh sent a plague on Israel; and seventy thousand men of Israel fell. ¹⁵ God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was about to destroy, Yahweh saw, and He relented of the disaster, and said to the destroying angel, It is enough; now stay your hand. The angel of Yahweh was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

David's Intercession for Israel

¹⁶ David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of Yahweh standing between earth and sky, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces. ¹⁷ David said to God, Isn't it I who commanded the people to be numbered? It is even

was angry with Israel and therefore He punished them (:7) – because they failed to pay the temple tax.

21:13 God is more merciful than people. This thought is a great encouragement when we at times worry as to whether God will be merciful to us at the last day. One factor in such fears is that we have only visibly known human mercy, but this is far inferior in quality and extent to God's grace.

21:15 *He relented* – God can change His planned judgments upon His people for the sake of the intercession of one faithful person who is willing to take their sin upon him; which is what David did in :16-:27. David pointed forward to Christ at this time.

21:17 David sinned only in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba (1 Kings 15:5); the people were punished by plague because they hadn't paid the tax required of them whenever a census was taken (Ex. 30:12-15). There are times when our conscience can smite us for things of which we are not fully guilty; but see on :3.

I who have sinned and done very wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand, O Yahweh my God, be against me, and against my father's house; but not against Your people, that they should be plagued. ¹⁸ Then the angel of Yahweh commanded Gad to tell David that David should go up, and make an altar to Yahweh in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁹ David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spoke in the name of Yahweh. ²⁰ Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons who were with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. ²¹ As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. ²² Then David said to Ornan, Give me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build thereon an altar to Yahweh. You shall sell it to me for the full price, that the plague may be stopped from afflicting the people. ²³ Ornan said to David, Take it for yourself, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes. Behold, I give the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meal offering. I give it all. ²⁴ King David said to Ornan, No; but I will most certainly buy it for the full price. For I will not take that which is yours for

Yahweh, nor offer a burnt offering without cost. ²⁵ So David gave to Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place. ²⁶ David built an altar to Yahweh there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on Yahweh; and He answered him from the sky by fire on the altar of burnt offering. ²⁷ Yahweh commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into its sheath. ²⁸ At that time, when David saw that Yahweh had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. ²⁹ For the tabernacle of Yahweh, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering, were at that time in the high place at Gibeon. ³⁰ But David couldn't go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 22 Oct. 6

David Prepares for the Temple

Then David said, This is the house of Yahweh God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel. ² David gave orders to gather together the foreigners who were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to cut worked stones to build God's house. ³ David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the couplings; and brass in abundance without weight; ⁴ and cedar trees without number; for

21:24 We shouldn't appear to make a sacrifice when actually it costs us nothing; e.g. to serve God in a way which naturally reinforces our natural interests and personality type. Sacrifice is to be after the pattern of Christ on the cross, and therefore has to involve real cost and pain for us; otherwise the concept of sacrifice loses any real meaning.

the Sidonians and Tyrians brought cedar trees in abundance to David.

⁵ David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for Yahweh must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all nations. I will therefore make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. ⁶ Then he called for Solomon his son, and commanded him to build a house for Yahweh, the God of Israel. ⁷ David said to Solomon his son, As for me, it was in my heart to build a house to the name of Yahweh my God. ⁸ But the word of Yahweh came to me saying, 'You have shed blood abundantly, and have made great wars. You shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight. ⁹ Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies all around; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. ¹⁰ He shall build a house for

My name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever'. ¹¹ Now, my son, may Yahweh be with you and prosper you, and build the house of Yahweh your God, as He has spoken concerning you. ¹² May Yahweh give you discretion and understanding, and put you in charge of Israel; that so you may keep the law of Yahweh your God. ¹³ Then you will prosper, if you observe to do the statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh gave Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed. ¹⁴ Now, behold, I have made a great effort in preparing for the house of Yahweh one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver, and brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance. I have also prepared timber and stone; and you may add to them. ¹⁵ There are also workmen with you in abundance, cutters and workers of stone and timber, and all kinds of men who are skilful in every kind of

22:8 Solomon slightly spins this when he tells Hiram that his father David hadn't himself had the time to get around to the job of building the temple because of being busy fighting wars (1 Kings 5:3). He says nothing about David shedding blood; the moral aspect of it all is nicely ignored by Solomon. But David in his turn appears to be twisting the promises to him given in 1 Chron. 17 and 2 Sam. 7. The house referred to was God's Kingdom, God's family of people; and the great son referred to was prophetic of Christ (Lk. 1:31-35). Indeed, God clarified that He didn't want man to build *Him* a temple, instead He wanted to build us up to be His house in Christ. One wonders therefore if God really did tell David that he couldn't build the temple because he had killed many people; and whether the building plans David claimed to have received from God were really from Him. All we have here is the record of David claiming God had told him that He did want a house built, but not by David because of his bloodshed. There are other Biblical examples of men assuming they know what God wants to the point of claiming that their hunch is in fact God's word (2 Sam. 7:3,4; 1 Kings 22:15-17).

work: ¹⁶ of the gold, silver, brass and iron, there is no number. Arise and be doing, and may Yahweh be with you. ¹⁷ David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, ¹⁸ Isn't Yahweh your God with you? Hasn't He given you rest on every side? For He has delivered the inhabitants of the land into my hand; and the land is subdued before Yahweh and before His people. ¹⁹ Now set your heart and your soul to seek after Yahweh your God. Arise therefore, and build the sanctuary of Yahweh God, to bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 23 Oct. 7

The Number and Genealogy of the Levites

Now David was old and full of days; and he made Solomon his son king over Israel. ² He gathered together all the princes of Is-

rael, with the priests and the Levites.

³ The Levites were numbered from thirty years old and over: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty-eight thousand. ⁴ David said, Of these, twenty-four thousand are to oversee the work of the house of Yahweh; six thousand are to be officers and judges; ⁵ four thousand are to be doorkeepers; and four thousand are to praise Yahweh with the instruments which I made for giving praise. ⁶ David divided them into divisions according to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ⁷ Of the Gershonites: Ladan and Shimei.

⁸ The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the chief, Zetham and Joel, three. ⁹ The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel and Haran, three. These were the heads of the fathers' households of Ladan.

¹⁰ The sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei. ¹¹ Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second: but Jeush and Beriah didn't have many

23:4 *To oversee the work of the house of Yahweh* – This system of arrangements in God's house would've been practically experienced by Solomon. He twice uses the Hebrew word translated "oversee" in Proverbs. He says that ants are self-motivated; they need no "guide, overseer or ruler" (Prov. 6:6,7). This seems a critique of the complex system of overseers which Solomon had to place over Israel in order to build the temple and build up the Kingdom. Ideally, he seems to be saying, every Israelite ought to be a zealous worker. Prov. 12:24 says the same: "The hand of the diligent [*whoever* he / she is] shall bear rule [in practice]" [s.w. Prov. 6:7 "ruler"]. And we must ask ourselves, whether for whatever reason the new Israel hasn't slumped into the same problem, of lack of self-motivation, waiting to be asked to do something before we do it, over-relying upon our "overseers". The ants aren't like this. They see the job to be done, and naturally get on with it.

Sanctified, that he should sanctify – This is alluded to in Jn. 17:17-19 where Jesus says that He sanctified Himself on the cross in order to sanctify us. Our sanctification is ultimately in order to do the same for others; because we are a Kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:5,6), the Levites are our pattern. Salvation and acceptance by God aren't given to us simply to personally enjoy, but so that we may serve others with them.

sons; therefore they combined to become a father's house. ¹² The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. ¹³ The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses; and Aaron was sanctified, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons, forever, to burn incense before Yahweh, to minister to Him, and to bless in His name, forever. ¹⁴ But as for Moses the man of God, his sons were named among the tribe of Levi. ¹⁵ The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer. ¹⁶ The sons of Gershom: Shebuel the chief. ¹⁷ The sons of Eliezer were: Rehabiah the chief. Eliezer had no other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. ¹⁸ The sons of Izhar: Shelomith the chief. ¹⁹ The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the chief, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. ²⁰ The sons of Uzziel: Micah the chief, and Isshiah the second. ²¹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. ²² Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters only; and their brothers the sons of Kish took them as wives. ²³ The sons of Mushi: Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three. ²⁴ These were the sons of Levi after their fathers' houses, even the heads of the fathers' houses of those who were counted individually, in the number of names by their polls, who did the work for the service of the house of Yahweh, from twenty years old and over. ²⁵ For David said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, has given rest to His people; and He dwells in Jerusalem forever. ²⁶ Also the Lev-

ites will no longer need to carry the tabernacle and all its vessels for its service. ²⁷ For by the last words of David the sons of Levi were numbered, from twenty years old and over. ²⁸ Their ministry was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of Yahweh, in the courts, and in the rooms, and in the purifying of all holy things, even the work of the service of God's house; ²⁹ for the showbread also, and for the fine flour for a meal offering, whether of unleavened wafers, or of that which is baked in the pan, or of that which is soaked, and for all kinds of measure and size. ³⁰ And to stand every morning to thank and praise Yahweh, and likewise in the evening; ³¹ and to offer all burnt offerings to Yahweh, on the Sabbaths, on the new moons, and on the set feasts, in number according to the ordinance concerning them, continually before Yahweh; ³² and that they should keep the duty of the Tent of Meeting, and the duty of the holy place, and the duty of the sons of Aaron their brothers, for the service of the house of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 24 Oct. 8

The Divisions of the Descendants of Aaron

These were the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron: Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ² But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. ³ David with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons

of Ithamar, divided them according to their ordering in their service.

⁴ There were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar. They were divided like this: of the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen, heads of fathers' houses; and of the sons of Ithamar, according to their fathers' houses, eight. ⁵ Thus were they divided impartially by drawing lots; for there were princes of the sanctuary, and princes of God, both of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar.

⁶ Shemaiah the son of Nethanel the scribe, who was of the Levites, wrote them in the presence of the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the heads of the fathers' households of the priests and of the Levites; one father's house being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar.

⁷ Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, ⁸ the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, ⁹ the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, ¹⁰ the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, ¹¹ the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, ¹² the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, ¹³ the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, ¹⁴ the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, ¹⁵ the seventeenth to Hezir,

the eighteenth to Happizzetz, ¹⁶ the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, ¹⁷ the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, ¹⁸ the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. ¹⁹ This was their ordering in their service, to come into the house of Yahweh according to the ordinance given to them by Aaron their father, as Yahweh, the God of Israel, had commanded him. ²⁰ Of the rest of the sons of Levi: of the sons of Amram, Shubael; of the sons of Shubael, Jehdeiah. ²¹ Of Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, Isshiah the chief. ²² Of the Izharites, Shelomoth; of the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath. ²³ The sons of Hebron: Jeriah, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. ²⁴ The sons of Uzziel, Micah; of the sons of Micah, Shamir. ²⁵ The brother of Micah, Isshiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah. ²⁶ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Jaaziah: Beno. ²⁷ The sons of Merari: of Jaaziah, Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri. ²⁸ Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons. ²⁹ Of Kish; the sons of Kish: Jerahmeel. ³⁰ The sons of Mushi: Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites after their fathers' houses. ³¹ These likewise cast lots even as their brothers the sons of

24:19 The 24 orders of priests are alluded to in the vision of the Heavenly court in Rev. 4:4; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4, where again there are 24 elders. God's people on earth are to reflect the system of their representative Angels in Heaven. But Israel tragically perverted this; in Ez. 8:16–18 we read of how the High Priest and the 24 elders worshipped idols within the temple. We on earth are not alone as we do God's work; we are part of a reflection on earth of the situation which is now in Heaven.

24:31 *These likewise* – Notice the stress on the equality of the priests and the irrel-

Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the heads of the fathers' households of the priests and of the Levites; the fathers' households of the chief even as those of his younger brother.

CHAPTER 25 Oct. 8

The Sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun

Moreover, David and the captains of the army set apart for the service certain of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments and cymbals. The number of those who did the work according to their service was: ² Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nathaniah and Ashareliah, the sons of Asaph, under the hand of Asaph, who prophesied after the order of the king. ³ Of Jeduthun; the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun with the harp, who prophesied in giving thanks and praising Yahweh. ⁴ Of Heman; the

sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir and Mahazioth. ⁵ All these were the sons of Heman the king's prophet of the words of God, to lift up the horn. God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. ⁶ All these were under the hands of their father for the singing ministry in the house of Yahweh, with cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, for the service of God's house: Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman being under the order of the king. ⁷ The number of them, with their brothers who were instructed in singing to Yahweh, even all who were skilful, was two hundred and eighty-eight. ⁸ They cast lots for their offices, all alike, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar. ⁹ Now the first lot of Asaph came forth to Joseph: the second to Gedaliah, he and his brothers and sons were twelve: ¹⁰ the third to Zaccur, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹¹ the fourth to Izri, his sons and

evance of their personal status (25:8; 26:12). We are the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,6). The greatness, urgency and very nature of the work before us as a community of believers ought to make worldly differences of status and age irrelevant.

25:2 The "sons" mentioned in these lists could include those who were taught by, e.g., Asaph; the students were understood as "sons" of the teacher (:8).

25:6 *The service of God's house* – The temple project became an obsession with Solomon; after his death, his people complained at the "grievous servitude" which Solomon had subjected them to (2 Chron. 10:4). But the Hebrew word "servitude" is that repeatedly used to describe the "service" of the temple by the people (here and 26:8,30; 27:26; 28:13-15,20,21; 29:7; 2 Chron. 8:14). Solomon became obsessed with making others 'serve God' when it was effectively serving him; he came to be abusive to God's people, when the initial idea of the temple was that it was to be built in order to help God's people serve Him. And such obsession, turning well motivated projects into means of personal ego tripping, with all the resultant abuse, has sadly not been unknown amongst the believers of our generation.

his brothers, twelve; ¹² the fifth to Nathaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹³ the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁴ the seventh to Jesharelah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁵ the eighth to Jeshaiiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁶ the ninth to Mattaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁷ the tenth to Shimei, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁸ the eleventh to Azarel, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁹ the twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁰ the thirteenth to Shubael, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²¹ the fourteenth, to Mattithiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²² the fifteenth to Jeremoth, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²³ the sixteenth to Hananiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁴ the seventeenth to Joshbekashah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁵ the eighteenth to Hanani, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁶ the nineteenth to Mallothi, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁷ the twentieth to Eliathah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁸ the twenty-first to Hothir, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁹ the twenty-second to Giddalti, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ³⁰ the

twenty-third to Mahazioth, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ³¹ the twenty-fourth to Romamti-Ezer, his sons and his brothers, twelve.

CHAPTER 26 Oct. 9

The Doorkeepers

For the divisions of the doorkeepers: of the Korahites, Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph. ² Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, ³ Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh. ⁴ Obed-Edom had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sacar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, ⁵ Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peul-lethai the eighth; for God blessed him. ⁶ Also to Shemaiah his son were sons born, who ruled over the house of their father; for they were mighty men of valour. ⁷ The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed and Elzabad, whose brothers were capable men, Elihu and Semachiah. ⁸ All these were of the sons of Obed-Edom: they and their sons and their brothers, able men in strength for the service; sixty-two of Obed-Edom.

26:4 *Obed-Edom... God blessed him* – Obed-Edom bravely had the ark stay in his home, when at the time all others thought that it would lead to the death of his family (2 Sam. 6:11,12). God blessed him for this – by giving him many children and grandchildren, 62 in all (:8). And yet Obed-Edom wasn't highly rewarded for this in human terms; his many children were doorkeepers in the temple, which Ps. 84:10 implies was seen as the lowest and least honourable work. There are times when we have to do what is right and disregard the fears of others in the ecclesia, even those of the leaders [cp. David]. Reward and honour for such faithfulness will not necessarily come in this life, nor should we expect it now, if our focus is upon the future Kingdom of God on earth as the time and arena for our reward.

⁹ Meshelemiah had sons and brothers, valiant men, eighteen. ¹⁰ Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons: Shimri the chief, (for though he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him chief), ¹¹ Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth. All the sons and brothers of Hosah were thirteen. ¹² Of these were the divisions of the doorkeepers, even of the chief men, having offices like their brothers, to minister in the house of Yahweh. ¹³ They cast lots, the small as well as the great, according to their fathers' houses, for each gate. ¹⁴ The lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son, a wise counsellor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward. ¹⁵ To Obed-Edom southward; and to his sons, the storehouse. ¹⁶ To Shuppim and Hosah, westward, by the gate of Shallecheth, at the causeway that goes up, watch against watch. ¹⁷ Eastward were six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and for the storehouse two and two. ¹⁸ For the colonnade on the west, four at the causeway, and two at the colonnade. ¹⁹ These were the

divisions of the doorkeepers; of the sons of the Korahites, and of the sons of Merari.

The Keepers of the Treasury

²⁰ Of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasures of God's house, and over the treasures of the dedicated things.

²¹ The sons of Ladan, the sons of the Gershonites belonging to Ladan, the heads of the fathers' households belonging to Ladan the Gershonite: Jehieli. ²² The sons of Jehieli: Zetham and Joel his brother were over the treasures of the house of Yahweh.

²³ Of the Amramites, of the Izharites, of the Hebronites, of the Uzzielites:

²⁴ and Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler over the treasures. ²⁵ His brothers: of Eliezer, Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiiah his son, Joram his son, Zichri his son and Shelomoth his son. ²⁶ This Shelomoth and his brothers were over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the heads of the fathers' households, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the army, had dedicated. ²⁷ They dedicated some of

26:26 *David... had dedicated* – God swore to David “by My holiness” (Ps. 89:35). The Hebrew for “holiness” is the same word translated “dedication”. David’s response to God’s dedication to him was to dedicate [s.w.] all the silver and gold which he had won from this world, to the service of God’s house (see too 1 Kings 7:51; 2 Chron. 5:1). Our response to God’s dedication to us should be a like dedication of what we have to Him. Covenant relationship with God requires much of both Him and us. The case of David is a nice illustration of the meaning of grace. David wanted to *do* something for God – build Him a house, spending his wealth to do so. God replied that no, He wanted to build *David* a house. And He started to, in the promises He gave David. And David’s response to that grace is to still *do* something – to dedicate his wealth to God’s house, as God had dedicated Himself to David’s house. This is just how grace and works should be related in our experience.

the spoil won in battles to repair the house of Yahweh. ²⁸ All that Samuel the seer, Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner and Joab the son of Zeruiah had dedicated, whoever had dedicated anything, it was under the hand of Shelomoth, and of his brothers.

Other Officials

²⁹ Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were for the outward business over Israel, for officers and judges. ³⁰ Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brothers, men of valour, one thousand seven hundred, had the oversight of Israel beyond the Jordan westward, for all the business of Yahweh, and for the service of the king. ³¹ Of the Hebronites was Jerijah the chief, even of the Hebronites, according to their generations by fathers' households. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valour at Jazer of Gilead. ³² His brothers, men of valour, were two thousand seven hundred, heads of fathers' households, whom king David made overseers over the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of the Manassites, for every matter pertaining to God, and for the affairs of the king.

CHAPTER 27 Oct. 10

The Monthly Battalions

Now the children of Israel after their number, the heads of fathers' households and the captains of thousands and of hundreds,

and their officers who served the king, in any matter of the divisions which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year — of every division were twenty-four thousand. ² Over the first division for the first month was Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ³ He was of the children of Perez, the chief of all the captains of the army for the first month. ⁴ Over the division of the second month was Dodai the Ahohite, and his division; and Mikloth the ruler; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁵ The third captain of the army for the third month was Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, chief; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁶ This is that Benaiah, who was the mighty man of the thirty, and over the thirty; and of his division was Ammizabad his son. ⁷ The fourth captain for the fourth month was Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁸ The fifth captain for this fifth month was Shamhuth the Izrahite; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁹ The sixth captain for the sixth month was Ira the son of Ikkesheh the Tekoite; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁰ The seventh captain for the seventh month was Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim; and in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹¹ The eighth captain for the eighth month was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zerahites; and in his division

were twenty-four thousand.¹² The ninth captain for the ninth month was Abiezer the Anathothite, of the Benjamites; and in his division were twenty-four thousand.¹³ The tenth captain for the tenth month was Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zerahites; and in his division were twenty-four thousand.¹⁴ The eleventh captain for the eleventh month was Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim; and in his division were twenty-four thousand.¹⁵ The twelfth captain for the twelfth month was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; and in his division were twenty-four thousand.

The Rulers of the Tribes

¹⁶ Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: of the Reubenites was Eliezer the son of Zichri the ruler: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maacah: ¹⁷ of Levi, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel: of Aaron, Zadok: ¹⁸ of Judah, Elihu, one of the brothers of David: of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael: ¹⁹ of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jeremoth the son of Azriel: ²⁰ of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah: ²¹ of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner: ²² of Dan, Azarel the son of Jeroham.

These were the captains of the tribes of Israel.²³ But David didn't take the number of them from twenty years old and under, because Yahweh had said He would increase Israel like the stars of the sky.²⁴ Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but didn't finish; and there came wrath for this upon Israel; neither was the number put into the account in the chronicles of king David.²⁵ Over the king's treasures was Azmaveth the son of Adiel. Over the treasures in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the towers, was Jonathan the son of Uziah.²⁶ Over those who did the work of the field for tillage of the ground was Ezri the son of Chelub.²⁷ And over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite. And over the increase of the vineyards for the winecellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite.²⁸ And over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that were in the lowland was Baal Hanan the Gederite. And over the cellars of oil was Joash.²⁹ And over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite. and over the herds that were in the valleys was Shaphat the son of Adlai.³⁰ And over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite. And over the donkeys was Jehdeiah the Meronothite. And over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite.³¹ All these were the rulers of the substance which was king David's.³² Also Jonathan, David's

27:23 There would've been nothing morally wrong with taking a census of Israel's young people, the next generation; but David believed in the promise that Abraham's seed would be many, and so he didn't. We can count every penny of our resources if we wish, but the higher level is to live in faith that God will fulfil His promise to provide for His people on their journey towards His Kingdom.

uncle, was a counsellor, a man of understanding, and a scribe. Jehiel the son of Hachmoni was with the king's sons.³³ Ahithophel was the king's counsellor. Hushai the Archite was the king's advisor;³⁴ and after Ahithophel was Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar. The captain of the king's army was Joab.

CHAPTER 28 Oct. 11

David Charges Solomon about the Temple

David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, the captains of the companies who served the king by division, the captains of thousands and hundreds, and the rulers over all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the officers and the mighty men, even all the mighty men of valour, to Jerusalem.² Then David the king stood up on his feet and said, Hear me, my brothers and my people! As for me, it was in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and for the footstool of our God; and I had

prepared for the building.³ But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name, because you are a man of war, and have shed blood'.⁴ However Yahweh, the God of Israel, chose me out of all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever. For He has chosen Judah to be prince; and in the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel.⁵ Of all my sons (for Yahweh has given me many sons), He has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of Yahweh's kingdom over Israel.⁶ He said to me, 'Solomon, your son, shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his father.⁷ I will establish his kingdom forever, if he continues to do My commandments and My ordinances as he does at this time'.⁸ Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of Yahweh, and in the audience of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of Yahweh your God; that you may possess this good

28:3-6 These words of David appear to be his claims as to what God had told him; but what he says here appears to be a mixture of God's actual words with some wishful thinking on his own part. The reasons God gave for not wanting David to build a temple are different to what David here claims God said, and clearly David was obsessed with justifying Solomon as his heir, even claiming that God had commanded Solomon to be king and to build the temple. David had lost his Christ-centeredness in his zeal to see his son become the major fulfilment of the promises to him in 2 Sam. 7. This desire to declare Solomon right and as God's man at all costs was very damaging for Solomon, for it led him to a loss of conscience, chronic selfishness and loss of faith in the end. See on :19.

28:8 *Seek out all the commandments of Yahweh* – If we love God, we will not have a minimalistic attitude to serving Him, doing as little as we can get away with. We will eagerly seek out how to please Him, what principles we should live by, what we should and should not do or be in order to please Him.

land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever. ⁹ You, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Yahweh searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. ¹⁰ Take heed now; for Yahweh has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary. Be strong, and do it.

David's Preparation for the Temple

¹¹ Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch of the temple, and of its houses, and of its treasuries, and of the upper rooms of it, and of the inner rooms of it, and of the place of the mercy seat; ¹² and the pattern of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of Yahweh, and for all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of God's house, and for the treasuries of the dedicated things; ¹³ also for the divisions of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Yahweh, and for all the vessels of service in the house of Yahweh; ¹⁴ of gold by weight for the gold, for all vessels of every kind of service; for all the vessels of silver by weight, for all vessels of every kind of service; ¹⁵ by weight also for the lampstands

of gold, and for its lamps, of gold, by weight for every lampstand and for its lamps; and for the lampstands of silver, by weight for every lampstand and for its lamps, according to the use of every lampstand; ¹⁶ and the gold by weight for the tables of show bread, for every table; and silver for the tables of silver; ¹⁷ and the forks, and the basins, and the cups, of pure gold; and for the golden bowls by weight for every bowl; and for the silver bowls by weight for every bowl; ¹⁸ and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot, the cherubim, that spread out, and covered the ark of the covenant of Yahweh. ¹⁹ All this, said David, I have been made to understand in writing from the hand of Yahweh, even all the works of this pattern. ²⁰ David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous, and do it. Don't be afraid, nor be dismayed; for Yahweh God, even my God, is with you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of Yahweh is finished. ²¹ Behold, there are the divisions of the priests and the Levites, for all the service of God's house. There shall be with you in all kinds of work every willing man who has skill, for any kind of service. Also the captains and all the people will be entirely at your command.

28:19 *This, said David, I have been made to understand in writing from the hand of Yahweh* – The implication could be that David was only claiming to have been given the temple plans from Yahweh (see on 28:3-6). David like many today mixed God's word with his own wishes and speculations, and ended up assuming that what he wished to be true was in fact God's word.

CHAPTER 29 Oct. 12***David Addresses Israel and They Respond Generously***

David the king said to all the assembly, Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great; for the palace is not for man, but for Yahweh God. ² Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, the brass for the things of brass, the iron for the things of iron and wood for the things of wood; onyx stones and stones to be set, stones for inlaid work and of various colours, all kinds of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. ³ In addition, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, since I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, I give it to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, ⁴ even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, with which to overlay the walls of the house; ⁵ of gold for the things of

gold, and of silver for the things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be made by the hands of artisans. Who then offers willingly to consecrate himself this day to Yahweh? ⁶ Then the princes of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly; ⁷ and they gave for the service of God's house five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, and of silver ten thousand talents, of brass eighteen thousand talents and of iron a hundred thousand talents. ⁸ They with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of Yahweh, under the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced, because they offered willingly, because with a complete heart they offered willingly to Yahweh: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy. ¹⁰ Therefore David blessed Yahweh before all the assembly; and David said, You are blessed, Yahweh, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, Yahweh, is the great-

29:1 *Whom alone God has chosen* – God hadn't said this, but David made his personal wishes and preferences to sound as if they were God's word; see on 28:3-6,19.

29:5 *To be made by the hands of artisans* – Solomon's temple is described as being made with hands. The word "made" is stressed in the record of Solomon's building the temple (2 Chron. 3:8,10,14-16; 4:1,2,6-9,14,18,19,21). The work of the temple was very much produced by men's *hands* (2 Chron. 2:7,8). 'Things made with hands' is a phrase referring to idols in several passages (e.g. Is. 2:8; 17:8; 31:7). And it may be significant that the words of Is. 66:1,2 concerning God not living in temples are quoted by Paul with reference to pagan temples in Acts 17:24, and concerning the temple in Jerusalem by Stephen. The building of the temple became an idol to Solomon, just as the service of God can be twisted by us into a form of self-worship.

29:6 David's generosity inspired his brethren to do the same; generosity to God's work is contagious.

ness, the power, the glory, the victory and the majesty! For all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, Yahweh, and You are exalted as head above all. ¹² Both riches and honour come from You, and You rule over all; in Your hand is power and might; it is in Your hand to make great, and to give strength to all. ¹³ Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. ¹⁴ But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own have we given You. ¹⁵ For we are strangers before You, and foreigners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no remaining. ¹⁶ Yahweh our God, all this store that we have prepared to build You

a house for Your holy name comes from Your hand, and is all Your own. ¹⁷ I know also, my God, that You try the heart, and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things. Now have I seen with joy Your people, that are present here, offer willingly to You. ¹⁸ Yahweh, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and prepare their heart for You. ¹⁹ Give to Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Your commandments, Your testimonies and Your statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for which I have made provision. ²⁰ David said to all the assembly, Now bless Yahweh your God!

29:14 *Of Your own have we given You* – We are not our own: how much less is ‘our’ money or time our own! Like David, we need to realize that all our giving is only a giving back to God of what we have been given by Him. The myth of materialism is the assumption that we are ultimate owners of what we ‘have’. Connected to this is David’s argument that we ought to be generous to God’s work because of our mortality (:15) – seeing we can take nothing with us, we should give it all to God. This is one outcome of believing that man is mortal and that we have no immortal soul which consciously survives death.

29:19 David earnestly prayed in Psalm 72 for Solomon to be the Messianic King, and therefore David asked for Solomon to be given a truly wise heart. These prayers were answered in a very limited sense – in that Solomon was given great wisdom, and his Kingdom was one of the greatest types of Christ’s future Kingdom. Thus our prayers for others really can have an effect upon them, otherwise there would be no point in the concept of praying for others. But each individual has an element of spiritual freewill; we can’t force others to be spiritual by our prayers; yet on the other hand, our prayers can influence their spirituality. David’s prayers for Solomon is an example of this. Those prayers were heard, in that God helped Solomon marvellously, giving him every opportunity to develop a superb spirituality; but he failed to have the genuine personal desire to be like this in his heart, in his heart he was back in Egypt, and therefore ultimately David’s desire for Solomon to be the wondrous Messianic King of his dreams had to go unfulfilled.

The Death of David

All the assembly blessed Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads and prostrated themselves before Yahweh and the king. ²¹ They sacrificed sacrifices to Yahweh, and offered burnt offerings to Yahweh, on the next day after that day, even one thousand bulls, one thousand rams and one thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel, ²² and ate and drink before Yahweh on that day with great gladness. They made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him to Yahweh to be prince, and Zadok to be priest. ²³ Then Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. ²⁴ All the princes, the mighty men, and also all the sons of king David submitted themselves to

Solomon the king. ²⁵ Yahweh magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. ²⁶ Now David the son of Jesse had reigned over all Israel. ²⁷ The time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ²⁸ He died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honour; and Solomon his son reigned in his place. ²⁹ Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the history of Samuel the seer, in the history of Nathan the prophet and in the history of Gad the seer, ³⁰ with accounts of all his reign and his might, and the circumstances which he and all Israel experienced, and those of all the kingdoms of the surrounding countries.

29:23 *Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh as king* – Note that the Kingdom of Israel was in fact God's Kingdom; the re-establishment of God's Kingdom on earth (Ez. 21:27; Acts 1:6) therefore requires that the arena of that Kingdom will likewise be here on earth – not in Heaven.

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

CHAPTER 1 Oct. 13

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and Yahweh his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly. ² Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every prince in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' households. ³ So Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the Tent of Meeting of God, which Moses the servant of Yahweh had made in the wilderness. ⁴ But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath Jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. ⁵ Moreover the bronze altar, that Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur had made, was there before the tabernacle of Yahweh; and Solomon

and the assembly were seeking counsel there. ⁶ Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before Yahweh which was at the Tent of Meeting and offered one thousand burnt offerings on it. ⁷ In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, Ask what I shall give you. ⁸ Solomon said to God, You have shown great grace to David my father, and have made me king in his place. ⁹ Now, Yahweh God, let your promise to David my father be established; for you have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. ¹⁰ Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this your people, that is so great? ¹¹ God said to Solomon, Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of those who hate you, neither yet have asked long life; but have asked

1:6 The Chronicles record is very positive compared to the accounts of Solomon in 1 Kings. But Solomon's many sacrifices must be compared with Mic. 6:7, which says that God isn't impressed by such "thousands" of sacrifices, but looks instead for humility, justice and kindness in a person. Solomon's father had likewise appreciated that the cattle on one thousand hills are God's and so we can't give Him anything materially which He doesn't have, but we can give Him our personalities and characters (Ps. 50:10). But Solomon thought that external generosity to God was what He wanted, and he ignored the spiritual sacrifices which are far more important to God.

1:10 'Going out and coming in' is an idiom for leadership. Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the future Kingdom which is to come at Christ's return).

wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge my people, over whom I have made you king: ¹² wisdom and knowledge is granted to you. I will give you riches, wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had who have been before you; neither shall there any after you have the like.

Solomon's Prosperity

¹³ So Solomon came from the high place that was at Gibeon, from before the Tent of Meeting, to Jerusalem; and he reigned over Israel. ¹⁴ Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had one thousand four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, that he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The king made silver and gold to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as abundant as the sycamore trees that are in the

lowland. ¹⁶ The horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt and from Kue; the king's merchants purchased them from Kue. ¹⁷ They brought out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred pieces of silver, and a horse for one hundred and fifty. They also brought them out for all the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of Syria.

CHAPTER 2 Oct. 13

Solomon Arranges Raw Materials for the Temple from Hiram

Now Solomon purposed to build a house for the name of Yahweh, and a house for his kingdom. ² Solomon counted out seventy thousand men to bear burdens, and eighty thousand men who were stone cutters in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred to oversee them. ³ Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre saying, As you dealt with David my father, and sent him cedars to build

1:11 We too can prefer wisdom over wealth when we decide to turn down a more demanding or a second job or course of education because we don't want to be left without time or heart for God's word.

1:16 *The king's merchants purchased them* – This was specific disobedience to Dt. 17:16, which taught that Israel's king shouldn't cause the people to go to Egypt to buy horses. And Solomon would have copied out this section of the law and memorized it (Dt. 17:18). This shows how we have a tendency to not only ignore God's word but actually to do exactly the opposite. Israel was strategically situated between Egypt and other nations, and so Solomon became a middleman for the horse and chariot trade (:17); but Israel were not to have horses and chariots themselves (Dt. 17:16). Inevitably, Solomon ended up keeping horses for himself because he was 'in the trade', and became obsessed with them. It's rather like a person dealing in alcohol becoming themselves an alcoholic; and in more subtle ways we too can fall for the goods of Egypt through wilful association with them and enabling others to enjoy them.

2:1 Solomon wanted to build two houses, one for God and another for himself. There was always a duality in Solomon's service, rather than a total commitment to God alone.

2:3-6 These words seem to smack of a false humility. He pompously informs Hiram of the magnificence of his project, lost in the manic obsession of the powerful architect,

him a house in which to dwell, so deal with me. ⁴ Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of Yahweh my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him incense of sweet spices, and for the continual showbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts of Yahweh our God. This is an ordinance forever to Israel. ⁵ The house which I build is great; for our God is great above all gods. ⁶ But who is able to build Him a house, since heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain Him? Who am I then, that I should build Him a house, except just to burn incense before Him? ⁷ Now therefore send me a man talented to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, purple, crimson and blue, and who knows how to produce engravings, to be with the talented men who are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father provided. ⁸ Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon; for I know that your servants know how to cut timber in

Lebanon. My servants shall be with your servants, ⁹ even to prepare me timber in abundance; for the house which I am about to build shall be great and wonderful. ¹⁰ Behold, I will give to your servants, the cutters who cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil. ¹¹ Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in a writing which he sent to Solomon, Because Yahweh loves His people, therefore He has made you king over them. ¹² Hiram continued, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel That made heaven and earth, Who has given to David the king a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, that should build a house for Yahweh, and a house for His kingdom. ¹³ Now I have sent a talented man endowed with understanding, of Hiram my fathers, ¹⁴ the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan; and his father was a man of Tyre, talented to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, timber, purple,

and then concludes: "Who am I then, that I should build (God) an house?". Confirmation of this is provided by the way in which Jer. 22:13-17 describes Jehoiakim's proud building of his own cedar house in the language of Solomon's building of the temple. We can serve God with pride, in which case it is an abomination. There's an obvious contradiction in Solomon's reasoning; if God is indeed so great that He doesn't dwell in human houses (Acts 7:48; 17:24), then why build Him a house? This was all false humility, draped, as it were, in out of context Biblical quotation and spiritual allusion.

2:5 *The house which I build is great* – The Hebrew word translated "great" is used again by Solomon at the end of his life when he lost his faith and looked back at how he had built "great" buildings (Ecc. 2:4) in a vain search for self-fulfilment which he ultimately found to be vanity. The lesson of Solomon is that we can serve God on a surface level whilst our heart is far from Him, and the works we do for Him are in fact only a living out of our vain search for self-fulfilment, rather than a total devotion to Him and His causes.

blue, fine linen and crimson, also to engrave any kind of engraving, and to devise any device. Let there be a place appointed to him with your talented men, and with the talented men of my lord David your father. ¹⁵ Now therefore the wheat and the barley, the oil and the wine, which my lord has spoken of, let him send to his servants; ¹⁶ and we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as you shall need. We will bring it to you in floats by sea to Joppa; and you shall carry it up to Jerusalem. ¹⁷ Solomon numbered all the foreigners who were in the land of Israel, after the numbering with which David his father had numbered them; and they were found one hundred and fifty-three thousand six hundred. ¹⁸ He set seventy thousand of them to bear burdens, and eighty thousand to be stone cutters in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred overseers to set the people to work.

CHAPTER 3 Oct. 14

The Dimensions and Specifications of the Temple

Then Solomon began to build the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where Yahweh appeared to David his father, which he prepared in the place that David

had appointed, in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ² He began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign. ³ Now these are the foundations which Solomon laid for the building of God's house. The length by cubits after the first measure was sixty cubits and the breadth twenty cubits. ⁴ The porch that was in front, its length, according to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and the height one hundred and twenty; and he overlaid it within with pure gold. ⁵ The greater house he made with a ceiling of fir wood which he overlaid with fine gold, and ornamented it with palm trees and chains. ⁶ He garnished the house with precious stones for beauty; and the gold was gold of Parvaim. ⁷ He overlaid also the house, the beams, the thresholds and its walls and its doors, with gold; and engraved cherubim on the walls. ⁸ He made the most holy place: its length, according to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and its breadth twenty cubits; and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents. ⁹ The weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He overlaid the upper rooms with gold. ¹⁰ In the most holy place he made two cherubim of wood; and

3:1 This implies David assumed that the spot where the Angel appeared to him in 2 Sam. 24:17,18 was where he should build the temple. But this could be one of several examples of David wildly over-interpreting in order to justify his obsession with his son building a temple.

Mount Moriah – This was where Abraham offered Isaac (Gen. 22:2), and it was near Jerusalem – further strengthening the connections between that offering and the sacrifice of Christ on a hill outside Jerusalem.

3:3 A cubit was the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.

they overlaid them with gold. ¹¹ The wings of the cherubim were twenty cubits long. The wing of the one was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub. ¹² The wing of the other cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was five cubits, joining to the wing of the other cherub. ¹³ The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, and their faces were toward the house. ¹⁴ He made the veil of blue, purple, crimson and fine linen, and decorated it with cherubim. ¹⁵ Also he made be-

fore the house two pillars of thirty-five cubits high, and the capital that was on the top of each of them was five cubits. ¹⁶ He made chains in the oracle, and put them on the tops of the pillars; and he made one hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains. ¹⁷ He set up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.

CHAPTER 4 Oct. 14

Details of the Temple Furniture

Then he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits in length, and

3:12 *Joining to the wing of the other cherub* – The cherubim totally covered the ark. In the Psalms, David reflects that the righteous dwell under the shadow of God's wings (Ps. 17:8; 36:7), as if we are located on the atonement cover which was on top of the ark, where the blood of atonement was sprinkled, which represented Christ's blood. Our covering by God's Angelic cherubim protection is therefore total and complete. But the cherubim described here aren't those which covered the ark; these covered the entire Most Holy Place. Likewise the constant theme of cherubim everywhere in the temple suggests that Solomon wished to expand the concept of the holiness and protection of the atonement cover to the entire temple. The temple represents all God's people; for we are His temple. The New Testament expands the theme further – the person of each individual believer is the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19). Each of us personally becomes as it were within the Most Holy Place and likewise constantly in God's most intense presence and covered by His wings.

4:1 Stephen says that David tried to find a *tabernacle* for God, "*But* Solomon built him an *house*. *Howbeit* the most High dwelleth *not* in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne... what house will ye build me?" (Acts 7:46-49 AV). This cannot mean 'God no longer dwells in the temple as He used to before Christ's death', because the reason given is that the prophet Isaiah says that God cannot live in houses. This reason was true in Isaiah's time, before the time of Christ. It would seem that Stephen is politely saying: 'Solomon made this mistake of thinking that God can be limited to a physical building. You're making just the same mistake'. And he goes on to make a comment which could well allude to this: "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers (including Solomon) did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51 AV). Further evidence that Stephen saw Solomon's building of the temple in a negative light is provided by the link between Acts 7:41 and 48: "They made a calf... and rejoiced in *the works of their own hands*... howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in

twenty cubits in breadth, and ten cubits in height. ² Also he made the molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass; and its height was five cubits; and a line of thirty cubits encircled it. ³ Under it was the likeness of oxen which encircled it for ten cubits, encircling the sea. The oxen were in two rows, cast when it was cast. ⁴ It stood on twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south and three looking toward the east. The sea was set on them above, and all their back parts were inward. ⁵ It was a handbreadth thick; and its brim was worked like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily. It received and held three thousand baths. ⁶ He made also ten basins, and put five on the right hand and five on the left, to wash in them. Such things as related to the burnt offering they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in. ⁷ He made the ten lampstands of gold according to the command concerning them; and he set them in the temple, five on the right hand and five on the left. ⁸ He made also ten tables, and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. He made one hundred basins of gold. ⁹ Furthermore he

made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid their doors with brass. ¹⁰ He set the sea on the right side of the house eastward, toward the south. ¹¹ Hiram made the pots, the shovels and the basins. So Hiram made an end of doing the work that he did for king Solomon in God's house: ¹² the two pillars, and the bowls, and the two capitals which were on the top of the pillars, and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars, ¹³ and the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks; two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. ¹⁴ He made also the bases, and the basins he made on the bases; ¹⁵ one sea, and the twelve oxen under it. ¹⁶ Hiram his father also made the pots, the shovels, the forks, and all its vessels for king Solomon for the house of Yahweh of bright brass. ¹⁷ The king cast them in the plain of the Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah. ¹⁸ Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance; for the weight of the brass could not be estimated. ¹⁹ Solomon made all the vessels that were in God's house, the golden altar also, and the tables

temples *made with hands*" (AV). The word "made" is stressed here in the record of Solomon's building the temple (3:8,10,14-16; 4:1,2,6-9,14,18,19,21). The work of the temple was very much produced by men's *hands* (2:7,8). Things made with hands refers to idols in several Old Testament passages (e.g. Is. 2:8; 17:8; 31:7). Significantly, Solomon's temple is described as being made with hands in 1 Chron. 29:5. The lesson ought to be clear: we can expend huge effort in apparently serving God when in fact we are only serving ourselves; and thus we can turn the supposed service of God into an idol.

with the showbread on them; ²⁰ and the lampstands with their lamps, to burn before the oracle according to the commandment, of pure gold; ²¹ and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, of gold (perfect gold); ²² and the snuffers, basins, spoons and fire pans, of pure gold. As for the entry of the house, the inner doors of it for the most holy place, and the doors of the main hall of the temple were of gold.

CHAPTER 5 Oct. 15

The Temple Is Dedicated with Praise

Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of Yahweh was finished. Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold, and all the vessels, and put them in the treasuries of the house of God. ² Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the fathers' households of the children of Israel, to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of

the covenant of Yahweh out of the city of David, which is Zion. ³ And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to the king at the feast, which was in the seventh month. ⁴ All the elders of Israel came. The Levites took up the ark; ⁵ and they brought up the ark, and the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent; these the priests the Levites brought up. ⁶ King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled to him, were before the ark, sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted nor numbered for multitude. ⁷ The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. ⁸ For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its poles. ⁹ The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen outside. It is there to this day. ¹⁰ There was nothing in

5:6 *Sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted* – Whilst the record here isn't specifically critical of Solomon, he failed to understand his father David's reflection that all the cattle on every hill are God's (Ps. 50:10) and therefore God doesn't so much as seek animal sacrifice from us as desire faith and a broken casting of ourselves upon God. David came to that understanding because his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba deserved death and there was no animal sacrifice which could take away that guilt – he had to throw himself upon God's grace and learn that the real sacrifice God sought was that of a broken, penitent heart (Ps. 51:16,17). Solomon didn't recognize his sins as David did, he didn't mess up so publically as David did, and therefore he failed to appreciate this, focussing instead on the external rather than the internal. It's amazing how God uses human sin and failure to teach us; those like Solomon who don't sin publically and don't recognize the weight of their private sins are often lead into the shallow, empty spirituality and surface level service of God which we see in Solomon at this time. See on 7:5.

5:8 *The cherubim covered the ark* – See on 3:12.

the ark except the two tables which Moses put in it at Horeb, when Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt.¹¹ The priests came out of the holy place, (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, and didn't keep their divisions;¹² also the Levites who were the singers, all of them, even Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and their brothers, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them one hundred twenty priests sounding with trumpets).¹³ The trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Yahweh; and they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Yahweh, saying, For He is good; for His loving kindness endures forever! Then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of

Yahweh,¹⁴ so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Yahweh filled God's house.

CHAPTER 6 Oct. 15

Solomon Addresses the People

Then Solomon said, Yahweh has said that He would dwell in the thick darkness.² But I have built You a house of habitation, and a place for You to dwell in forever.³ The king turned his face and blessed all the assembly of Israel; and all the assembly of Israel stood.⁴ He said, Blessed be Yahweh the God of Israel, Who spoke with His mouth to David my father and has with His hands fulfilled it saying,⁵ Since the day that I brought forth My people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that My name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over My people Israel.⁶ But I have chosen Jerusalem, that

6:2 *A place for You to dwell in forever* – This is one of several hints that Solomon felt that the full fulfilment of the Davidic promises was to be found in him (see on :10). He failed to look forward to the spirit of Christ, instead becoming obsessed with the achievement of his own works. He was largely encouraged in this by David, who seems to have felt that Solomon was the Messiah figure the promises spoke about. Thus Ps.72 is dedicated to Solomon, and yet it speaks clearly of the messianic Kingdom. David thus came to misquote and misapply the promises God made to him in his obsession about his own family, rather than seeing the promises as concerning the great spiritual family which would be built by Messiah. Solomon repeated his father's error. God had told David that He did not want a physical house, because He had never commanded this to be done at any time in the past. Solomon misquotes this in :5,6 to mean that God had never asked for a physical house in the past, but now He had asked David's son to build such a house in Jerusalem. This is a lesson to us all against misquoting and misapplying Scripture to justify how we would like things to be for us and our immediate family.

6:6. Solomon claims that God said: "But I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there". God had chosen no resting place, although it would have been po-

My name might be there; and have chosen David to be over My people Israel. ⁷ Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. ⁸ But Yahweh said to David my father, Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. ⁹ Nevertheless you shall not build the house; but your son who shall come forth out of your body, he shall build the house for My name. ¹⁰ Yahweh has performed His word that He spoke; for I have risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh promised, and have built the house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. ¹¹ Therein I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of Yahweh, which He made with the children of Israel.

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

¹² He stood before the altar of Yahweh in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands ¹³ (for Solomon had made a bronze

scaffold, five cubits long, five cubits broad and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and on it he stood, and kneeled down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven). ¹⁴ He said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is no God like You, in heaven or on earth; You Who keep covenant and loving kindness with Your servants who walk before You with all their heart; ¹⁵ Who has kept with Your servant David my father that which You promised him: yes, You spoke with Your mouth, and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. ¹⁶ Now therefore, Yahweh the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David my father that which You promised him saying, There shall not fail you a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children take heed to their way, to walk in My law as you have walked before Me. ¹⁷ Now therefore, Yahweh the God of Israel, let Your word be verified which You spoke to Your servant David. ¹⁸ But will God indeed dwell with men on

literally convenient for Solomon if Jerusalem as a city was where God had chosen to dwell. And so he kept thinking that way until he persuaded himself that in fact this was what God had said, and misquoted God's word to that end.

6:10 *Yahweh has performed His word that He spoke* – The promise to David about his great son building God's house was a promise of Messiah building a house in the sense of a spiritual family (Lk. 1:31-35). The promise was given in response to David's desire to build a physical house for God. But Solomon was too eager to see the prophecy fulfilled in him and before his eyes, and this lack of Christ-centeredness and focus on the future, ultimate Kingdom of God on earth led him astray.

6:12, 13 The record emphasizes how Solomon prayed in front of everyone and showed his apparent humility before all. Christ's teaching condemning such behaviour may well allude to Solomon's failures in these things (Mt. 6:6).

6:18 These fine words contradict what Solomon just said in :2, that he was building a house where God *would* dwell, and would do so, he claimed, "for ever". This is all

the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain You; how much less this house which I have built! ¹⁹ Yet have respect for the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, Yahweh my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You; ²⁰ that Your eyes may be open toward this house day and night, even toward the place where you have said that You would put Your name; to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place. ²¹ Listen to the petitions of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they shall pray toward this place. Yes, hear from Your dwelling place, even from heaven; and when You hear, forgive. ²² If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath is laid on him to cause him to swear, and he comes and swears before your altar in this house; ²³ then hear from heaven, and do, and judge your servants, bringing retribution to the wicked, to bring his way on his own head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness. ²⁴ If Your people Israel be struck down before

the enemy because they have sinned against You, and shall turn again and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this house; ²⁵ then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land which You gave to them and to their fathers. ²⁶ When the sky is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You; if they pray toward this place, and confess Your name and turn from their sin, when You afflict them; ²⁷ then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, when You teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land, which You have given to Your people for an inheritance. ²⁸ If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is; ²⁹ whatever prayer and supplication be made by any man, or by all Your people Israel who shall know every man his own plague and his own sorrow of heart,

therefore false humility, which is something every spiritual person must ever be on their guard against.

6:20 *Pray toward this place* – Prayer should've been directed toward God, but Solomon gave in to the human tendency to want a buffer between God and man, just as Israel didn't want to hear God speaking directly with them. Popular religion has pandered to this tendency through hierarchical systems of priesthood etc., but God has always revealed Himself as thirsting for relationship with man and therefore is eager for the most direct form of contact with us which our humanity permits. This is supremely enabled for those who are by status "in Christ" who can come directly to God because of Christ's achievement for us.

6:24 *Turn again and confess Your name* – God's Name refers to the declaration of His characteristics (Ex. 34:4-6). Repentance involves a recognition both of our wrongness, and God's rightness. See on 12:6.

and shall spread forth his hands toward this house; ³⁰ then hear from heaven Your dwelling place and forgive, and render to each man according to all his ways, whose heart You know; (for You, even You only, know the hearts of the children of men;) ³¹ that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways, so long as they live in the land which You gave to our fathers. ³² Moreover concerning the foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, when he shall come from a far country for Your great name's sake and because of Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm; when they shall come and pray toward this house; ³³ then hear from heaven,

even from Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to You for; that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as does Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name. ³⁴ If Your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to You toward this city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for your name; ³⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their supplication, and uphold their case. ³⁶ If they sin against You (for there is no man who sins not) and You are angry with

6:30 *Render to every man according to all his ways* – This will happen when Christ returns at the final day of judgment (Rev. 22:12). And yet it is said to happen in response to prayer now. When we pray, we come before God's throne; the experience of prayer is therefore a foretaste of the day of judgment. As we feel toward the Lord now when we are in His presence in prayer, so we will then.

6:33 Solomon speaks as if the heavens where God lived were actually the temple; he bid men pray towards the temple where God lived, rather than to God in Heaven. Yet theoretically he recognized the magnitude of God (:18); yet the vastness of God, both in power and spirituality, meant little to him; it failed to humble him as it should have done. It is a feature of human nature to be able to perceive truth and yet act the very opposite. His enthusiasm for his own works lead him to lose a true relationship with God. The idea of salvation by grace became lost on him, loving response to God's forgiveness was not on his agenda, he felt true humility was unnecessary for him, given his certainty that he was King as God intended.

6:35 *Uphold their case* – The crises encountered by God's people on earth are as it were considered by the court of Heaven, with God acting as both the advocate and judge, upholding their case. But this is if we bring our case before Him in prayer. This is why simply telling God the situation we're in, although He knows it in the sense that He knows all things, is so necessary.

6:36 Solomon is alluding in this verse to God's threatened punishments for Israel if they totally rebelled against Him. But Solomon seems to minimize that sin by describing it as if it's inevitable – "for there is no man who sins not". God set before Israel the blessings for obedience and abiding in the covenant, and the curses for disobedience and breaking covenant with God, which included being scattered amongst the Gentiles and losing their land. And Solomon minimizes such serious rebellion as something ordinary. This minimizing of sin is what led him to spiritual self-destruction.

them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive to a land far off or near; ³⁷ yet if they shall repent themselves in the land where they are carried captive, and turn again, and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity saying, We have sinned, we have done perversely, and have dealt wickedly; ³⁸ if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity to where they have carried them captive, and pray toward their land which You gave to their fathers and to the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name: ³⁹ then hear from heaven, even from Your dwelling place, their prayer and their petitions, and uphold their case and forgive Your people who have sinned against You. ⁴⁰ Now, my God, let, I beg You, Your eyes be open, and let Your ears be attentive, to the prayer that is made in this place. ⁴¹ Now therefore arise, Yahweh God, into Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength: let Your priests, Yahweh God, be clothed with salvation, and let Your saints rejoice in goodness. ⁴² Yahweh God, don't turn

away the face of Your anointed. Remember Your graces to David Your servant.

CHAPTER 7 Oct. 16

God Accepts the Temple

Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Yahweh filled the house. ² The priests could not enter into the house of Yahweh, because the glory of Yahweh filled Yahweh's house. ³ All the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of Yahweh was on the house; and they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshipped and gave thanks to Yahweh saying, For He is good; for His grace endures for ever. ⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before Yahweh. ⁵ King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated God's house. ⁶ The priests stood, according to their positions; the Levites also with instruments

7:1 Although God had clearly told David that He didn't want a physical house built for Him, He made a concession to Israel's weakness as He did in allowing them to have a human king – and worked through that concession, that lower level of spiritual life which His people had chosen. Such is His thirst for relationship with us His people. Therefore His glory filled the temple as a sign that despite Solomon's pompous prayer of chapter 6, He was willing to accept that system of temple presence.

7:5 These huge numbers of animal sacrifices weren't really what God was looking for; each animal represented the dedication of one person, and we cannot dedicate other people's devotion; they must themselves offer it. The fact Solomon's animal sacrifices were too many or too large to fit on the altar God had designed and specified the size of (:7) indicates that they weren't what God had intended. See on 5:6.

of music of Yahweh, which David the king had made to give thanks to Yahweh, when David praised by their ministry saying, For His grace endures forever. The priests sounded trumpets before them; and all Israel stood. ⁷ Moreover Solomon made the middle of the court holy that was before the house of Yahweh; for there he offered the burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offering, and the meal offering, and the fat. ⁸ So Solomon held the feast at that time seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. ⁹ On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly; for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast

seven days. ¹⁰ On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the grace that Yahweh had shown to David, and to Solomon, and to Israel His people. ¹¹ Thus Solomon finished the house of Yahweh, and the king's house. He successfully completed all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of Yahweh, and in his own house.

God Responds to Solomon's Prayer

¹² Yahweh appeared to Solomon by night and said to him, I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice. ¹³ If I shut up the sky so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send plague among My people; ¹⁴ if My

7:11 *The house of Yahweh, and in his own house* – Twice in this verse and often elsewhere we see God's house paralleled with Solomon's house. His dedication to God's house wasn't total and undivided.

7:12 2 God accepted the temple only as a place of sacrifice, i.e. a glorified altar (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17,18). And yet – God didn't really want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5). It was a concession to weakness.

7:14 Solomon in his prayer had said that if Israel sinned and then prayed toward the temple, God would then forgive them. But God corrects this; He wants sinners to pray directly to Him, and He will forgive them – the temple was not to be seen as the instrument or mediatrix of forgiveness which Solomon envisaged. Likewise, Solomon's implication that prayer offered in the temple would be especially acceptable was not upheld by God's reply to him about this (6:24-26 cp. 7:12,13). Again and again we see that God thirsts for direct relationship with Him, rather than via any system of priesthood or human religion, even attending meetings because that's our social club and family background. Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "My people who are called by My name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees *them* as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in :21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even

people who are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. ¹⁵ Now My eyes shall be open and My ears sensitive to the prayer that is made in this place. ¹⁶ For now have I chosen and made this house holy, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually. ¹⁷ As for you, if you will walk before Me as David your father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances; ¹⁸ then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, according as I covenanted with David your father saying, There shall not fail you a man to be ruler in Israel. ¹⁹ But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and

serve other gods, and worship them; ²⁰ then I will pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them; and this house, which I have made holy for My name, I will cast out of My sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ²¹ This house, which is so high, everyone who passes by it shall be astonished, and shall say, ‘Why has Yahweh done thus to this land, and to this house?’ ²² They shall answer, ‘Because they abandoned Yahweh, the God of their fathers, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and took other gods, worshipped them, and served them. Therefore He has brought all this evil on them’.

CHAPTER 8 Oct. 17

Solomon's Building Projects

It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the house of Yahweh and his own

if the people were punished. The lesson is that it's individual people rather than religious structures, of whatever sort, which God is interested in.

7:16 This is a conditional promise, followed by five verses of conditions concerning Solomon's spirituality which he overlooked. Like Solomon, we too can fix upon promises without considering their conditionality. There is good reason to think that communally and individually we so easily shut our eyes to the possibility of our spiritual failure and disaster, the sense of the future we might miss. God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9).

7:20 God here corrects Solomon's idea that if Israel were dispersed, then the temple would still stand and they could pray to it from their dispersion.

8:1 *Solomon had built the house of Yahweh and his own house* – Again Solomon's building of God's house is paralleled with building his own house, implying his dedication to God's house wasn't wholehearted, unlike David his father. This chapter goes on to use the word “built” many times. Solomon's building of God's house is set within the context of the way he liked building anyway. At the end of his life, he admits that he went through a phase of being obsessed with building, in some vain search to

house,² that the cities which Hiram had given to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.³ Solomon went to Hamath Zobah, and prevailed against it.⁴ He built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the storage cities which he built in Hamath.⁵ Also he built Beth Horon the upper, and Beth Horon the lower, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars;⁶ and Baalath, and all the storage cities that Solomon had, and all the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.⁷ As for all the people who were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel;⁸ of their children who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel didn't consume, of them Solomon conscripted forced labour to this day.⁹ But of the children of Israel, Solomon made no servants for his work; but they were men of war, and chief of his captains,

and rulers of his chariots and of his horsemen.¹⁰ These were the chief officers of king Solomon, even two-hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people.¹¹ Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David to the house that he had built for her; for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places where the ark of Yahweh has come are holy.¹² Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to Yahweh on the altar of Yahweh, which he had built before the porch,¹³ even as the duty of every day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the Sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts, three times in the year, in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tents.¹⁴ He appointed, according to the ordinance of David his father, the divisions of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their offices, to praise, and to minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required; the doorkeepers also by their divisions at every gate; for so had David the man of God

find self-fulfilment without God (Ecc. 2:4). In his apparently zealous building of the temple, Solomon was therefore only serving God in ways which he enjoyed, which reinforced his own personality type. Hence :6 speaks of how he "desired to build for *his* pleasure". On one hand, we must use our God-given talents to serve Him; and yet on the other, we are asked to take up Christ's cross and follow Him, going right against the grain of how we would naturally like to be.

8:6 Solomon had so many horses and chariots that he needed to build cities to store them. This was a specific disobedience to the command that the king of Israel was not to multiply horses to himself (Dt. 17:16). Yet that was the very section of the Law which he had to copy out and remember (Dt. 17:19). He had the ability, like all of us, to know God's requirements and yet do the very opposite. He must've assumed that somehow he was an exception... but if we accept and love God's principles we will not wish to make ourselves any exception to them.

commanded. ¹⁵ They didn't depart from the commandment of the king to the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures. ¹⁶ Now all the work of Solomon was prepared to the day of the foundation of the house of Yahweh, and until it was finished. So the house of Yahweh was completed. ¹⁷ Then went Solomon to Ezion Geber, and to Elath, on the seashore in the land of Edom. ¹⁸ Huram sent him ships and servants who had knowledge of the sea by the hands of his servants; and they came with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and fetched from there four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon.

CHAPTER 9 Oct. 18

The Visit of the Queen of Sheba

When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to prove Solomon with hard questions, with a very great train, and camels that bore spices, and gold in abundance and precious stones. When she had come to Solomon, she talked with

him of all that was in her heart. ² Solomon told her all her questions; and there was not anything hidden from Solomon which he didn't tell her. ³ When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, ⁴ and the food of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their clothing, his cup bearers also and their clothing, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of Yahweh; there was no more spirit in her. ⁵ She said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your acts and of your wisdom. ⁶ However I didn't believe their words until I came, and my eyes had seen it; and behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom wasn't told me: you exceed the fame that I heard. ⁷ Happy are your men, and happy are these your servants who stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom. ⁸ Blessed be Yahweh your God, who delighted in you to set you on His throne, to be king for Yahweh your God: because your God loved Israel to establish them forever, therefore He made you

9:5 *No more spirit in her*— The Hebrew word translated “spirit” has a wide range of meaning. It can refer to the life force within people; or as here, it can refer to the mind.

9:6 People usually need to see intellectual truths lived out in practice before they will really believe them. This is why the Gospel is more powerfully taught by people, rather than through impersonal mediums like the internet or reading books.

9:8 *To be king for Yahweh your God* – Israel were God's Kingdom on earth, and their kings were reigning on God's behalf. The Kingdom was therefore overturned when the last king of Israel was deposed; but it will be re-established at Christ's return (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:6). The hope of the coming Kingdom of God on earth is therefore the hope of the re-establishment of God's Kingdom which once was upon earth. Again we see that the promised Kingdom will be on earth – this is the Biblical hope, not going to Heaven on death.

king over them, to do justice and righteousness. ⁹ She gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, and spices in great abundance, and precious stones. Neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. ¹⁰ The servants also of Hiram, and the servants of Solomon, who brought gold from Ophir, brought alnum trees and precious stones. ¹¹ The king made of the alnum trees terraces for the house of Yahweh and for the king's house, and harps and stringed instruments for the singers. There were none like these seen before in the land of Judah. ¹² King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides that which she had brought to the king. So she returned to her own land, she and her servants.

Solomon's Wealth

¹³ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was

six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, ¹⁴ besides that which the traders and merchants brought. All the kings of Arabia and the governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. ¹⁵ King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of beaten gold went to one large shield. ¹⁶ He made three hundred other shields of beaten gold; three hundred shekels of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. ¹⁷ Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. ¹⁸ And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on either side by the place of the seat, and two lions standing beside the stays. ¹⁹ Twelve lions stood there on both sides of the six steps: there was nothing like it made in any kingdom.

²⁰ All king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels

9:13 The reference to 666 cannot be coincidental; this is the number of a man who is the epitome of "the beast" (Rev. 13:18). There are many other similarities between the descriptions of the beast's kingdom and that of Solomon's kingdom. And yet his kingdom was clearly a type of Christ's kingdom. We see in this the terrible duality possible within human beings; and we see how what may appear very spiritual and wonderful on the surface can in fact be very sinful. This is true of both individuals and communities.

9:19 Solomon came to see his throne as the throne of God; he seemed to think that the promise to David that Messiah would sit on his throne could be fulfilled if he built the most amazing throne ever seen in the world. He made 12 lions to stand on either side of his throne, perhaps in imitation of how the Angels were perceived to be on either side of God's throne (1 Kings 22:19). He was indeed sitting on the throne of the Lord as king over Israel, but in the sense that he was reigning on God's behalf; for God was Israel's true king. Solomon seems to have thought that he himself was some kind of God over Israel. And the lesson for us is to perceive ourselves as God's servants and representatives, but not to take this to the extent that we think that all of our actions are thereby justified as somehow Divinely sanctioned. The end result was that Solo-

of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. Silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. ²¹ For the king had ships that went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram; once every three years came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. ²² So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. ²³ All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. ²⁴ They brought each man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and clothing, armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. ²⁵ Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen that he stationed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. ²⁶ He ruled over all the kings from the River even to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. ²⁷ The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars to be as the sycamore trees that are in the lowland, for abun-

dance. ²⁸ They brought horses for Solomon out of Egypt, and out of all lands. ²⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, aren't they written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat? ³⁰ Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. ³¹ Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father. Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 10 Oct. 19

The Division of the Kingdom

Rehoboam went to Shechem; for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ² When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of king Solomon), then Jeroboam returned out of Egypt. ³ They sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam saying, ⁴ Your father made our yoke grievous. Now therefore make lighter the grievous

mon lost sight of the future Kingdom – and we too will likewise lose our way if we *de facto* consider our little kingdoms to effectively be God's Kingdom.

9:23 Solomon had God's wisdom throughout his apostasy (Ecc. 2:9), as the Truth ever remains with us in intellectual terms. God put that wisdom in his heart in order for him to help others, both in Israel and in the world; yet Solomon failed to realize that he needed to apply it to himself. The more truth passes through our lips to others, the stronger we are tempted to not apply it to ourselves personally.

10:4 The temple project became an obsession with Solomon; after his death, his people complained at the "grievous service" which Solomon had subjected them to. But the Hebrew word translated "service" is that repeatedly used to describe the "service" of the temple by the people (1 Chron. 25:6; 26:8,30; 27:26; 28:13-15,20,21; 29:7; 2 Chron. 8:14). Solomon became obsessed with making others 'serve God' when it was effectively serving *him*; he came to be abusive to God's people, when the initial idea of the temple was that it was to be built in order to help God's people serve Him. And

service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you. ⁵ He said to them, Come again to me after three days. The people departed. ⁶ King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men who had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What advice do you give me to return answer to this people? ⁷ They spoke to him saying, 'If you are kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever'. ⁸ But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. ⁹ He said to them, What advice do you give, that we may return answer to this people who have spoken to me saying, 'Make the yoke that your father put on us lighter?' ¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him spoke to him saying, Thus you shall tell the people who spoke to you saying, Your father made our yoke heavy, but make it lighter on us; thus you shall say to them, My little finger is thicker than

my father's waist. ¹¹ Now whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. ¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king asked, saying, Come to me again the third day. ¹³ The king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the advice of the old men, ¹⁴ and spoke to them after the advice of the young men saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. ¹⁵ So the king didn't listen to the people; for it was brought about of God, that Yahweh might establish His word, which He spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. ¹⁶ When all Israel saw that the king didn't listen to them, the people answered the king saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse! Every man to your tents, Israel! Now see to your own house, David. So all Israel departed to their tents. ¹⁷ But as for the

such obsession, turning well motivated projects into means of personal ego tripping, with all the resultant abuse, has sadly damaged so many within the body of Christ. Jesus invited people who were heavily burdened under a hard yoke to come to Him and have that yoke made lighter (Mt. 11:29,30). He was clearly alluding to this incident, where heavily burdened people 'came' seeking a lighter yoke.

10:10 Younger people are often harsher than older ones, and therefore make good soldiers in wars of aggression, both literal and figurative. As we grow older we ought to become softer and the more influenced by God's grace, rather than growing hard and gnarled as some do.

10:15 *It was brought about of God* – Rehoboam's response to the people seems obviously wrong and unwise. Yet this error of judgment was worked through by God to fulfil His prophetic word. Whilst we have freewill, God confirms us in the attitudes and choices which we make.

children of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. ¹⁸ Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the men subject to forced labour; and the children of Israel stoned him to death with stones. King Rehoboam made speed to get himself up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day.

CHAPTER 11 Oct. 19

Rehoboam Begins Well

When Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. ² But the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah the man of God saying, ³ Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin saying, ⁴ Thus says Yahweh, ‘You shall not go up nor fight against your brothers! Return every man to his house; for this thing is of Me’. So they listened to the words

of Yahweh, and returned from going against Jeroboam. ⁵ Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah. ⁶ He built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, ⁷ Beth Zur, Soco, Adullam, ⁸ Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, ⁹ Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, ¹⁰ Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin, fortified cities. ¹¹ He fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of food, and oil and wine. ¹² He put shields and spears in every city, and made them exceedingly strong. Judah and Benjamin belonged to him. ¹³ The priests and the Levites who were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their border. ¹⁴ For the Levites left their suburbs and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons cast them off, that they should not execute the priests’ office to Yahweh. ¹⁵ He appointed priests for the high places, and for the male goats, and for the calves which he had made. ¹⁶ After them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek Yahweh, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice

11:4 *So they listened to the words of Yahweh* – This is very commendable. When we’ve prepared to do something on a major scale, turning back from the project because we perceive God’s word to teach otherwise is a hard thing to do. But this must be the power of God’s word in our lives. Any war of aggression against our brethren just has to be wrong; and we as the Israel of God should bear this always in mind regardless of what provocation we receive from our brethren.

11:14 Despite Jeroboam being so apostate from the true God, the ten tribes are still called the “brothers” of Judah (:4). No matter how far some go from the Lord or His truth, once a brother always a brother. Once a person is within the family of God through baptism into Christ, it is not for us to ever say in this life that they are no longer in that family.

11:16 In times when the children of God turn away from Him, the faithful minority will go to great lengths to meet with others who are still faithful; and it may even

to Yahweh, the God of their fathers.¹⁷ So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years; for they walked three years in the way of David and Solomon.¹⁸ Rehoboam took him a wife, Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David and of Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse.¹⁹ She bore him sons: Jeush, and Shemariah, and Zaham.²⁰ After her he took Maacah the daughter of Absalom. She bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith.²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines. (He took eighteen wives, and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.)²² Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maacah to be chief, the prince among his brothers; for he intended to make him king.²³ He dealt wisely, and settled some of his sons throughout all the lands of Judah and

Benjamin, to every fortified city: and he gave them food in abundance. He sought for them many wives.

CHAPTER 12 Oct. 20

The Invasion of Shishak

When the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and he had made himself strong, he forsook the law of Yahweh, and all Israel with him.² It happened in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had trespassed against Yahweh,³ with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen. The people were without number who came with him out of Egypt: the Lubim, the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians.⁴ He took the fortified cities which pertained to Judah and came to Jerusalem.⁵ Now Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, Thus

require our geographical relocation, with all the economic costs associated with that (:13).

11:18 This implies that David married his own niece. There were many anomalies in David's life, especially in his personal relationships; and yet God accepted him and spoke so highly of him. This isn't to justify any sin or complacent attitude in ourselves personally; but to encourage us in the hard work of being patiently acceptive of those who have similar anomalies in their lives.

11:21 *Eighteen wives, and sixty concubines* – The weakness of Solomon his father was repeated in Solomon's son. Justifying sin and worldly behaviour inevitably influences our children to think such behaviour is acceptable. And in their turn, Solomon's son sought to lead *his* children into failure in this area of polygamy (:23).

12:1 *Made himself strong* – The Hebrew word translated “strong” is *hezek*. Good king Hezekiah had the same word within his name, but with ‘Yah’ added on the end – ‘the one made strong by Yah’. Human strength and prowess is the very opposite to God's strength. We wonder why we don't always have all we want – wealth, health, acceptance, good relationships, praise of men, nice homes and vehicles... but it's not surprising really, because human strength nearly always leads us away from God.

says Yahweh, You have forsaken Me, therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. ⁶ Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, Yahweh is righteous. ⁷ When Yahweh saw that they humbled themselves, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them; but I will grant them some deliverance. My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. ⁸ Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. ⁹ So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house. He took it all away. He also took away the shields of gold which Solomon had made. ¹⁰ King Rehoboam made in their place shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard who kept the door of the king's house. ¹¹ It was so, that as often as the king entered into the house of Yahweh, the guard came and carried them back into the guard room. ¹² When he humbled himself, the wrath of Yahweh turned from him, so as not to destroy him altogether. Moreover, in Judah there were good

things found. ¹³ So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. ¹⁴ He did that which was evil, because he didn't set his heart to seek Yahweh. ¹⁵ Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, aren't they written in the histories of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, after the way of genealogies? There were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. ¹⁶ Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David; and Abijah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 13 Oct. 20

Abijah's Reign

In the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. ² He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. ³ Abijah joined battle with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men. Jeroboam set the battle in array against him with eight

12:6 *Yahweh is righteous* – Repentance involves not only a recognition of our wrongness, but of God's rightness. See on 6:24.

12:8 *They shall be his servants, that they may know My service* – Sometimes God teaches us how to relate to Him by putting us in situations where we simply have to be obedient to some human entity or person. In this way we can serve our worldly masters in our employment as if we are serving Christ (Col. 3:22-24; it seems Paul there is alluding to the LXX here).

hundred thousand chosen men, who were mighty men of valour. ⁴ Abijah stood up on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel. ⁵ Ought you not to know that Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? ⁶ Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up, and rebelled against his lord. ⁷ There were gathered to him vain men, base fellows, who strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them. ⁸ Now you think to withstand the kingdom of Yahweh in the hand of the sons of David. You are a great multitude, and there are with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods. ⁹ Haven't you driven out the priests of Yahweh, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and

made priests for yourselves after the ways of the peoples of other lands? So that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, the same may be a priest of those who are not gods. ¹⁰ But as for us, Yahweh is our God, and we have not forsaken Him. We have priests ministering to Yahweh, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites in their work: ¹¹ and they burn to Yahweh every morning and every evening burnt offerings and sweet incense. They also set the showbread in order on the pure table; and the lampstand of gold with its lamps, to burn every evening. We keep the instruction of Yahweh our God; but you have forsaken Him. ¹² Behold, God is with us at our head, and His priests with the trumpets of alarm to sound an alarm against you. Children of Israel, don't fight against Yahweh, the God of your fathers; for you shall not prosper. ¹³ But Jeroboam caused an ambush to come about behind them:

13:7 *When Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them* – This was an exaggeration, because he was 41 when he became king (12:13). We can so easily justify the sins and weakness of others whom we perceive as being 'on our side', trying to reduce everything to a simplistic black and white view of the world, whereby people are either wonderfully good or totally bad (:11). Reality is far different – we only have to realistically analyze our own lives and personalities.

13:12 *Don't fight against Yahweh* – It seems Abijah was assuming that he was as it were in the place of God. He had picked a fight with Jeroboam (:3), but then realized he was outnumbered and wanted a way out – and so he starts claiming how righteous Judah are (:10-12) even though they were rebellious against God from the day He knew them (Is. 65:2; Ez. 16:20) and were worshipping idols (14:3). He also starts playing God, by assuming that his enemy is God's enemy. Therefore God brought Judah's strong men into a situation where they were about to be destroyed, and had to throw themselves upon His grace (:14).

13:13 This was exactly the situation which the Gentile people of Ai were in as described in Josh. 8:21,22. They were caught in an ambush and hemmed in on all sides. Judah who thought they were so superior spiritually were being taught they were no better than Gentiles who had to be cast out by God.

so they were before Judah, and the ambush was behind them. ¹⁴ When Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind them; and they cried to Yahweh, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. ¹⁵ Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened, that God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶ The children of Israel fled before Judah; and God delivered them into their hand. ¹⁷ Abijah and his people killed them with a great slaughter; so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. ¹⁸ Thus the children of Israel were overcome at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on Yahweh, the God of their fathers. ¹⁹ Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him: Bethel with its suburbs, Jeshanah with its suburbs and Ephron with its suburbs. ²⁰ Jeroboam didn't recover strength again in the days of Abijah. Yahweh struck him, and he died. ²¹ But Abijah grew mighty, and took to himself fourteen wives, and became the father of twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters. ²² The rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his sayings, are written in the commentary of the prophet Iddo.

CHAPTER 14 Oct. 21

King Asa Begins Well

So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of

David; and Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land was quiet ten years. ² Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his God. ³ He took away the foreign altars, and the high places, and broke down the pillars, and cut down the Asherim, ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and to obey the law and the commandment. ⁵ Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the sun images. The kingdom was quiet before him. ⁶ He built fortified cities in Judah; for the land was quiet, and he had no war in those years, because Yahweh had given him rest. ⁷ For he said to Judah, Let us build these cities, and make walls around them, with towers, gates, and bars. The land is yet before us, because we have sought Yahweh our God. We have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered. ⁸ Asa had an army that carried shields and spears: out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bore shields and drew bows, two hundred and eighty thousand. All these were mighty men of valour. ⁹ There came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an army of a million troops, and three hundred chariots; and he came to Mareshah. ¹⁰ Then Asa went out to meet him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. ¹¹ Asa cried to Yahweh his God and said, Yahweh, there

14:3 This shows that the previous king's claim to such great spirituality in Judah was hypocritical; see on 13:12.

14:11 *Him who has no strength* – All Asa's human strength he considered as non-

is none apart from You to help, between the mighty and him who has no strength. Help us, Yahweh our God; for we rely on You, and in Your name are we come against this multitude. Yahweh, You are our God. Don't let man prevail against You. ¹² So Yahweh struck the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. ¹³ Asa and the people who were with him pursued them to Gerar. There fell of the Ethiopians so many that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before Yahweh and before His army; and they carried away very much booty. ¹⁴ They struck all the cities around Gerar; for the fear of Yahweh came on them. They despoiled all the cities; for there was much spoil in them. ¹⁵ They struck also the tents of the herdsmen, and carried away sheep in abundance, and camels, and returned to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 15 Oct. 21

Asa's Dedication to God

The Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded: ² and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, Hear me, Asa, and all Judah

and Benjamin! Yahweh is with you, while you are with Him; and if you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. ³ Now for a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. ⁴ But when in their distress they turned to Yahweh the God of Israel and sought Him, He was found by them. ⁵ In those times there was no peace to him who went out, nor to him who came in; but great troubles were on all the inhabitants of the lands. ⁶ They were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God troubled them with all adversity. ⁷ But you be strong, and don't let your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded. ⁸ When Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill country of Ephraim; and he renewed the altar of Yahweh that was before the porch of Yahweh. ⁹ He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who lived with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh,

existent. He had learnt the lesson of 12:3 [see note there]; that the *only* strength is in God. God brought Asa to this realization by putting him in a situation where he was hopelessly outnumbered, just as He tried to teach Abijah in 13:12. We see God working to a pattern in these men's lives, just as He does with us. He puts us in situations which are quite beyond our own strength – and then makes a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:8; 8:3). This not only strengthens our faith for the next crisis we face, but awes us into an appropriate humility.

15:8 *And put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah* – But 14:3 says that Asa did this at the start of his reign. Whenever we root out weakness from our lives, it tends to return. The records of Judah's kings are full of such accounts of purging out the idols – and then we read the same again soon afterwards. The tendency to idol worship was and is very strong.

and out of Simeon; for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Yahweh his God was with him. ¹⁰ So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. ¹¹ They sacrificed to Yahweh in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep. ¹² They entered into the covenant to seek Yahweh the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul; ¹³ and that whoever would not seek Yahweh the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. ¹⁴ They swore to Yahweh with a loud voice, and with shouting, trumpets and cornets. ¹⁵ All Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them: and Yahweh gave them rest all around. ¹⁶ Also Maacah, the mother of Asa the king,

he removed from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah. Asa cut down her image, and made dust of it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron. ¹⁷ But the high places were not taken away out of Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days. ¹⁸ He brought into God's house the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. ¹⁹ There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

CHAPTER 16 Oct. 22

Asa Falls Away from God

In the thirty sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not allow anyone to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ² Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of Yahweh and of the king's house, and sent to Ben Hadad king of Syria,

15:9 The faithful in the 10 tribes relocated to be near the believers in Judah. We should make every effort to fellowship with other believers, even if it may mean relocating.

15:15 *All Judah rejoiced at the oath* – Joy comes from full dedication to God; indeed true joy can come from nothing else.

Sought Him... and He was found – Christ's invitation to seek knowing that we shall find is in the context of His teaching that whatever we ask for in prayer will be given; if we knock, the door will be opened (Mt. 7:7; Lk. 11:9). However, this isn't a blank cheque offer to give us whatever we wish; rather is it teaching that if we pray to find God, if we really seek relationship with Him – we will find it, and thereby all other requests and needs in our lives will appear far less significant.

16:2 By giving the wealth of the temple to Ben Hadad, Asa was acting as if it was his personal wealth, to spend as he wished. But those things had been given or dedicated to God; if you give somebody something, it's theirs and no longer yours. Although God was invisible to Asa, it's as if He was sitting there in that temple with His silver and gold – which had been given to Him in thanks for what He had done for His people. And then Asa walks up to God and takes that silver and gold right from His presence and gives it to a pagan idolater whom he considers a better defence against

who lived at Damascus saying, ³ Let there be a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you silver and gold. Go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. ⁴ Ben Hadad listened to king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they struck Ijon, and Dan, and Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali. ⁵ It happened, when Baasha heard of it, that he left off building Ramah, and let his work cease. ⁶ Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and its timber, with which Baasha had built; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

⁷ At that time Hanani the seer of visions came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on Yahweh your God, therefore is the army of the king of Syria escaped out of your hand. ⁸ Weren't the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge army, with exceeding many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on Yahweh, He delivered them into your hand. ⁹ For the eyes of Yahweh run back and forth throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein you have done foolishly; for from henceforth you shall have wars. ¹⁰ Then Asa was angry with the seer

enemies than God. The more we sense the presence of God, the more we perceive His total ownership. What we dedicate to God is His, it's not for us to 'play God' by then taking it back and acting as if it's ours. And we are asked to dedicate our whole lives to God.

16:3 *Let there be a covenant* – Asa's covenant or treaty with Yahweh in 15:12,13 demanded total dedication to Him; he should therefore have trusted in Yahweh rather than now making another covenant with a pagan king. Covenant relationship with God is all demanding, as Asa had said at the time; we can't be in covenant with more than one God.

16:8 God gave Asa a test of faith when He sent a huge army against him earlier; and Asa passed the test. But like any good teacher, God repeats the circumstances in our lives; and sometimes like Asa we may do well in one test, but fail when it is repeated. God gave Asa more such wars (:9) – not simply as a punishment, but so he would learn the lesson of trusting in God and not men against our enemies.

16:9 These "eyes of Yahweh" refer to the Angels. If we ask how, mechanically, as it were, God sees and knows all things, the answer is perhaps 'Through His Angels'. Their activity is amazing; because their work is invisible to us, we may get the impression at times that God is somehow silent and inactive. But the colossal network of Angelic work on earth is constantly humming with activity – for our sakes (Heb. 1:14).

16:10 *Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time* – In our deepest conscience, we know when we sin; even if we don't consciously recognize every sin. We also realize that sin must be punished. When we sin but don't confess that sin, or if we refuse to accept the punishment for sin, we have a tendency to subconsciously transfer that sin onto others and punish them for it. This is why religious people can be capable of the greatest hypocrisies and inconsistencies, punishing others for the very sins which

of visions, and put him in the prison; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. ¹¹ Behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ¹² In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet. His disease was exceeding great; yet in his disease he didn't turn to Yahweh, but to the physicians. ¹³ Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the forty-first year of his reign. ¹⁴ They buried him in his own tombs, which he had dug out for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art; and they made a very great burning for him.

CHAPTER 17 Oct. 22

Jehoshaphat Strengthens Judah Spiritually

Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel. ² He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken. ³ Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and didn't seek the Baals, ⁴ but sought to the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not after the

doings of Israel. ⁵ Therefore Yahweh established the kingdom in his hand. All Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honour in abundance. ⁶ His heart was lifted up in the ways of Yahweh. Furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherim out of Judah. ⁷ Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; ⁸ and with them the Levites, even Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tobadonijah the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. ⁹ They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Yahweh with them. They went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people. ¹⁰ The fear of Yahweh fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. ¹¹ Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute. The Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams, and seven thousand seven hundred male goats. ¹² Jehoshaphat grew great exceedingly; and he built in Judah fortified and store cities. ¹³ He had many works in the cities of Judah; and men of war, mighty men of valour, in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ This was the numbering of them

they commit, or falsely accusing others of committing the sins they commit and then eagerly punishing them for them. Asa's bad conscience at this time is reflected in how he treated others.

17:3 *In the first ways of his father David* – Does this imply that David became less spiritually committed as he got older?

according to their fathers' houses. Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand; ¹⁵ and next to him Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and eighty thousand; ¹⁶ and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to Yahweh; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour. ¹⁷ Of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield; ¹⁸ and next to him Jehozabad; and with him one hundred and eighty thousand prepared for war. ¹⁹ These were those who waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

CHAPTER 18 Oct. 23

Jehoshaphat Makes a Wrong Alliance with Ahab

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance; and he joined affinity with Ahab. ² After certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. Ahab killed sheep and cattle for him in abundance, and for the people who were with him, and moved him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead. ³ Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Ju-

dah, Will you go with me to Ramoth Gilead? He answered him, I am as you are, and my people as your people. We will be with you in the war. ⁴ Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Please inquire first for the word of Yahweh. ⁵ Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, Shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I desist? They said, Go up; for God will deliver it into the hand of the king. ⁶ But Jehoshaphat said, Isn't there here a prophet of Yahweh besides, that we may inquire of him? ⁷ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Yahweh; but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla. Jehoshaphat said, Don't let the king say so. ⁸ Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, Get Micaiah the son of Imla quickly. ⁹ Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, arrayed in their robes. They were sitting in an open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. ¹⁰ Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'With these you shall push the Syrians,

18:1 This chapter shows how Jehoshaphat was wrong to make this alliance with Ahab; our covenant with Yahweh precludes any other covenant. Ahab was one of God's people, but clearly his faith in Yahweh was weak and he had surrounded himself with false prophets who claimed that whatever Ahab wanted to be true was in fact the word of Yahweh (:4-7). Even within those who are externally the children of God, we must be careful whom we choose to closely associate with; for not all are seriously interested in following God's word.

until they are consumed'. ¹¹ All the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; for Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king. ¹² The messenger who went to call Micaiah spoke to him saying, Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth. Let your word therefore, please be like one of theirs, and speak good. ¹³ Micaiah said, As Yahweh lives, what my God says, that will I speak. ¹⁴ When he had come to the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I desist? He said, Go up, and prosper. They shall be delivered into your hand. ¹⁵ The king said to him, How many times shall I adjure you that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of Yahweh? ¹⁶ He said, I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. Yahweh said, These have no master. Let them return every man to his house in peace. ¹⁷ The king of Israel said to

Jehoshaphat, Didn't I tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?

Micaiah's Vision of Angels

¹⁸ Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of Yahweh: I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, and all the army of heaven standing on His right hand and on His left. ¹⁹ Yahweh said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? One spoke saying this way, and another saying that way. ²⁰ A spirit came out, stood before Yahweh and said, I will entice him. Yahweh said to him, How? ²¹ He said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. He said, You will entice him, and will prevail also. Go forth, and do so. ²² Now therefore, behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets; and Yahweh has spoken evil concerning you. ²³ Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and struck Micaiah on the

18:14 Considering Micaiah had already seen the vision of :18-21, this was a significant failure of his. In some contexts, we all have a tendency to quickly perceive and then say what we think the other person wants us to say. The fact we know God's word means that we are now bound not to do that, but to speak according to how His word has influenced us.

18:18-21 We have here a unique insight into how the court of Heaven operates. God states His plan, but the Angels discuss how they will operationalize it. The "spirit" in :20 refers to an Angel – for God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4). One Angel had the idea that Ahab's false prophets could be moved to prophesy to him a false prophesy about going to Ramoth Gilead, where he would die. God liked that idea, perhaps because it was an appropriate way to punish Ahab for his rejection of the true prophets. That Angel was empowered to bring that about, and went out from the court of Heaven to do it. God confirms people in the way they wish to go, and He can do this through leading them into mindsets and theological understandings which are false (2 Thess. 2:11). The amazing thing is that God is holding case conferences about us in Heaven, with Angels discussing how best to bring about God's will in our lives.

cheek, and said, Which way did the spirit of Yahweh go from me to speak to you? ²⁴ Micaiah said, Behold, you shall see on that day, when you shall go into an inner room to hide yourself. ²⁵ The king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son. ²⁶ Say, 'Thus says the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace'. ²⁷ Micaiah said, If you return at all in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me. He said, Listen, you peoples, all of you!

The Battle at Ramoth Gilead

²⁸ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. ²⁹ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but you put on your robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went into the battle. ³⁰ Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots saying, Fight neither with small nor great, except only with the king of Israel. ³¹ It happened that when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, It is the king of Israel! Therefore

they turned around to fight against him. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and Yahweh helped him; and God moved them to depart from him. ³² It happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. ³³ A certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the armour. Therefore he said to the driver of the chariot, Turn your hand, and carry me out of the army; for I am severely wounded. ³⁴ The battle increased that day. However the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot against the Syrians until the evening. About the time of the going down of the sun, he died.

CHAPTER 19 Oct. 23

Jehoshaphat Reforms Judah

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. ² Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Should you help the wicked, and love those who hate Yahweh? Because of this, wrath is on you from before Yahweh. ³ Nevertheless there are good things found in you, in that you have put away Asheroth out of the land, and

19:2 *Love those who hate Yahweh* – We can imagine how Jehoshaphat would've justified the alliance he made with Ahab in 18:1,2 – 'We both serve the same God... believe more or less the same things... face a common enemy...' But God's wrath was upon Jehoshaphat for saying this. Ahab's refusal to hear Yahweh's word in 18:4-17 was counted as hating Yahweh.

19:3 *Nevertheless* – God didn't reject Jehoshaphat because of his failure in one area in one period of life; He saw the bigger picture. When one aspect of another believer's failure is extremely difficult for us to tolerate, we too need to see this bigger picture and think of the other areas of their lives where they are spiritual.

have set your heart to seek God.

⁴ Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. He went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to Yahweh, the God of their fathers.

⁵ He set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, ⁶ and said to the judges, Consider what you do. You don't judge for man, but for Yahweh; and He is with you in the judgment. ⁷ Now therefore let the fear of Yahweh be upon you. Be careful and do so; for there is no iniquity with Yahweh our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes. ⁸ Moreover in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed Levites and priests, and of the heads of the fathers' households of Israel, for the judgment of Yahweh, and for controversies. They returned to Jerusalem.

⁹ He commanded them saying, Thus you shall do in the fear of Yahweh, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

¹⁰ Whenever any controversy shall come to you from your brothers who dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances, you shall warn them, that they not be guilty towards Yahweh, and so wrath come on you and on your brothers. Do this, and you shall not be guilty.

¹¹ Behold, Amariah the chief priest

is over you in all matters of Yahweh; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters. The Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and may Yahweh be with the good.

CHAPTER 20 Oct. 24

Jehoshaphat Prays to God for Deliverance

It happened after this that the children of Ammon, and the children of Moab, and with them some of the other Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. ² Then some came who told Jehoshaphat saying, A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea from Syria. Behold, they are in Hazazon Tamar (that is, En Gedi). ³ Jehoshaphat was alarmed, and set himself to seek to Yahweh. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ Judah gathered themselves together to seek help from Yahweh. They came out of all the cities of Judah to seek Yahweh. ⁵ Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of Yahweh, before the new court; ⁶ and he said, Yahweh, the God of our fathers, aren't You God in heaven? Aren't You ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand, so that

19:10 *Between blood and blood* – Perhaps a reference to controversies about revenge-ing bloodshed, alluding to Dt. 17:8.

20:2 A great multitude is coming – Jehoshaphat was expected to have learnt the lesson from Asa's experience when hugely outnumbered (16:8), and it seems he did. The whole purpose of Biblical history is for *our* sakes, that we might learn from the experiences of others who in essence were in our situation – and be strengthened, warned and encouraged (Rom. 15:4).

no one is able to stand against You. ⁷ Didn't You, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and give it to the seed of Abraham Your friend forever?

⁸ They lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name saying, ⁹ If evil comes on us—the sword, judgment, plague or famine—we will stand before this house and before You, (for Your name is in this house), and cry to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.

¹⁰ Now, consider the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned aside from them, and didn't destroy them. ¹¹ See how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. ¹² Our God, will You not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do, but our eyes are toward You. ¹³ All Judah stood before Yahweh, with their little ones, their wives and their children.

Judah Win the Battle without Fighting

¹⁴ Then the Spirit of Yahweh came on Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, the Levite, of the sons of

Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.

¹⁵ He said, Listen, all Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, king Jehoshaphat. Thus says Yahweh to you, 'Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they are coming up by the ascent of Ziz. You shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not need to fight this battle. Set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid, nor be dismayed. Go out against them tomorrow, for Yahweh is with you'. ¹⁸ Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before Yahweh, worshipping Yahweh. ¹⁹ The Levites, of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites, stood up to praise Yahweh, the God of Israel, with an exceeding loud voice.

²⁰ They rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa. As they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Listen to me, Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in Yahweh your God, so you shall be established! Believe His prophets, so you shall prosper. ²¹ When he had taken counsel

20:12 *God, will You not judge them?* – Jehoshaphat like David in the Psalms saw the crises of life as a foretaste of the final judgment; he stated the situation before God in detail (:10) and felt his prayer was a coming before God's throne of judgment. Our prayers likewise come before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16); our feelings toward God in prayer now are as they will be in essence at the final judgment.

20:21 There is a strong theme of praise; and praise is something one does to their God

with the people, he appointed those who should sing to Yahweh and give praise in holy array, as they went out before the army, and say, Give thanks to Yahweh; for His grace endures forever. ²² When they began to sing and to praise, Yahweh set ambushers against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were struck. ²³ For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to kill and destroy them. When they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, each one helped to destroy another. ²⁴ When Judah came to the place overlooking the wilderness, they looked at the multitude which were now dead bodies fallen to the earth, and there were none who escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them in abundance both riches and dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. ²⁶ On the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Beracah; for there they blessed Yahweh. Therefore the name of that place is called The valley of Beracah

to this day. ²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in their forefront, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for Yahweh had made them to rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ They came to Jerusalem with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets to the house of Yahweh. ²⁹ The fear of God was on all the kingdoms of the countries, when they heard that Yahweh fought against the enemies of Israel.

Jehoshaphat's Last Years

³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest all around. ³¹ Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: he was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ³² He walked in the way of Asa his father, and didn't turn aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh. ³³ However the high places were not taken away; neither as yet had the people set their hearts to the God of their fathers. ³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they are written in the history of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is inserted in the book of the kings of Israel. ³⁵ After this, Je-

after a victory, not *before* it. Humanly, they must have feared that they were being asked to trust in mere words. Yet Jehoshaphat praised God for the assurance of victory as if it had already happened; and his battle plan was hardly humanly wise. He sent out ahead of his troops a group of priests who were praising God for the victory. Such faith is all about adopting God's perspective, who speaks of things which are not yet as if they are, so sure is His word of promise of fulfilment (Rom. 4:17).

20:35 *Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel* – When he earlier joined himself with a king of Israel, he nearly lost his life and was rebuked

hoshaphat king of Judah joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly. ³⁶ He joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish; and they made the ships in Ezion Geber. ³⁷ Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, Because you have joined yourself with Ahaziah, Yahweh has destroyed your works. The ships were broken, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

CHAPTER 21 Oct. 25

The Bad Reign of Jehoram

Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and Jehoram his son reigned in his place. ² He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah,

Michael and Shephatiah. All these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. ³ Their father gave them great gifts, of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fortified cities in Judah; but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he was the first-born. ⁴ Now when Jehoram was risen up over the kingdom of his father, and had strengthened himself, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and various also of the princes of Israel. ⁵ Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab as wife: and he did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. ⁷ However Yahweh would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant

for it severely in 19:2. We too can deal with a situation in the wrong way, repent for doing so, and then the essence of the situation is repeated in another context – and again we fail. And yet although at the end of his life, Jehoshaphat failed in this matter, he was on balance reckoned as righteous (:32). This shouldn't lead us to think that some aspects of human behaviour don't matter and we can 'get away' with them. But it helps us in not rejecting brothers or sisters who clearly have weakness in one point of their lives at some period of their spiritual journey, even if as with Jehoshaphat it's right at the end of their lives when we might expect more spiritual maturity from them. We will all come to the end of our journeys with some incomplete spirituality, and we should show others the same grace God shows us.

21:6 Jehoshaphat his father had been rebuked for his alliance with Ahab (19:2) and had continued to fail in making alliances with the rulers of Israel (see on 20:35). The result of this was that although he himself was righteous, his son committed failure in the same area but went much further to the point of becoming totally sinful and being rejected by God. The problem with sin and permitting ourselves weaknesses is that our children and others will likely commit the same weaknesses but take them much further; the mother who gets drunk once a year on her birthday shouldn't be surprised if her son becomes alcoholic.

For he had the daughter of Ahab as wife – The history of the kings often stresses the huge influence of women upon a man, especially his wife or mother. Women at that time were considered mere chattels, but the Biblical record grants them human dignity and significance, and stresses their huge influence especially in spiritual matters.

that He had made with David, and as He promised to give a lamp to him and to his children always.⁸ In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.⁹ Then Jehoram passed over with his captains, and all his chariots with him. He rose up by night, and struck the Edomites who surrounded him, along with the captains of the chariots.¹⁰ So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time from under his hand, because he had forsaken Yahweh, the God of his fathers.¹¹ Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the prostitute, and led Judah astray.¹² A letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says Yahweh, the God of David your father, ‘You have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,¹³ but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the prostitute like the house of Ahab did, and also have slain your brothers of your father’s house, who

were better than yourself.¹⁴ Therefore, Yahweh will strike with a great plague your people and your children and your wives, and all your substance;¹⁵ and you shall have great sickness by disease of your bowels, until your bowels fall out by reason of the sickness, day by day’.

Jehoram’s Punishments

¹⁶ Yahweh stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians who are beside the Ethiopians.¹⁷ They came up against Judah and broke into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king’s house, and his sons also and his wives; so that there was no son left him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.¹⁸ After all this Yahweh struck him in his bowels with an incurable disease.¹⁹ It happened, in process of time, at the end of two years, that his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, and he died of severe diseases. His people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers.²⁰ Thirty-two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He departed without being de-

21:12 This incident is well after the time when Elijah had ascended into the sky at the close of his public ministry. It seems that Elijah was simply taken up into the sky and put down somewhere else, which is why his servants went out looking for him; it was done in this dramatic public manner to indicate to all that his public ministry had come to an end. But it seems that he returned to earth and continued a more discrete ministry, as this incident demonstrates. The Bible doesn’t teach that we go to Heaven at death; Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead and given eternal life, and all the faithful will receive eternity together at the day of judgment when Christ returns.

21:16 God is able to work directly on the mind or “spirit” of people, according to His will. We should therefore eagerly ask Him to work on our spirit / mind to make it holy; for the human mind is the ultimate arena of our spiritual warfare.

sired; and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

CHAPTER 22 Oct. 25

Ahaziah Reigns One Year

The inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his place; for the band of men who came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the older ones. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. ² Forty-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. ³ He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. ⁴ He did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, as did the house of Ahab; for they were his counsellors after the death of his father, to his destruction. ⁵ He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth Gilead; and the

Syrians wounded Joram. ⁶ He returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which they had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick. ⁷ Now the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, in that he went to Joram; for when he had come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom Yahweh had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. ⁸ It happened, when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, that he found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brothers of Ahaziah, ministering to Ahaziah, and killed them. ⁹ He sought Ahaziah, and they caught him (now he was hiding in Samaria), and they brought him to Jehu, and killed him. They buried him, for they said, He is the descendant of Jehoshaphat, who sought Yahweh with all his heart. The house of Ahaziah had no power to hold the kingdom. ¹⁰ Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaz-

22:3 *His mother was his counsellor to do wickedly* – Again we see the influence of women on the spiritual lives of their children; see on 21:6. Her ‘counsel’ to him likely refers to the way she raised him in his youth. His grandfather, righteous king Jehoshaphat, had a weakness with respect to his friendship with the Ahab family (19:2). Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram even more so (see on 21:6), and the grandson likewise. The failure of a righteous man had disastrous spiritual consequence even for his grandchild. Grandfather Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life by going to war in tandem with Ahab king of Israel; and the grandson failed in exactly the same way (:5), at the very same place, Ramoth Gilead (18:11). He didn’t learn the lesson of his grandfather’s failure but rather repeated it.

22:6 Ahaziah was severely punished because he didn’t learn the lesson from spiritual history. Jehoshaphat had been nearly killed because of his union with Ahab the king of Israel; we really are intended to learn from Biblical history and take concrete action based upon what we perceive within it, rather than let these records drift over us without taking a grip upon our lives in practice.

iah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah. ¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were slain, and put him and his nurse in the bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah, so that she didn't kill him. ¹² He was with them hidden in God's house six years; and Athaliah reigned over the land.

CHAPTER 23 Oct. 26

Jehoiada the Priest Supports Joash

In the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. ² They went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the heads of fathers' households of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. ³ All the assembly made a covenant with the king in God's house. He said to them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as Yahweh has spoken concerning the sons of David.

⁴ This is the thing that you shall do. A third part of you, who come in on the Sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters at the thresholds. ⁵ A third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation. All the people shall be in the courts of Yahweh's house. ⁶ But let no one come into the house of Yahweh, except the priests, and those who minister of the Levites. They shall come in, for they are holy, but all the people shall follow Yahweh's instructions. ⁷ The Levites shall surround the king, every man with his weapons in his hand. Whoever comes into the house, let him be slain. Be with the king when he comes in, and when he goes out. ⁸ So the Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded. They took every man his men, those who were to come in on the Sabbath, with those who were to go out on the Sabbath; for Jehoiada the priest didn't dismiss the shift. ⁹ Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds the spears, large shields and shields that had been king David's, which were in God's house. ¹⁰ He set all the people, each man with his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, surrounding the king. ¹¹ Then they brought out

23:1 *Took... into covenant with him* – Note how at this same time they made a covenant with God (:3). Our covenant with God is often connected with our covenant with each other; covenant relationship isn't just a deal between God and us, rather does our relationship with Him involve us in relationship with the rest of His true people. We can't be in relationship with God and isolate ourselves from His people.

23:11 *Jehoiada and his sons anointed him* – One of these sons was Zechariah, whom

the king's son and put the crown on him, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. Jehoiada and his sons anointed him; and they said, Long live the king! ¹² When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of Yahweh. ¹³ She looked, and, behold, the king stood by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. The singers also played musical instruments, and led the singing of praise. Then Athaliah tore her clothes, and said, Treason! Treason! ¹⁴ Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds who were set over the army and said to them, Bring her out between the ranks; and whoever follows her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Don't kill her in Yahweh's house. ¹⁵ So they made way for her. She went to the entrance of the horse gate to the king's house; and they killed her there.

Jehoiada Reforms Judah

¹⁶ Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people, and the king, that they should be Yahweh's people. ¹⁷ All the people went to the house of Baal and broke it down, and broke his altars and his images in pieces, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. ¹⁸ Jehoiada appointed the officers of the house of Yahweh under the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of Yahweh, to offer the burnt offerings of Yahweh, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. ¹⁹ He set the porters at the gates of the house of Yahweh, that no one who was unclean in any matter should enter in. ²⁰ He took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of Yahweh. They came through the upper gate to the king's house, and set the king on the throne of the kingdom. ²¹ So all

Joash was later to ungratefully murder for daring to criticize him (24:20-22). Indeed, 24:25 says that Joash killed all these sons. Ingratitude is a sin because the kindness we were shown is a reflection of *God's* grace to us through a human channel, and to be ungrateful for it is thereby a rejection of God's grace.

23:16 The parallel record in 2 Kings 11:17 says this covenant was between Yahweh and the people, but here we read that it was between Jehoiada and the people. Jehoiada as the priest was God's representative, and therefore what he did was on God's behalf. God's representatives can be spoken of as if they are God, even though they aren't God Himself in person. This principle, which is found throughout the Old Testament, should prepare us to accept that God's Son, Jesus, as His Father's total representative, isn't God Himself but can be spoken of as God, as Jehoiada was, because He functions so completely on God's behalf.

23:21 *The people of the land rejoiced* – In the same way as “all the people” destroyed the temple of Baal (:17) and “all the people” rejoiced at the idea of Joash being made king (:13). Although the people were spiritually weak at this time, there was deep

the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. Athaliah they had slain with the sword.

CHAPTER 24 Oct. 27

Joash Zealously Restores the Temple

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba.

² Joash did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh all the days of Jehoiada the priest. ³ Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he fathered sons and daughters. ⁴ It happened after this that Joash intended to restore the house of Yahweh. ⁵ He gathered together the priests and the Levites and said to them, Go out to the cities of Judah, and gather money to repair the house of your God from all Israel from year to year. See that you hasten this matter. However the Levites didn't do it right away. ⁶ The king called for Jehoiada the chief and said to him, Why haven't you required of the Levites to bring in the tax of Moses the servant of Yahweh, and of the assembly of Israel, out of Judah and out of Jerusalem, for the tent of the testimony? ⁷ For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up God's house; and they

also gave all the dedicated things of the house of Yahweh to the Baals.

⁸ So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it outside at the gate of the house of Yahweh. ⁹ They made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for Yahweh the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness.

¹⁰ All the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. ¹¹ It was so, that whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the chief priests' officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to its place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. ¹² The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of the house of Yahweh. They hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of Yahweh, and also those who worked iron and brass, so as to repair the house of Yahweh. ¹³ So the workmen worked, and the work of repairing advanced in their hands, and they restored God's house to its proper condition and strengthened it. ¹⁴ When they had finished, they brought the rest

within them a desire to do the right thing – they just lacked the strength to do it, and needed someone like Jehoiada to present it clearly to them. We may consider those around us to be totally disinterested in spiritual things, but if we present them with the right way, we will be surprised how this is passively and unconsciously what a lot of apparently 'worldly' people are in fact looking for. See on 24:10.

24:10 People do respond generously when someone gives them firm leadership and explains the need; see on 23:21.

24:14 *All the days of Jehoiada* – Joash's zeal for restoring the temple appears to have been all on his own initiative. But clearly his zeal for God was all the result of Je-

of the money before the king and Jehoiada, from which were made vessels for the house of Yahweh, even vessels with which to minister and to offer, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. They offered burnt offerings in the house of Yahweh continually all the days of Jehoiada. ¹⁵ But Jehoiada grew old and was full of days, and he died. He was one hundred and thirty years old when he died. ¹⁶ They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house.

Joash Departs from Yahweh

¹⁷ Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king listened to them. ¹⁸ They forsook the house of Yahweh, the God of their

fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. Wrath came on Judah and Jerusalem for this their guiltiness. ¹⁹ Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them again to Yahweh; and they testified against them. But they would not listen. ²⁰ The spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, Thus says God, ‘Why do you disobey the commandments of Yahweh, so that you can’t prosper? Because you have forsaken Yahweh, He has also forsaken you’. ²¹ They conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of Yahweh. ²² Thus Joash the king didn’t remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son. When he died, he

hoiada’s influence upon him, and as soon as Jehoiada was dead, he turned to other gods (:17,18). People can serve God, even in a very zealous way, purely as the result of others’ influence upon them. This is why how we end our spiritual journey is so important – when those who influenced our youth are no longer with us, and we serve God with no possibility of the motivation of pleasing those we respect. It seems Joash was grateful to Jehoiada for saving his life and organizing the coup which led to his having the kingdom at seven years old – when his gratitude should’ve been to *God*, who used Jehoiada merely as a human channel. If we don’t see our spiritual elders as *channels* used by God, but glorify them in themselves, then we will tend to do spiritual things just to please those elders. And when they are no more, we are left with no real relationship with God Himself. This would explain how *immediately* on the death of Jehoiada, Joash turned to other gods.

24:17 *The king listened to them* – So often the history of the kings repeats itself. This was exactly the mistake of Rehoboam – listening to bad advisors and rejecting the Godly advice of older men (1 Kings 12:8,10). Our life situations likewise tend to repeat in essence the situations faced by Biblical characters; and we really are expected to learn the lessons. We have to ask how often it is that we base a life decision specifically upon a Biblical precedent... How much does Bible history really affect our life choices today?

24:21 *At the commandment of the king* – See on 23:11.

24:22 *May Yahweh look at it, and require it* – This is one of many Biblical indications that at the day of judgment, situations in this life will as it were be played back to

said, May Yahweh witness it, and require it.²³ It happened at the end of the year, that the army of the Syrians came up against him. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.²⁴ For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men; and Yahweh delivered a very great army into their hand, because they had forsaken Yahweh, the God of their fathers. So they executed judgment on Joash.²⁵ When they had departed from him (for they left him very sick), his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed, and he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they didn't bury him in the tombs of the kings.²⁶ These are those who conspired against him: Zabad the son of Shimeath the Ammonitess and Je-

hozabab the son of Shimrith the Moabitess.²⁷ Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid on him, and the rebuilding of God's house, behold, they are written in the commentary of the book of the kings. Amaziah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 25 Oct. 28

Amaziah's Incomplete Devotion

Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.² He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, but not with a complete heart.³ Now it happened that when the kingdom was established to him, he killed his servants who had killed the king his father.⁴ But he didn't put their children to death, but did according to that which is written in the law in the book of Moses, as

the wicked, and be 'required' from them. All their sins will be mentioned unto them, whereas this will not be the case for the righteous, whose sins have been forgiven (Ez. 18:22; 33:16).

25:3 *When the kingdom was established to him, he killed his servants* – This sentence structure is common in the record of the kings; *when* they became strong, *once* they were set up in life, *then* they did wrong (11:17; 12:1; 17:1; 21:4; 26:8,16). Some people never get set up in life or become financially or domestically 'strong' as they would wish, and resent it. But remember this formula; perhaps if that had been granted them by God, they would turn away from Him. Amaziah repeated the pattern of Jehoram, who became strong in his kingdom, and then killed his brothers (21:4). Again we see how God intended Amaziah, as He intends all of us, to perceive how we should be and live on the basis of the examples in the history of His people. This is why reading the records of these kings is so valuable for us; and more than valuable, God intends us to be familiar with the history He has recorded and carefully preserved for so long, and learn from it, applying it specifically in our lives.

25:4 Despite committing murder after the pattern of wicked Jehoram (21:4), he was careful to be obedient to part of God's law. We so often justify wrong behaviour by mixing it with some element of legalistic obedience to God's word, just as we see in

Yahweh commanded saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin. ⁵ Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and ordered them according to their fathers houses, under captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, even all Judah and Benjamin. He numbered them from twenty years old and upward, and found them three hundred thousand chosen men, able to go forth to war, who could handle spear and shield. ⁶ He hired also one hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for one hundred talents of silver. ⁷ A man of God came to him, saying, O king, don't let the army of Israel go with you; for Yahweh is not with Israel, with all the children of Ephraim. ⁸ But if you will go, go and take action, be strong for the battle. God will overthrow you before the enemy; for God has power to help, and to overthrow. ⁹ Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? The

man of God answered, Yahweh is able to give you much more than this. ¹⁰ Then Amaziah separated them, the army that had come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again. Therefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in fierce anger. ¹¹ Amaziah took courage, and led forth his people, and went to the Valley of Salt, and struck ten thousand of the children of Seir. ¹² The children of Judah carried away ten thousand alive, and brought them to the top of the rock, and threw them down from the top of the rock, so that they all were broken in pieces. ¹³ But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah, from Samaria even to Beth Horon, and struck of them three thousand, and took much spoil.

Amaziah's Spiritual Decline

¹⁴ Now it happened, after that Amaziah had come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir,

the account of the judgment and crucifixion of Jesus, with the Jews careful to obey parts of the Mosaic Law in detail – whilst totally missing the bigger picture

25:6 Jehoshaphat (19:2) and other kings of Judah had always gotten into trouble by making military alliances with Israel; but still the lesson wasn't learnt, spiritual history wasn't allowed by Amaziah to really have a practical impact upon him.

25:8 *But if you will go, go and take action, be strong for the battle* – A classic example of the downward spiral, whereby God pushes people along the road of self-destruction if this is the path they choose.

25:13 We might be surprised at this; Amaziah had paid money to hire this army, but in humility to God's word had dismissed them and as it were wasted his money, just because God had told him not to use them but trust in Him. But then they do so much damage to Amaziah's kingdom. Perhaps this was because his obedience to God's word was only external, and not with a complete heart (:2). Likewise Amaziah won a great victory by faith in Yahweh, but immediately adopted pagan gods (:14,15).

and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense to them. ¹⁵ Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Amaziah, and He sent to him a prophet who said to him, Why have you sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of your hand? ¹⁶ It happened, as he talked with him, that the king said to him, Have we made you one of the king's counsellors? Stop! Why should you be struck down? Then the prophet stopped, and said, I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this, and have not listened to my counsel. ¹⁷ Then Amaziah king of Judah consulted his advisers, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us face off against each other. ¹⁸ Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon saying, Give your daughter to my son as his wife. Then a wild animal that was in Lebanon passed by, and trampled down the thistle. ¹⁹ You say to yourself that you have struck Edom; and your heart lifts you up to boast. Now stay at home. Why should you meddle with trouble, that you should fall, even you, and Judah with you? ²⁰ But Amaziah would not listen;

for it was of God, that He might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought after the gods of Edom. ²¹ So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah confronted each other at Beth Shemesh, which belongs to Judah. ²² Judah was defeated by Israel; and they fled every man to his tent. ²³ Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth Shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits. ²⁴ He took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in God's house with Obed-Edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria. ²⁵ Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years. ²⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, aren't they written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? ²⁷ Now from the time that Amaziah turned away from following Yahweh, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem. He fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. ²⁸ They brought him on horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of David.

25:17 Earlier Amaziah had wanted to make an alliance with Israel (:6,7); now he picks an argument with them and purposefully provokes a war with them. This unstable, inconsistent attitude arose from his incomplete devotion to God (:2). The instability and inconsistency evident in so many aspects of so many lives is reflective of a lack of steady, consistent devotion to the God who is eager to be our rock.

CHAPTER 26 Oct. 29***Uzziah's Industry and Success***

All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. ² He built Eloth and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. ³ Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. ⁴ He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God. As long as he sought Yahweh, God made him to prosper. ⁶ He went forth and warred against the Philistines, and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod; and he built cities in the country of Ashdod and among the Philistines. ⁷ God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians who lived in Gur Baal and the Meunim. ⁸ The Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah. His name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he grew extremely strong. ⁹ Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate and the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. ¹⁰ He built

towers in the wilderness, and dug out many cisterns, for he had much livestock; in the lowland also, and in the plain. He had farmers and vineyard keepers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved farming. ¹¹ Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men, who went out to war by bands, according to the number of their reckoning made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. ¹² The whole number of the heads of fathers' households, even the mighty men of valour, was two thousand six hundred. ¹³ Under their hand was an army, three hundred and seven thousand five hundred, who made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. ¹⁴ Uzziah prepared for them, even for all the army, shields, spears, helmets, coats of armour, bows and stones for slinging. ¹⁵ He made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and on the battlements, with which to shoot arrows and great stones. His name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, until he was strong.

Uzziah's Failure

¹⁶ But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Yahweh

26:4 But Amaziah only did a few things right before God and turned to other gods in the end (25:20). God so thirsts for human response to Him that He writes these records so positively, in recognition of any spirituality which there was.

26:16 *But when he was strong* – He was strong only in his own self-perception, because his strength was only the result of God's help (:15). Again we see how human strength precedes spiritual failure, which is a common theme in these lives of the kings and indeed throughout history; see on 25:3.

his God; for he went into Yahweh's temple to burn incense on the altar of incense. ¹⁷ Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him eighty priests of Yahweh, who were valiant men. ¹⁸ They resisted Uzziah the king, and said to him, It isn't for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to Yahweh, but for the priests the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary; for you have trespassed; neither shall it be for your honour from Yahweh God. ¹⁹ Then Uzziah was angry; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was angry with the priests, the leprosy broke forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Yahweh, beside the altar of incense. ²⁰ Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked on him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from there. Yes, he himself hurried also to go out, because Yahweh had struck him. ²¹ Uzziah

the king was a leper to the day of his death, and lived in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Yahweh; and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. ²² Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, wrote. ²³ So Uzziah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the field of burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper. Jotham his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 27 Oct. 29

Jotham's Good Reign

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. ² He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that his father Uzziah had done. However he didn't enter into Yahweh's temple.

26:17 Azariah was very brave to do this; for kings, especially like Uzziah at this time, considered themselves all powerful and beyond such criticism. We shouldn't fear to bring God's word to those who are 'senior' in rank, even if it criticizes them explicitly or implicitly; for compared to God's word, all men are as grass, of whatever rank they are in human society (Is. 40:6-8).

26:18 Uzziah is here condemned for doing what only the priests could do. However, David also did what only the priests (of the tribe of Levi) could do; but he was of the tribe of Judah and therefore not a priest (1 Chron. 15:27; 16:3). So we conclude that the same action can be sinful for one person but a sign of spiritual maturity in another. We need to bear this in mind when considering the behaviour of others, and try not to legislate against it in a legalistic manner but treat each case on its merits. We also learn from this that motive and not external action nor appearance are of ultimate importance to God. All our works need careful analysis once we grasp this point. It could be that Uzziah was trying to imitate David in acting as a priest when he wasn't; for 2 Kings 14:3 emphasizes that Uzziah did *not* do his good deeds in the spirit of David. It was all just an attempt to externally mimic a righteous man when the heart was far from spirituality; and God judges such hypocrisy very hard.

The people still did corruptly. ³ He built the upper gate of the house of Yahweh, and on the wall of Ophel he built much. ⁴ Moreover he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers. ⁵ He fought also with the king of the children of Ammon, and prevailed against them. The children of Ammon gave him the same year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand measures of wheat and ten thousand of barley. The children of Ammon gave that much to him in the second year also, and in the third. ⁶ So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before Yahweh his God. ⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. ⁸ He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. ⁹ Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 28 Oct. 30

The Wickedness of Ahaz

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he didn't do that which was right

in the eyes of Yahweh, as David his father did; ² but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and additionally made molten images for the Baals. ³ Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel. ⁴ He sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills, and under every green tree. ⁵ Therefore Yahweh his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they struck him, and carried away from him a great multitude of captives, and brought them to Damascus. He was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great slaughter. ⁶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed in Judah one hundred and twenty thousand in one day, all of them valiant men; because they had forsaken Yahweh, the God of their fathers. ⁷ Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the ruler of the house, and Elkanah who was next to the king. ⁸ The children of Israel carried away captive of their brothers two hundred thousand, women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought

27:6 If a man prepares his way after God's principles (see too Prov. 4:26), then God will 'prepare' that man's way too (Ps. 37:23; 119:5), confirming him in the way he chooses to go.

28:5 *Therefore Yahweh his God* – Yahweh was still his God even through this very evil part of his life when Ahaz had forsaken God (:6); we too shouldn't give up on our brethren who clearly leave God's principles. Even if we disbelieve God, He still remains faithful to us (2 Tim. 2:13). God is still working with our lost brethren, and so should we, after the pattern of the shepherd who searches until he finds the lost sheep.

the spoil to Samaria. ⁹ But a prophet of Yahweh was there, whose name was Oded. He went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, Behold, because Yahweh, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand, and you have slain them in a rage which has reached up to heaven. ¹⁰ Now you purpose to oppress the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondservants and bondmaids for yourselves. Aren't there even with you trespasses of your own against Yahweh your God? ¹¹ Now hear me therefore, and send back the captives, that you have taken captive from your brothers; for the fierce wrath of Yahweh is on you. ¹² Then some of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood

up against those who came back from the war. ¹³ They said to them, You shall not bring in the captives here; for you purpose that which will bring on us a trespass against Yahweh, to add to our sins and to our trespass; for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. ¹⁴ So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the assembly. ¹⁵ The men mentioned by name rose up and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them, gave them sandals, and gave them something to eat and to drink, anointed them, carried all the feeble of them on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brothers. Then they returned to Samaria. ¹⁶ At that time king Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him. ¹⁷ For again the Edomites had come and struck

28:9 The “rage” of sinful Israel against sinful Judah was likely because they transferred their own sins onto their brethren, and then eagerly punished them for them. This psychological phenomenon explains why there is so much judgmentalism and anger against other members within the church. To avoid it, we must face up to our own sins, and believe that the judgment for them has truly been laid upon Jesus. We will therefore know our guilt to have been lifted and will not feel the need to transfer it onto others.

28:11 *Fierce wrath* – This seems a stronger term than the ‘anger’ of God with Judah for their idolatry (:9). Hypocrisy and harshly judging our brethren when we too are sinners is something which makes God fiercely angry.

28:13 This kind of thing happens several times in the record of the kings; men had committed themselves already to a significant plan like hiring many soldiers and are then told to not go ahead with the plan (e.g. 25:9) at the risk of loss of face or money. This kind of thing ought to be a regular aspect of our lives – stopping in our tracks and turning back from a course of action because of God’s word.

28:15 Clothing the naked, putting them on donkeys and taking them to Jericho is all the basis of the good Samaritan parable (Lk. 10). We can therefore understand that parable in terms of our having compassion upon those within the ecclesia who are suffering for their sins; we are to take care of them, considering our own sins deserve the same judgment (:10).

Judah, and carried away captives. ¹⁸ The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland, and of the South of Judah, and had taken Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gedereth, Soco with its towns, Timnah with its towns, Gimzo also and its towns; and settled there. ¹⁹ For Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he had dealt wantonly in Judah, and trespassed severely against Yahweh. ²⁰ Tilgath Pilneser king of Assyria came to him and distressed him, but didn't strengthen him. ²¹ For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of Yahweh, and out of the house of the king and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria; but it didn't help him. ²² In the time of his distress, he trespassed yet more against Yahweh, this same king Ahaz. ²³ For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which struck him. He said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, so I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. ²⁴ Ahaz gathered

together the vessels of God's house, cut in pieces the vessels of God's house, and shut up the doors of the house of Yahweh; and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger Yahweh, the God of his fathers. ²⁶ Now the rest of his acts, and all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷ Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem; for they didn't bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel; and Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 29 Oct. 31

Hezekiah Cleanses the Temple

Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. ² He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all

28:27 *They didn't bring him into the tombs of the kings* – This is mentioned several times about the sinful kings. Although the people were themselves sinful and rebellious, they recognized that the kings who hadn't followed the spirit of king David shouldn't be buried together with him. There is in society a basic sense of right and wrong, which is reflected in such decisions as this. It's not the case, therefore, that people are totally disinterested in spirituality and have no sense of right or wrong. There is interest in spirituality in people; it's just connecting with it in an appropriate way which is our challenge.

29:2 We wonder how it could be that such an evil man as Ahaz had such a righteous son as Hezekiah. Perhaps the extreme sinfulness of Ahaz made Hezekiah reflect upon the wrongness of sin; perhaps Hezekiah was angry with his father for killing his brothers and sisters in sacrifice to stupid idols (28:3) and so he went the other way, as it were. Whatever, we learn that bad background doesn't force people into sin; Hezekiah had an awful spiritual background but he was righteous. We can't blame our sin on anything, including bad background.

that David his father had done. ³ In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of Yahweh, and repaired them. ⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together into the broad place on the east, ⁵ and said to them, Listen to me, you Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of Yahweh, the God of your fathers, and carry all the abominations out of the holy place. ⁶ For our fathers have trespassed and done that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of Yahweh, and turned their backs. ⁷ Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. ⁸ Therefore the wrath of Yahweh was on Judah and Jerusalem, and He has delivered them to

be tossed back and forth, to be an astonishment and a hissing, as you see with your eyes. ⁹ For, behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. ¹⁰ Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with Yahweh, the God of Israel, that His fierce anger may turn away from us. ¹¹ My sons, don't be negligent now; for Yahweh has chosen you to stand before Him to minister to Him, and that you should be His ministers, and burn incense. ¹² Then the Levites arose, Mahath son of Amasai, and Joel son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah son of Zimma and Eden son of Joah; ¹³ and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; ¹⁴ and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jedut-

In the eyes of Yahweh – These “eyes of Yahweh” refer to the Angels (16:9). If we ask how, mechanically, as it were, God sees and knows all things, the answer is perhaps ‘Through His Angels’. Their activity is amazing; because their work is invisible to us, we may get the impression at times that God is somehow silent and unobservant. But His “eyes” are constantly informing Him of our situations and forming an opinion about them.

29:3 There is a frequent cycle in the record of the kings of mass apostasy by the people, reformation by a faithful king and then quick descent into apostasy again. This mirrors the cycle of sin, repentance, devotion and sin which is seen in so many personal lives. One of the greatest joys we can look forward to in the Kingdom of God is not just the eternity of the life, but the spiritual quality of it, never able to sin again. The cycle of the kings suggests, however, that much of the reformation was as a result of the personal leadership of the king; people go back to the easier way of the flesh very easily, and good leadership can only go so far in personal reformation; because our relationship with God is ultimately so very personal.

29:11 *My sons* – Hezekiah was only 25 years old when he said this (:1), but when others are spiritually weak and someone takes spiritual leadership, they become the elder – regardless of their age.

hun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. ¹⁵ They gathered their brothers and sanctified themselves, and went in, according to the commandment of the king by the words of Yahweh, to cleanse the house of Yahweh. ¹⁶ The priests went in to the inner part of the house of Yahweh to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in Yahweh's temple into the court of the house of Yahweh. The Levites took it, to carry it out abroad to the brook Kidron. ¹⁷ Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of Yahweh. They sanctified the house of Yahweh in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. ¹⁸ Then they went in to Hezekiah the king within the palace and said, We have cleansed all the house of Yahweh, and the altar of burnt offering, with all its vessels, and the table of showbread, with all its vessels. ¹⁹ Moreover all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign threw away when he trespassed, have we prepared and sanctified; and behold, they are before the altar of Yahweh.

A Service of Re-dedication

²⁰ Then Hezekiah the king arose early, and gathered the princes of the city, and went up to the house of Yahweh. ²¹ They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. He commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of Yahweh. ²² So they killed the bulls, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar. They killed the rams, and sprinkled the blood on the altar: they killed also the lambs, and sprinkled the blood on the altar. ²³ They brought near the male goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly; and they laid their hands on them: ²⁴ and the priests killed them, and they made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel; for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. ²⁵ He set the Levites in the house of Yahweh with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of

29:23 It would seem from :21 that the male goats were the sin offering. Jesus understood goats to represent those who would be rejected at the final judgment (Mt. 25:33). We are to put our hand as it were on the head of such goats, recognizing that we should come to judgment day and be condemned, treated as goats. We need to imagine how it would feel to be at the judgment and be sent to the left hand side. This is what we deserve, and we recognize that by placing our hand on the head of the goat, as it were. But we are saved by the blood of the lamb; we are identified with Him and will therefore be treated as Him, and moved to the right hand side where the sheep are. All these principles are brought together in baptism into Christ, whereby through that immersion in water we die the death of a sinner and yet rise again with Christ; and we are to continue living out the essence of baptism in an ongoing sense throughout our lives.

Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was of Yahweh by His prophets. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song of Yahweh began also, and the trumpets, together with the instruments of David king of Israel. ²⁸ All the assembly worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ When they had made an end of offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. ³⁰ Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises to Yahweh with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. ³¹ Then Hezekiah answered, Now you have consecrated yourselves to Yahweh; come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of Yahweh. The assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. ³² The number of the burnt offerings which the as-

sembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs. All these were for a burnt offering to Yahweh. ³³ The consecrated things were six hundred head of cattle and three thousand sheep. ³⁴ But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings. Therefore their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was ended, and until the priests had sanctified themselves; for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. ³⁵ Also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and with the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of Yahweh was set in order. ³⁶ Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, because of that which God had prepared for the people; for this was done suddenly.

CHAPTER 30 Nov.1

Hezekiah's Great Passover

Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to Yahweh, the God of Israel. ² For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Je-

30:1 By doing so, Hezekiah was seeking to bring together the spiritually minded of both Israel and Judah (see too :5). Technical divisions between God's people are always ended 'on the ground' when like minded believers find they have so much in common, and the official divides between them only exist from a human viewpoint; God sees His people as one, whatever divisions between them there may be from human perspectives.

30:2 *The second month* – Passover was to be kept in the first month; but Hezekiah perceived the urgency which there is in serving God, and he rightly perceived it was better to technically infringe the Law in order to keep the spirit of it.

rusalem, to keep the Passover in the second month. ³ For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. ⁴ The thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly. ⁵ So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to Yahweh, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers in the manner that is written. ⁶ So the couriers went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king saying, You children of Israel, turn again to Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that He may return to the remnant that have escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. ⁷ Don't be like your fathers, and like your brothers, who trespassed against Yahweh, the God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to destruction, as you see. ⁸ Now don't be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves to Yahweh, and enter into His sanctuary which He has sanctified forever. Serve Yahweh your God, that His fierce anger may turn away from you. ⁹ For if you turn

again to Yahweh, your brothers and your children shall find compassion before those who led them captive, and shall come again into this land; for Yahweh your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you if you return to Him. ¹⁰ So the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even to Zebulun; but there they were ridiculed and despised. ¹¹ Nevertheless certain men of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. ¹² Also on Judah came the hand of God to give them one heart, to do the commandment of the king and of the princes by the word of Yahweh. ¹³ Many people assembled at Jerusalem to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly. ¹⁴ They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. ¹⁵ Then they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt offerings into the house of Yahweh. ¹⁶ They stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Moses the man of God, and the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of the hand of the Levites.

30:9 Note that if *they* turned to Yahweh, then their spiritually weak brethren currently in captivity would be blessed; to some extent, our spirituality can affect third parties.

30:12 God is capable of working directly on the human heart to make us obedient to His word; given the tragic weakness of our will, we should also ask Him to be with us in this way, as David often does in Ps. 119.

The Passover Kept in Uncleaness

¹⁷ There were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites were in charge of killing the Passovers for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to Yahweh. ¹⁸ For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them saying, May the good Yahweh pardon everyone ¹⁹ who sets his heart to seek God, Yahweh, the God of his fathers, even if they aren't clean according to the purification of the sanctuary. ²⁰ Yahweh listened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. ²¹ The children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised Yahweh day by day, singing with loud instruments to Yahweh. ²² Hezekiah spoke to the heart of all the Levites who had good understanding in the service of Yah-

weh. So they ate throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace offerings, and making confession to Yahweh, the God of their fathers. ²³ The whole assembly took counsel to keep another seven days; and they kept another seven days with gladness. ²⁴ For Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly for offerings one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. ²⁵ All the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly who came out of Israel, and the foreigners who came out of the land of Israel, and who lived in Judah, rejoiced. ²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy habitation, even to heaven.

30:18 *They ate the Passover otherwise than it is written* – This needs to be ever remembered by those who fear they aren't worthy to participate in the breaking of bread service, which is the Christian equivalent of the Passover feast. Our desire for God and His thirst for relationship with us are between them more than enough to make our weaknesses no barrier to remembering the great salvation He achieved for us in Christ. However, the reference in :20 to God's healing of the people at this time suggests that although He agreed with their keeping of Passover in an unclean state (:12 "by the word of Yahweh"), He also made them recognize their sinfulness at this time.

30:23 If we truly love God, we will not be minimalists, doing the minimum required by His word; we will joyfully go beyond. For His commandments are but a springboard to more total dedication by us on our own initiative. We need to ask, when was the last time we decided to do something for God as it were "extra", on our own initiative?

CHAPTER 31 Nov.2***Generous Response and Distribution of the Tithes***

Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, and broke in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherim, and broke down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned each man to his possession, into their own cities.

² Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites after their divisions, each man according to his service, both the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of Yahweh. ³ He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of

Yahweh. ⁴ Moreover he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the law of Yahweh.

⁵ As soon as the commandment was published, the children of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, new wine, oil and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. ⁶ The children of Israel and Judah, who lived in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of dedicated things which were consecrated to Yahweh their God, and laid them by heaps. ⁷ In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. ⁸ When Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed Yahweh and His people Israel. ⁹ Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. ¹⁰ Azariah the chief priest, of the house of Zadok, answered him and said, Since people

31:3 *The king's portion of his substance* – Hezekiah led this reformation by his personal example – absolutely vital in any leadership role within God's people.

31:7 There are many 'small' details in the Biblical record which indicate that we are reading real history, inspired by God and infallible. The third month was at the end of the grain harvest, the time of the feast of Pentecost. The seventh month was at the end of the fruit and wine harvest, the time of the feast of tabernacles.

31:8 The Hebrew idea of 'blessing' carries more weight than a casual 'Bless you!' or 'Well done!'. It was loaded with the solemn belief that something actual would happen as a result of the blessing being pronounced (the same is true of the idea of 'cursing'). Passages like Ez. 44:30; Hag. 2:19 and Mal. 3:10,11 state that there would be material blessing in the homes of those who gave the tithe, and Hezekiah surely had this in mind. Our giving to God is responded to by Him; maybe not in cash terms (otherwise the concepts of giving and generosity lose their significance), but we can be assured that there will be a real blessing in response.

31:10 Several times in the record of Israel's history we have this feature – of response

began to bring the offerings into the house of Yahweh, we have eaten and had enough, and have left plenty; for Yahweh has blessed His people. That which is left is this great store.

¹¹ Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of Yahweh; and they prepared them.

¹² They brought in the offerings, the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully. Conaniah the Levite was ruler over them, and Shimei his brother was second. ¹³ Jehiel, Azaziah, Nathath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath and Benai-hah were overseers under the hand of Conaniah and Shimei his brother, by the appointment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of God's house. ¹⁴ Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter at the east gate, was over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the offerings of Yahweh and the most holy things.

¹⁵ Under him were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in their office of trust, to give to their brothers by divisions, both to the great and small. ¹⁶ Also under him were those who were reckoned by genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, even each one who entered into the house of Yahweh, as

the duty of every day required, for their service in their offices according to their divisions; ¹⁷ and those who were reckoned by genealogy of the priests by their fathers' houses; and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their offices by their divisions; ¹⁸ and those who were reckoned by genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, their sons and their daughters, through all the congregation. In their office of trust they sanctified themselves in holiness. ¹⁹ Also for the sons of Aaron the priests, who were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every city, there were men who were mentioned by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all who were reckoned by genealogy among the Levites. ²⁰ Hezekiah did so throughout all Judah; and he worked that which was good and right and faithful before Yahweh his God. ²¹ In every work that he began in the service of God's house, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

CHAPTER 32 Nov.3

The Assyrian Invasion

After these things, and this faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came against Jerusalem, to destroy it, according to a call for donations far over what was required (e.g. 24:10). And yet the prophets emphasize that Israel never really quit idol worship and were constantly rebellious against Yahweh. We observe from this that there was a conscience toward God amongst them, and people love and need to be given some concrete way of serving God; generally, people lack initiative and need to have a structure given to them within which they can serve God. But we also see that it's far easier to give material things at one point in time than to give our hearts to God for a lifetime.

32:1 *After these things, and this faithfulness* – This is clear enough evidence that devotion to God doesn't save us from trial, nor guarantee us an easy life in the flesh.

Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fortified cities, and thought to win them for himself. ² When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that he was set to fight against Jerusalem, ³ he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the springs which were outside of the city; and they helped him. ⁴ So many people gathered together, and they stopped all the springs, and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? ⁵ He took courage, and built up all the wall that was broken down, and raised it up to the towers, and the other wall outside, and strengthened Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. ⁶ He set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the broad place at the gate of the city, and spoke to their hearts saying, ⁷ Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the mul-

titude who is with him; for there is a greater One with us than with him. ⁸ With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles. The people rested themselves on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. ⁹ After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem, (now he was before Lachish, and all his power with him), to Hezekiah king of Judah, and to all Judah who were at Jerusalem saying, ¹⁰ Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, In whom do you trust, that you remain under siege in Jerusalem? ¹¹ Doesn't Hezekiah persuade you, to give you over to die by famine and by thirst by saying, 'Yahweh our God will deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?' ¹² Hasn't the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense? ¹³ Don't you know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Were

Hezekiah's devotion was extraordinary – and now calamity came. Although it could be that his dedication wasn't matched by Israel's, and the Assyrian crisis came as a result of their unfaithfulness.

32:12 *His high places and His altars* – We see in this comment the nature of Israel's apostasy. They hadn't rejected Yahweh totally, become atheists; rather they had proclaimed the pagan high places and altars as actually being Yahweh's, thus justifying pagan idol worship as if it were a form of Yahweh worship. Something similar happened when the pagan feast of December 25th and the worship of the evergreen tree was declared a Christian festival, and the pagan tree turned into the "Christmas tree". But we make the same mistake countless times, in justifying fleshly behaviour (e.g. anger, judgmentalism, gossip, pride, exclusivity, character destruction etc.) as a form of serving Yahweh.

32:13 All this was true; but to the faithful mind, it was actually an encouragement, although a discouragement to the weak in faith. Truly the pagan gods had been powerless, and so too would be the Assyrian gods.

the gods of the nations of the lands in any way able to deliver their land out of my hand? ¹⁴ Who was there among all the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of my hand? ¹⁵ Now therefore don't let Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you in this way, neither believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of my hand, and out of the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand? ¹⁶ His servants spoke yet more against Yahweh God, and against His servant Hezekiah. ¹⁷ He also wrote letters insulting Yahweh, the God of Israel, and to speak against Him saying, As the gods of the nations of the lands, which have not delivered their people out of my hand, so shall the God of Hezekiah not deliver His people out of my hand. ¹⁸ They cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten them, and to trouble them; that they might take

the city. ¹⁹ They spoke of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands. ²⁰ Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven. ²¹ Yahweh sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. When he had come into the house of his god, those who came forth from his own bowels killed him there with the sword. ²² Thus Yahweh saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. ²³ Many brought gifts to Yahweh to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah; so that He was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

Hezekiah's Poor Response to Grace

²⁴ In those days Hezekiah was sick even to death. He prayed to Yahweh; and He spoke to him, and gave

32:21 *Those who came forth from his own bowels* – The reference is to his sons. But children come forth from the “bowels” or inner parts of a woman, not a man. But husband and wife are seen as one in the production of children; ‘they’ become pregnant and jointly bring forth children. This was a radical perspective in a society where women existed basically to bear children and the fathers carried little responsibility for their children.

32:24 *In those days Hezekiah was sick even to death* – 2 Kings 14:2 shows that Hezekiah reigned for 29 years, and the Assyrian invasion came in the 14th year of his reign. At the time of his sickness, God gave him another 15 years of life; hence his sickness and the invasion were at the same time. When circumstances come together in such an awful way, we know this is the hand of God trying to develop us; not coincidence, nor any personal Satan being, of whom the Bible knows nothing.

him a sign. ²⁵ But Hezekiah didn't render again according to the grace done to him. His heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath on him, and on Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶ Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Yahweh didn't come on them in the days of Hezekiah. ²⁷ Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour and he set up treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all kinds of goodly vessels; ²⁸ store-houses also for the increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all kinds of animals, and flocks in folds. ²⁹ Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance. ³⁰ This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works. ³¹ However concerning the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder

that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart. ³² Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ³³ Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the ascent of the tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 33 Nov.4

Manasseh's Great Wickedness

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, after the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel. ³ For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshipped all the army of the sky, and served them. ⁴ He built altars in the house of Yahweh, of which Yah-

32:25 We have all received grace; and the intended response to it is humility. It is because God so hugely values humility that He has arranged the whole concept of grace as the basis of our salvation. Those who deny grace and rather trust in works will therefore tend towards pride and away from humility.

33:2 Manasseh's father Hezekiah was a righteous man; his grandfather Ahaz a very wicked man. This just shows that spirituality isn't totally the result of our upbringing and background. We each stand as individuals before God and can overcome the influence of where we came from; and on the other hand, faithful parents are no guarantee of personal spirituality. It could be that Hezekiah in the last 15 years of his life was somewhat switched off from devotion to God, resting on his laurels and enjoying the good life in retirement. Whilst he didn't himself turn to other gods, this laid back attitude to the true God meant that his son turned away from Him.

weh said, My name shall be in Jerusalem forever. ⁵ He built altars for all the army of the sky in the two courts of the house of Yahweh. ⁶ He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; and he practised sorcery and used enchantments, and practised witchcraft and dealt with those who had familiar spirits, and with wizards. He worked much evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger. ⁷ He set the engraved image of the idol, which he had made, in God's house, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever: ⁸ neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from off the land which I have appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them, even all the law and the statutes and the ordinances given by Moses. ⁹ Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations did whom Yahweh had destroyed before the children of Israel. ¹⁰ Yahweh spoke to Manasseh,

and to his people; but they gave no heed. ¹¹ Therefore Yahweh brought on them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

Manasseh's Repentance

¹² When he was in distress, he begged Yahweh his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ He prayed to Him; and He was entreated by him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God. ¹⁴ Now after this he built an outer wall to the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance at the fish gate; and he encircled Ophel with it, and raised it up to a very great height; and he put valiant captains in all the fortified cities of Judah. ¹⁵ He took away the foreign gods, and the idol out of the house of Yahweh, and all the altars that he had built in the mountain of the house of Yahweh, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. ¹⁶ He built up the altar of Yahweh, and offered thereon

33:12 *Yahweh his God* – God was still his God even in those years of revolt against Him; God never gives up with us so long as we live on this earth. Although Yahweh was *his* God, only on repentance years later did “Manasseh [know] that Yahweh was God” (:13), and we read of Yahweh as “*his* God” (:18). Thus in repentance, a man makes Yahweh's knowledge of him mutual; and in that meeting of God and man in repentance there is a huge synergy. All the Angels of God rejoice when one person repents (Lk. 15:10). Hence the huge, cosmic joy at each repentant baptism into Christ. *Humbled himself* – This shows that no matter how wicked a person is, there is always a way back to God; but the supreme requirement is of humility. We should therefore never give up on people as too far gone. Self humbling is spoken of in :19 as the same as repentance; this is what repentance is all about, not a passing recognition on a mental level of a small slip, but a deep humbling of self.

sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve Yahweh, the God of Israel. ¹⁷ Nevertheless the people sacrificed still in the high places, but only to Yahweh their God. ¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel, behold, they are written among the acts of the kings of Israel. ¹⁹ His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin and his trespass, and the places in which he built high places, and set up the Asherim and the engraved images, before he humbled himself: they are written in the history of Hozai. ²⁰ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house; and Amon his son reigned in his place.

Amon's Wicked Reign

²¹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. ²² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, as did Manasseh his father; and Amon sacrificed to all the engraved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them. ²³ He didn't humble himself before Yahweh, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but this same Amon trespassed more and more.

33:22 The consequence of sin, even if we ourselves repent of it, is in the bad pattern it sets to others. Our examples are more powerful than we think; sin is largely sin because of the effect it has upon others.

34:3 A 16 year old can significantly search after God; and a 20 year old isn't too young to do major things for God or take a leadership role if there are no others willing to do so.

²⁴ His servants conspired against him, and put him to death in his own house. ²⁵ But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.

CHAPTER 34 Nov.5

Josiah's Good Reign

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ² He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and walked in the ways of David his father, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father. In the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the engraved images, and the molten images. ⁴ They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence. He cut down the incense altars that were on high above them. He broke in pieces the Asherim, and the engraved images, and the molten images, and made dust of them, and strewed it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. ⁵ He burnt the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. ⁶ He did this in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim

and Simeon, even to Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins. ⁷ He broke down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the engraved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem. ⁸ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of Yahweh his God. ⁹ They came to Hilkiyah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into God's house, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ They delivered it into the hand of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of Yahweh. The work-

men who laboured in the house of Yahweh gave it to mend and repair the house; ¹¹ even to the carpenters and to the builders they gave it, to buy cut stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. ¹² The men did the work faithfully; and their overseers were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and others of the Levites, all who were skilful with instruments of music. ¹³ Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all who did the work in every kind of service. Of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

The Book of the Law Discovered

¹⁴ When they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Yahweh, Hilkiyah the priest found

34:14 *Hilkiyah the priest found the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses* – Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16) says that when this book was found, it was to him the joy of his heart and he as it were ate it. Yet the part of the Law which was found listed the judgments for disobedience and the explanation of the terms of the covenant (:31). He didn't regard these things as some might – the boring droning on of God about sin. Jeremiah perceived in it God's requirements and the blessings for obedience, and rejoiced in it all, as only one who truly loves God can do. Note that in the generations that didn't have access to this book of the Law, there were still people who pleased God greatly, including Josiah. And yet they did so in ignorance of all His word. We who have the completed word of God so conveniently accessible can come to think that therefore anyone without a complete knowledge of God's word on every point cannot please Him or have a relationship with Him. But this is clearly not the case; for those at Josiah's time and the generation before who were ignorant of parts of God's word could still please Him. However we who have God's completed word have a far higher level of responsibility before Him. It could also be argued that God revealed more of His word and requirements to Josiah in response to Josiah's zeal to do the right thing before God so far as he knew, as with Cornelius in the New Testament. Those who truly seek after God will have His true word revealed to them.

the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses.¹⁵ Hilkiah answered Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahweh. Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.¹⁶ Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to your servants, they are doing.¹⁷ They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Yahweh, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen.¹⁸ Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest has delivered me a book. Shaphan read therein before the king.¹⁹ It happened, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he tore his clothes.²⁰ The king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying,²¹ Go inquire of Yahweh for me, and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found. Great is the wrath of Yahweh that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the

word of Yahweh, to do according to all that is written in this book.²² So Hilkiah, and they whom the king had commanded, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter), and they spoke to her to that effect.²³ She said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me,²⁴ Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will bring evil on this place, and on its inhabitants, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.²⁵ Because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is My wrath poured out on this place, and it shall not be quenched'.²⁶ But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Yahweh, thus you shall tell him, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'As touching the words which you have heard,²⁷ because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place, and against

34:19 *He tore his clothes* – He realized that sins of ignorance are still sins; hence the Law of Moses required offerings for sin once the sin was recognized. "Great wrath" was from God because of this disobedience, albeit performed in ignorance (:21). The fact sins of ignorance are still felt by God should lead us to search His word the more diligently to know what exactly He requires and hopes for from us. Spare a thought for God in this; He feels sin, all sin, committed by whoever, even in ignorance. His sensitivity to sin should lead us to vow the more passionately to live pleasingly before Him.

34:22 *Huldah the prophetess* – The Hebrew word translated 'prophet' doesn't just refer to someone who predicts the future, but to one who spoke forth God's inspired word. It's significant that in such a male dominated society, God chose to relay His word at times through women.

its inhabitants, and have humbled yourself before Me and have torn your clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard you, says Yahweh. ²⁸ Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil that I will bring on this place, and on its inhabitants'. They brought back word to the king. ²⁹ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ³⁰ The king went up to the house of Yahweh, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Yahweh. ³¹ The king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Yahweh, to walk after Yahweh, and to keep His commandments, His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. ³² He caused all who were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. ³³ Josiah took away all the abominations out of all

the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all who were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Yahweh their God. All his days they didn't depart from following Yahweh, the God of their fathers.

CHAPTER 35 Nov.6

Josiah's Passover

Josiah kept a Passover to Yahweh in Jerusalem: and they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. ² He set the priests in their offices, and encouraged them to the service of the house of Yahweh. ³ He said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to Yahweh, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built. There shall no more be a burden on your shoulders. Now serve Yahweh your God and His people Israel. ⁴ Prepare yourselves after your fathers' houses by your divisions, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. ⁵ Stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brothers the children of the people, and let there be for each a portion of a father's house of the Levites. ⁶ Kill the Passover and sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brothers, to do

34:31 Josiah didn't just accept the threatened judgment to come as inevitable. He believed that by repentance it could possibly be averted by God's grace, just as the people of Nineveh believed.

35:3 *Serve Yahweh your God and His people* – We serve God through serving His people; our attitude to them, our care for them, is effectively our attitude to the Lord, and will be the basis upon which we are judged at the last day (Mt. 25:40). We can't simply believe in God from the isolation of our own homes or computer screens, and not get involved with actively serving His people.

according to the word of Yahweh by Moses. ⁷ Josiah gave to the children of the people of the flock, lambs and young goats, all of them for the Passover offerings, to all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls. These were of the king's substance. ⁸ His princes gave for a freewill offering to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the rulers of God's house, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings two thousand and six hundred small livestock, and three hundred head of cattle. ⁹ Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the Passover offerings five thousand small livestock, and five hundred head of cattle. ¹⁰ So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites by their divisions, according to the king's commandment. ¹¹ They killed the Passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of their hand, and the Levites flayed them. ¹² They removed the burnt offerings, that they might give them according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the children of the people, to offer to Yahweh, as it is written in the book of Moses. So they

did with the cattle. ¹³ They roasted the Passover with fire according to the ordinance. They boiled the holy offerings in pots, in caldrons and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the children of the people. ¹⁴ Afterward they prepared for themselves, and for the priests, because the priests the sons of Aaron were busy with offering the burnt offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron. ¹⁵ The singers the sons of Asaph were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The porters were at every gate: they didn't need to depart from their service; for their brothers the Levites prepared for them. ¹⁶ So all the service of Yahweh was prepared the same day, to keep the Passover, and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of Yahweh, according to the commandment of king Josiah. ¹⁷ The children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. ¹⁸ There was no Passover like that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah

35:11 *Flayed them*— This seems to imply that the skin was flayed off the lambs, in uncanny prediction of Christ's whipping and scourging before His offering as the ultimate Passover lamb.

35:18 *Neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept* — Kings like David and Solomon were more prosperous than Josiah was, and yet he was the more generous in his Passover celebration. Seeing that God isn't impressed by numbers of sacrifices, this may not necessarily be an indication of Josiah's spirituality;

and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this Passover kept.

Josiah's Death

²⁰ After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him. ²¹ But he sent ambassadors to him saying, What have I to do with you, you king of Judah? I come not against you this day, but against the house with which I have war. God has commanded me to make haste. Beware and know that it is God who is with me, that he not destroy you. ²² Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and didn't listen to the words of Neco from the mouth

of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. ²³ The archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Take me away, because I am seriously wounded! ²⁴ So his servants took him out of the chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and brought him to Jerusalem; and he died, and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. ²⁵ Jeremiah lamented for Josiah. All the singing men and singing women spoke of Josiah in their lamentations to this day; and they made them an ordinance in Israel. These are written in the lamentations. ²⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds, according to that which is written in the law of Yahweh, ²⁷ and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

he should've learnt the lesson from the success of David and the failure of Solomon, that God seeks a broken heart rather than physical sacrifice. In any case, the people of Judah were soon taken into captivity because of their wickedness; Josiah gave them sacrifices to offer, whereas ideally they should've brought their own. We simply can't give spirituality to others.

35:21 This spirit of seeking a fight was his destruction; he should've learnt the lessons from Abijah in 13:3 who made the same mistake. God's history is written so that we might learn from it; but whilst it remains in our minds as mere history for the sake of it and doesn't become a living word speaking to us personally, it won't fulfil its intention. Perhaps Josiah's zeal for God had lifted him up in pride, and he thought that he could show his zeal for God by aggression towards 'the world', represented as always by Egypt. But aggression for the sake of it is so displeasing to God; God gave His Son to die for this world, this Egypt, rather than to try to destroy it for the sake of it. And it cost Josiah his life. Spiritual superiority, arrogance and aggression are simply so abhorrent to God.

35:22 *The words of Neco from the mouth of God* – The words of pagan Neco weren't inspired by God but were indirectly from Him, just as the words of Caiaphas were in Jn. 12:49-51. We mustn't think that unbelievers have nothing to teach us; God may be trying to communicate with us through them, although this doesn't make the channel of His communication righteous.

CHAPTER 36 Nov.7***The Final Kings of Judah***

Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. ² Joahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. ³ The king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem, and fined the land one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ⁴ The king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Neco took Joahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt. ⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh his God. ⁶ Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. ⁷ Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of Yahweh to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. ⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place. ⁹ Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months

and ten days in Jerusalem. He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh. ¹⁰ At the return of the year king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the beautiful vessels of the house of Yahweh, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. ¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. ¹² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh his God; he didn't humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking the words of Yahweh. ¹³ He also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning to Yahweh, the God of Israel. ¹⁴ Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Yahweh which He had made holy in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against His people, until there was no remedy.

36:9 *Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign* – 2 Kings 24:8 says he was 18, and Ez. 19:5-9 speaks of him as a young lion who killed people – relevant to an 18 year old but not an 8 year old. The Septuagint – the Greek version of the Old Testament which the New Testament writers tend to quote rather than the Hebrew text – gives “eighteen” here. This is an example of where although the Bible text itself is inspired, there may be slight errors of copying in a few places as the manuscripts were transmitted over the centuries.

Judah Taken Into Captivity

¹⁷ Therefore He brought on them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or gray-headed. He gave them all into his hand. ¹⁸ All the vessels of God's house, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. ¹⁹ They burnt God's house and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all the beautiful vessels of it. ²⁰ He carried those who had escaped from the sword away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Per-

sia: ²¹ to fulfil the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. As long as it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years. ²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing saying, ²³ Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, Yahweh, the God of heaven has given all the kingdoms of the earth to me; and He has commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up.

36:17 *King of the Chaldeans* – Assyria is here called 'Chaldea' perhaps to bring out the fact the people of Abraham, who had been called out of Ur in Chaldea, were now returning there. The call of the Gospel is a call to separation; if we don't want to be separate from this world, we shall be returned there. When Christ returns, those responsible to Him will come before His judgment, and the rejected will be sent back into the world to share the judgments coming upon it (1 Cor. 11:32). But that will be the last thing they want – seeing the eternity of God's new world stretching before them, to be sent back into this world which they so preferred in this their day of opportunity.

36:22 *Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus* – Although God can work directly on the mind / spirit of people, Dan. 10:13 says that the Angel who brought this about was initially resisted by the king of Persia for 21 days. This amazing proclamation by Cyrus, to allow the Jews to return to their land with his blessing and rebuild their temple, was genuinely from him; and yet the Angel had worked through various ways to stir him up to it. The amount of Angelic activity going on behind the scenes in our lives and in the geopolitics of the world is amazing; God isn't indifferent nor inactive, but is ceaselessly at work to bring about His Kingdom plans for us His people.

EZRA

CHAPTER 1 Nov.8

The Temple to Be Rebuilt

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, ² Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He has commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. ⁴ Whoever is left, in any place where he lives, let the men of his place help him with silver, with gold, with goods, and with animals, be-

sides the freewill offering for God’s house which is in Jerusalem’.

Offerings for the Temple

⁵ Then the heads of fathers’ households of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up, rose up to build the house of Yahweh which is in Jerusalem. ⁶ All those who were around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with animals, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. ⁷ Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Yahweh, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; ⁸ even those, Cyrus king of Persia brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. ⁹ This is the number of them: thirty platters of

1:1 God ‘stirred up’ the spirit of Cyrus and also of the Jews who returned (:1,5). Isaiah uses the same Hebrew term to describe how Israel’s saviour would be “raised up” [s.w.] – Is. 41:2,25; 45:13. And yet Isaiah pleads with Zion, i.e. the faithful, to indeed be stirred up – Is. 51:17; 52:1 appeals to Zion to “Awake!” – the same word translated “stirred up”. But Isaiah tragically concluded that there were so few who would ‘stir up themselves’ (Is. 64:7). God had given them the potential to be ‘stirred up’ in their hearts and minds to leave Babylon and return – but they wouldn’t respond. And today, the same happens. God is willing to change hearts, to stir up materialistic and complacent spirits – but because we’re not robots, we have to respond. And yet, God’s grace still shines through. 1 Kings 8:47-50 had predicted that God would give the exiles compassion before their captors *if* they repented. They didn’t repent, as passages like Ez. 18 make clear (they blamed everything on their fathers and protested their personal innocence) – and yet still God gave them compassion in the eyes of their captors, through the amazing decrees of Cyrus enabling them to return to their land and rebuild the temple at his expense.

gold, one thousand platters of silver, twenty-nine knives, ¹⁰ thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels one thousand. ¹¹ All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand four hundred. Sheshbazzar brought all these up, when the captives were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 2 Nov.8

List of Those Who Returned from Exile

Now these are the children of the province, who went up out of the captivity of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each one to his city; ² who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelai-ah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: ³ The children of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two. ⁴ The children of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two. ⁵ The children of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five. ⁶ The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and

twelve. ⁷ The children of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four. ⁸ The children of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five. ⁹ The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty. ¹⁰ The children of Bani, six hundred and forty-two. ¹¹ The children of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three. ¹² The children of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two. ¹³ The children of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six. ¹⁴ The children of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six. ¹⁵ The children of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four. ¹⁶ The children of Ater, of Hezekiah, ninety-eight. ¹⁷ The children of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three. ¹⁸ The children of Jorah, one hundred and twelve. ¹⁹ The children of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three. ²⁰ The children of Gibbar, ninety-five. ²¹ The children of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three. ²² The men of Netophah, fifty-six. ²³ The men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight. ²⁴ The children of Azmaveth, forty-two. ²⁵ The children of Kiriath Arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three. ²⁶ The children of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one. ²⁷ The men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two. ²⁸ The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred

2:1 The majority of Jews preferred to stay in Babylon. “The province” (singular) suggest that only a few Jews who lived in the province of Babylon returned (one out of 127 provinces; see 7:16 too), even though there were significant numbers of Jews in all the provinces, as the book of Esther makes clear (as also does Neh. 1:8, which says that the Babylonian captivity fulfilled God’s prophecy to scatter Israel amongst all nations). Those who did return were very significant to God, and He has therefore recorded their names and numbers to the individual, even how many donkeys went with them – each one who returned was so special to Him, just as we will be if we respond to the call of the restored Kingdom and come out from ‘Babylon’.

and twenty-three.²⁹ The children of Nebo, fifty-two.³⁰ The children of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six.³¹ The children of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four.³² The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.³³ The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five.³⁴ The children of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five.³⁵ The children of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.³⁶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three.³⁷ The children of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two.³⁸ The children of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven.³⁹ The children of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.⁴⁰ The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy-four.⁴¹ The singers: the children of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight.⁴² The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all one hundred and thirty-nine.⁴³ The Nethinim: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,⁴⁴ the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon,⁴⁵ the children of Lebanah,

the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub,⁴⁶ the children of Hagab, the children of Shamlai, the children of Hanan,⁴⁷ the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah,⁴⁸ the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam,⁴⁹ the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai,⁵⁰ the children of Asnah, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephisim,⁵¹ the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,⁵² the children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,⁵³ the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Temah,⁵⁴ the children of Nezhiah, the children of Hatipha.⁵⁵ The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Hassophereth, the children of Peruda,⁵⁶ the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,⁵⁷ the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth Hazzebaim, the children of Ami.⁵⁸ All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred and ninety-two.⁵⁹ These were those who went up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not show their fathers' houses, and their genealogy, whether they were

2:52 Comparing the list of names in the list of returnees in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, we find that a number of names recur in both lists, e.g. Bazluth (Ezra 2:52; Neh. 7:54). It could be that some went from Babylon to Judah with Ezra, then returned to Babylon, and returned with Nehemiah. This hardly sounds like the glorious, positive, confident return of the captives to Zion prophesied in the restoration prophecies. Many respond to the call to leave the good life in Babylon but then falter; the vision of the restored Kingdom on earth and our working with God's blessing to bring it about just doesn't motivate us as it should.

of Israel: ⁶⁰ the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two. ⁶¹ Of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Hakkoz, the children of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name. ⁶² These sought their place among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. ⁶³ The governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things, until there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. ⁶⁴ The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, ⁶⁵ besides their male servants and their female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven: and they had two hundred singing men and singing women. ⁶⁶ Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six;

their mules, two hundred and forty-five; ⁶⁷ their camels, four hundred and thirty-five; their donkeys, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

More Offerings for the Temple

⁶⁸ Some of the heads of fathers' households, when they came to the house of Yahweh which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for God's house to set it up in its place: ⁶⁹ they gave after their ability into the treasury of the work sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver and one hundred priests' garments. ⁷⁰ So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, lived in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

CHAPTER 3 Nov.9

Burnt Offerings Resume

When the seventh month had come and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gath-

2:64 Haggai's criticism of the returnees is more understandable if we understand that most of them were the poor, who hadn't 'made it' in Babylon and who went to Judah hoping to get nice houses, great harvests and material blessings – rather than to rebuild *God's* house. It would be fair to infer that only the poor Jews returned from Babylon. The record here in :64-70 speaks of 42,360 people returning, along with 7,337 servants and 200 singers, making a total of 49,837. And yet only 8,100 animals went with them to transport them. This means that many would have walked. They carried 5,400 vessels for use in the temple – so the picture could be that their more wealthy brethren laded them with goods, but only the poor returned. Further, the list of towns of origin in Ezra 2 suggests it was mainly those who had originally lived in peripheral villages who returned, rather than the inhabitants of Jerusalem and larger cities. It's stressed twice that only "some" of the returned exiles supported the work of the temple (:68-70) – which was supposed to be the main reason for their return. We too can leave 'Babylon' by responding to the call of the Kingdom when actually our motivation is simply a disillusion with our present life, with life in 'Babylon', rather than a serious desire to work for the establishment of *God's* Kingdom.

3:1 *As one man* – Unity amongst God's people comes from all being committed to a

ered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. ² Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak stood up with his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers, and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. ³ In spite of their fear because of the peoples of the surrounding lands, they set the altar on its base; and they offered burnt offerings on it to Yahweh, even burnt offerings morning and evening. ⁴ They kept the feast of tents, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the ordinance, as the duty of every day required; ⁵ and afterwards the continual burnt offering, the offerings of the new moons, of all the set feasts of Yahweh that were consecrated, and of each one who willingly offered a freewill offering to Yahweh. ⁶ From the first day of the seventh month, they began to offer burnt offerings to Yahweh; but the founda-

tion of Yahweh's temple was not yet laid. ⁷ They also gave money to the masons, and to the carpenters. They also gave food, drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus King of Persia.

The Rebuilding of the Temple Begins

⁸ Now in the second year of their coming to God's house at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brothers the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began the work and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of Yahweh's house. ⁹ Then Jeshua stood with his sons and his brothers, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, having the oversight of the workmen in God's house: the

sacrificial life before God and a genuine desire to hear God's word and obey it (:2-4).

3:3 *Their fear* – The promises of the restoration from Babylon had repeatedly emphasized that they were not to fear nor be dismayed because God would be behind their return – if they were returning to rebuild God's house and Kingdom rather than seek their own houses and kingdom (Jer. 30:10; Is. 41:10,13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2,8; 51:7; 54:4). This is such strong emphasis that we have to conclude that their fear was because they didn't allow God's prophetic word to influence them as they should have done.

3:7 *According to the grant that they had from Cyrus King of Persia* – Hag. 1:8, a prophecy given 18 years after the decree of Cyrus, orders the people to go up into the hills of Judah and get wood with which to build the temple. And yet we read here that the decree of Cyrus 18 years earlier had resulted in cedar wood being brought from Tyre and Sidon, enough for the temple to be built. Where did that wood go? Is the implication that the leadership had used it for their own wood ceilinged houses (Hag. 1:4)? It all seems so petty minded. But this is what we are tempted to do, time and again – build up our own house and leave God's house desolate and in a very poor second place.

sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brothers the Levites. ¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of Yahweh's temple, they set the priests in their clothing with trumpets, with the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Yahweh, according to the directions of David king of Israel. ¹¹ They sang to one another in praising and giving thanks to Yahweh: For He is good, for His grace endures forever toward Israel. All the people shouted with a great shout when they praised Yahweh, because the foundation of the house of Yahweh had been laid.

Joy and Weeping

¹² But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' households, the old men who had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice. Many also shouted aloud for joy, ¹³ so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard far away.

CHAPTER 4 Nov. 9

Opposition to Rebuilding the Temple

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that

the children of the captivity were building a temple to Yahweh, the God of Israel; ² then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' households and said to them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as you do; and we sacrifice to Him since the days of Esar Haddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here. ³ But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel, said to them, You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves together will build to Yahweh, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us. ⁴ Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, ⁵ and hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

A Letter Sent to the King of Persia

⁶ In the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. ⁷ In the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his companions, to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in Syrian, and set forth

3:12 The young and old didn't rejoice together as required by the restoration prophecy of Jer. 31:12-13. Instead the old men wept, perhaps at how small the temple was compared even with Solomon's, at how Ezekiel's temple wasn't being rebuilt; whilst the younger ones rejoiced.

4:2 *We seek your God, as you do* – They didn't actually seek the God of Israel. The fact people have some belief in a 'god' and perform religious worship doesn't mean

in the Syrian language. ⁸ Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this way: ⁹ then Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions, the Dinaites, and the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Shushanchites, the Dehaites, the Elamites, ¹⁰ and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar brought over, and set in the city of Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the River, and so forth, wrote. ¹¹ This is the copy of the letter that they sent to Artaxerxes the king:

Opposition to Rebuilding Jerusalem

Your servants the men beyond the River, and so forth. ¹² Be it known to the king, that the Jews who came up from you have come to us to Jerusalem; they are building the rebellious and the bad city, and have finished the walls, and repaired the foundations. ¹³ Be it known now to the king that if this city is built, and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and in the end it will be hurtful to the kings. ¹⁴ Now because we eat the salt of the palace, and it is not right for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and informed the king; ¹⁵ that search may

be made in the book of the records of your fathers: so you shall find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful to kings and provinces, and that they have made rebellion within the same city from old time; for which cause this city was laid waste. ¹⁶ We inform the king that if this city be built and the walls finished, because of this you shall have no portion beyond the River.

The King Orders the Rebuilding to Stop

¹⁷ Then the king sent an answer to Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the River: Peace, and so forth. ¹⁸ The letter which you sent to us has been plainly read before me. ¹⁹ I decreed, and search has been made, and it is found that this city of old time has made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it. ²⁰ There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the country beyond the River; and tribute, custom, and toll, was paid to them. ²¹ Make a decree now to cause these men to cease, and that this city not be built, until a decree shall be made by me. ²² Take heed that you not be slack herein: why should damage grow to

that the people of the true God have anything in common with them. The mantra of 'unity' has often been used in attempts to undermine the work of the true God. We live in a world of reductionism whereby the lowest common denominator is often used as a tool for manipulation. Yet the true God stands revealed in His word as He is and the core of the Gospel is in that sense non-negotiable.

the hurt of the kings? ²³ Then when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their companions, they went in haste to Jerusalem to the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. ²⁴ Then ceased the work of God's house which is at Jerusalem; and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

CHAPTER 5 Nov.10

Rebuilding the Temple Starts Again

Now the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who

were in Judah and Jerusalem; in the name of the God of Israel they prophesied to them. ² Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build God's house which is at Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, helping them. ³ At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shetharbozenai, and their companions, and said thus to them, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall? ⁴ Then we told them in this way, what the names of the men were who were making this building. ⁵ But the eye

4:24 This means that the work of rebuilding the temple was suspended for 21 years. This corresponds to the 21 days (a day representing a year) during which the Angel Gabriel worked on the prince of Persia to make him genuinely support the work of rebuilding, even though during that period the prince of Persia resisted him (Dan. 10:13). This was in response to Daniel's 21 days of prayer (Dan. 10:1,12). So although it may seem that God is distant and everything is in the hands of human rulers, in fact the Angels are actively at work, not forcing people to do what they don't want, but seeking to arrange circumstances so that they make the choices which favour God's work going forward. But because of this desire not to 'force' men, there are such delays. This is one way to explain the apparent silence of God at times in our lives, and the way that humanly, things can appear to 'go wrong'.

5:1 Ezra 4 says that the reason the temple was not further rebuilt was because of the decree of Artaxerxes suspending the building programme; then Haggai came and told Israel that the temple wasn't built because they had preferred to build their own ceiled houses (Hag. 1:4). So God had confirmed the people in the way they chose. They preferred to build their houses rather than His, so He stopped them from building His house altogether until they wholeheartedly recommitted themselves to Him. God arranges circumstances in our lives to try to bring us toward total commitment rather than a surface level devotion which is made out of social necessity.

5:2 *With them were the prophets of God, helping them* – The prophets didn't merely speak God's word and think they had done their job by relaying it; they proactively worked to as it were bring about the fulfilment of the things they predicted. We should have the same spirit, living according to the good news of the Kingdom which we preach.

5:3, 4 This is a situation very similar to that in Acts 4:18-21, where the early Christians were ordered not to preach about Christ and likewise threatened, but they felt they must do God's will above the will of man. And true believers often have this

of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease, until the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it. ⁶ This is the copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shetharbozenai, and his companions the Apharsachites, who were beyond the River, sent to Darius the king.

A Letter Sent to Darius

⁷ They sent a letter to him, in which was written thus: To Darius the king, all peace. ⁸ Be it known to the king, that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is built with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls; and this work goes on with diligence and prospers in their hands. ⁹ Then we asked those elders, and said to them thus, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall? ¹⁰ We asked them their names also, to inform you that we might write the names of the men who were at their head. ¹¹ Thus they returned us answer saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and are building the house that was built these many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. ¹² But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this

house, and carried the people away into Babylon. ¹³ But in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree to build this house of God. ¹⁴ The gold and silver vessels also of God's house, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought into the temple of Babylon, those Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; ¹⁵ and he said to him, 'Take these vessels, go, put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let God's house be built in its place'. ¹⁶ Then the same Sheshbazzar came, and laid the foundations of God's house which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now has it been in building, and yet it is not completed. ¹⁷ Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let a search be made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem; and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

CHAPTER 6 Nov.10

The Search for Cyrus' Decree

Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the archives, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. ² There was found at Achmetha, in

choice; we are to seek to live obediently in the societies within which we live, but we cannot obey any command (especially relating to military service) which causes us to disobey God's principles. God's word must come before the word of men.

the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll, and therein was thus written for a record: ³ In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree: Concerning God's house at Jerusalem, let the house be built, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let its foundations be strongly laid; its height sixty cubits, and its breadth sixty cubits; ⁴ with three courses of great stones, and a course of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house. ⁵ Also let the gold and silver vessels of God's house, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored, and brought again to the temple which is at Jerusalem, each one to its place; and you shall put them in God's house.

A New Decree for the Work to Continue

⁶ Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and your companions the Apharsachites, who are beyond the River, you must not hinder this matter. ⁷ Leave the work of this house of God alone;

let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place. ⁸ Moreover I make a decree what you shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence to these men, that they be not hindered. ⁹ That which they have need of, both young bulls, and rams, and lambs, for burnt offerings to the God of heaven; also wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests who are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail; ¹⁰ that they may offer sacrifices of pleasant aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons. ¹¹ Also I have made a decree, that whoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this: ¹² and the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow all kings and peoples who shall put forth their hand to alter the same, to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a de-

6:3 *Sixty cubits* – The temple which Cyrus commanded the Jews to build in Jerusalem was of different (smaller) dimensions to that of Ezekiel. Two possibilities arise here. Either Israel chose to listen to the words of man rather than those of God through Ezekiel; or perhaps God reduced the dimensions, knowing that this was within the capability of Israel to achieve. In any case, Israel were encouraged by Divine prophesy in the work of building according to the pattern which Cyrus had given (:14). God is so eager to work with men that He will work with us on our lower level, even if it is a level lower than what we are capable of. And so we should treat our weaker brethren.

6:10 Paul exhorts us to pray for kings and governors, in the very language of the LXX here about the returnees praying in the new temple for the kings of Babylon (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

cree; let it be done with all diligence. ¹³ Then Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and their companions, because Darius the king had sent a decree, did accordingly with all diligence. ¹⁴ The elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. ¹⁵ This house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

Joyous Dedication of the Temple

¹⁶ The children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. ¹⁷ They offered at the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁸ They set the priests in

their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. ¹⁹ The children of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. ²⁰ For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure: and they killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brothers the priests, and for themselves. ²¹ The children of Israel who had come again out of the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves to them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek Yahweh, the God of Israel, ate, ²² and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for Yahweh had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, to strengthen their hands in the work of God's house, the God of Israel.

CHAPTER 7 Nov.11

Ezra Comes to Jerusalem

Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son

6:21 The account of Judah's separation from the surrounding peoples reads similarly to that of the purges from idolatry during the reign of the kings. They separated / purged, and then, within a few years, we read of them doing so again. Initially, the exiles separated from the peoples of the land; by 9:1 they are in need of separating again; and by 10:11 likewise; then they separate (10:16), only to need another call to separation by the time of Neh. 9:2; 13:3. Our natures gravitate downwards, and any personal spiritual reformation we achieve has to be consciously maintained.

6:22 *Yahweh had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria* – Constantly we see evidence of God's ability to give people attitudes of mind, e.g. joy, and to affect how even unbelieving kings think about His people (Prov. 21:1). As believers in Christ, our greatest need is for spiritual mindedness, to think spiritually rather about worldly and fleshly things; and we can ask God to help us in this. For He surely has the power to change our hearts.

of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, ² the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, ³ the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, ⁴ the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, ⁵ the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest; ⁶ this Ezra went up from Babylon: and he was a willing scribe in the law of Moses, which Yahweh, the God of Israel, had given; and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of Yahweh his God on him. ⁷ There went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters and the Nethinim, to Jerusa-

lem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. ⁸ He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. ⁹ For on the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God on him. ¹⁰ For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Yahweh, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.

The Letter of Artaxerxes

¹¹ Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, even the scribe of the words of the commandments

7:2 Son of Zadok – It could have been possible for the Messianic Kingdom to have been established at the time of the restoration, and Ezekiel's temple prophecies would then have been fulfilled. Ezekiel emphasised that the sons of Zadok were to organize priestly work in the temple (Ez. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11); Ezra, the leader of the initial restoration, was one of the sons of Zadok. He was in a position to fulfil those prophecies, although the bulk of his brethren seem to have precluded this. Ezra was enabled to 'beautify' the temple (:27), the very same word used in Is. 60:7,9,13 about how God would "glorify" [s.w.] His temple with merchandise from throughout the Babylonian empire – all of which was willingly offered by Cyrus and Darius. Ez. 40-48 stress the "gates" dozens of times; and Nehemiah's account likewise stresses many times the attention he paid to setting up the "gates" [s.w.], as if he saw his work as fulfilling Ezekiel's words. Ez. 40:42 speaks of the vessels to be used in the temple [AV "instruments"] with the same word used for the temple vessels which were brought up out of Babylon back to Judah, in fulfilment of several of Isaiah's 'Kingdom' passages (Ezra 1:6-11; 8:25-33 cp. Is. 52:11; 66:20). God's relationship with Israel has in a sense been one long story of Him working out amazingly detailed and extensive potentials, which human inattention and lack of faith and vision meant didn't come true. But still He endures, trying to work with us, and is so thrilled at our attempts to respond. What relief and rejoicing and fulfilment God will have when His Son finally fulfils all these potential scenarios in their essence at His return.

7:10 For Ezra had set his heart – Ezra went up to Jerusalem with his heart set on fulfilling God's word there; and this was exactly the attitude of Jesus. It was evident from His body language that His heart was set upon going to Jerusalem to die there (Lk. 9:51,53). Ezra's single-minded focus upon his objective should be our pattern too; not gaining worldly wealth or honour, but rather the building up of God's house and people, and the things of His Kingdom.

of Yahweh, and of His statutes to Israel: ¹² Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace and so forth. ¹³ I make a decree, that all those of the people of Israel, and their priests and the Levites, in my realm, who are minded of their own free will to go to Jerusalem, go with you. ¹⁴ Because you are sent of the king and his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of your God which is in your hand, ¹⁵ and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel whose habitation is in Jerusalem, ¹⁶ and all the silver and gold that you shall find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem; ¹⁷ therefore you shall with all diligence buy with this money bulls, rams, lambs, with their meal offerings and their drink offerings, and shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. ¹⁸ Whatever shall seem good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do that after the will of your God. ¹⁹ The vessels that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver before the God of Jerusalem. ²⁰ Whatever more shall be needful for the house of your God, which you shall have occasion to grant, grant it out of the king's treasure house. ²¹ I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a de-

cree to all the treasurers who are beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done with all diligence, ²² to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred measures of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. ²³ Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? ²⁴ Also we inform you, that concerning any of the priests and Levites, the singers, porters, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on them. ²⁵ You, Ezra, after the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach him who doesn't know them. ²⁶ Whoever will not do the law of your God, and the law of the king, let judgement be executed on him with all diligence, whether it be to death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

Ezra's Response

²⁷ Blessed be Yahweh, the God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Yahweh which is in Jerusalem; ²⁸ and has extended grace to me before the king, his counsellors and before all the king's mighty

princes. I was strengthened according to the hand of Yahweh my God upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

CHAPTER 8 Nov. 12

The People Who Returned with Ezra

Now these are the heads of their fathers' households, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king: ² Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel. Of the sons of David, Hattush. ³ Of the sons of Shecaniah, of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah; and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males one hundred and fifty. ⁴ Of the sons of Pahathmoab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerariah; and with him two hundred males. ⁵ Of the sons of Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel; and with him three hundred males. ⁶ Of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan; and with him fifty males. ⁷ Of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah; and with him seventy males. ⁸ Of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael; and with him eighty males. ⁹ Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel; and with him two hundred and eighteen males. ¹⁰ Of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah; and with him one hundred and sixty males. ¹¹ Of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai; and with him twenty-eight males. ¹² Of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan; and with him one hundred and ten males. ¹³ Of the sons

of Adonikam, who were the last; and these are their names: Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah; and with them sixty males. ¹⁴ Of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud; and with them seventy males.

Ezra Finds Levites for the Temple

¹⁵ I gathered them together to the river that runs to Ahava; and there we encamped three days: and I viewed the people and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. ¹⁶ Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, who were teachers. ¹⁷ I sent them forth to Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia; and I told them what they should tell Iddo, and his brothers the Nethinim, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring to us ministers for the house of our God. ¹⁸ According to the good hand of our God on us they brought us a man of discretion, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brothers, eighteen; ¹⁹ and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons, twenty; ²⁰ and of the Nethinim, whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim: all of them were mentioned by name.

Fasting and Prayer

²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there,

at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. ²² For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken to the king saying, The hand of our God is on all those who seek Him for good; but His power and His wrath is against all those who forsake Him. ²³ So we fasted and begged our God for this: and He was entreated of us.

Offerings for the Temple

²⁴ Then I set apart twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brothers with them, ²⁵ and weighed to them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his princes, and all Israel there present, had offered: ²⁶ I

weighed into their hand six hundred fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels one hundred talents; of gold one hundred talents; ²⁷ and twenty bowls of gold, of one thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold. ²⁸ I said to them, You are holy to Yahweh, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to Yahweh, the God of your fathers. ²⁹ Guard and keep them, until you weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' households of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the rooms of the house of Yahweh. ³⁰ So the priests and the Levites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

Return to Jerusalem

³¹ Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem: and the

8:21 *A straight way for us* – God's people had been prophesied as returning, walking "by the rivers of waters in a *straight way*, wherein they shall *not stumble*" (Jer. 31:9). Ezra fasted for them to be given a "straight way", as Jeremiah had foretold they could have. He saw the need for them to make the effort to fulfil the prophecy of Ezekiel's vision in which the cherubim made "straight" progress (Ez. 1:12); the wheels on earth surely connect with how Israel should have been, moving in a straight way back to the land, in harmony with the Angel-cherubim above them likewise moving in a straight way. But they failed to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). They were to walk "each one straight before him" (Is. 57:2 Heb.), as each of the cherubim went straight ahead (Ez. 1:12). We too are not alone in this world, we are being guided by the Angels above, and are to walk in step with them.

8:22 The returning exiles had been comforted by the prophetic word: "Fear not... I will *help* you" (Is. 41:10). Ezra was ashamed to ask for *help* against Judah's enemies, the implication being that he wanted that human help but was ashamed to ask for it from the King. He had initially believed those words of Isaiah, but found it hard to maintain that level of faith. We find ourselves so often in this situation as we struggle to believe God's promises in the midst of our secular lives.

hand of our God was on us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the bandit by the way.³² We came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.³³ On the fourth day the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, the Levite.³⁴ Everything was counted and weighed: and all the weight was written at that time.³⁵ The children of the captivity, who had come out of exile, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs and twelve male goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering to Yahweh.³⁶ They delivered the king's commissions to the king's satraps, and to the governors beyond the River: and they furthered the people and God's house.

CHAPTER 9 Nov.13

Ezra Learns of Mixed Marriages

Now when these things were done, the princes drew near to me saying, The people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands and are following their abominations, even those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.² For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mixed themselves with the peoples of the lands. Yes, the hand of the princes and rulers has been chief in this trespass.

Ezra Is Distressed and Prays

³ When I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down confounded.

⁴ Then were assembled to me all who

9:1 The Levites in the restored Kingdom were not to marry divorcees or Gentiles (Ez. 44:22); but they did just this (see too Mal. 2:11-16). Time and again, they didn't have the Kingdom experience because they didn't want it. All who truly love the Kingdom and want it to ultimately be real for them will have it (2 Tim. 4:8).

9:2 *For they have taken of their daughters* – This was why they were following the idols of the Gentiles (:1). Marriage out of the faith is strongly associated with adopting the religion of the unbelieving partner. Whatever exceptions there are to this rule, that is the general pattern – be it the worship of Baal in those times, or agnosticism today. This is the spiritual danger of marriage to unbelievers.

9:3 *Plucked off the hair of my head* – The very punishment for marriage out of the faith at this time (Neh. 13:25). Ezra so identified with his weak brethren that he felt as if he himself had committed the sin; he even blushed before God because of the failure of His people with whom He was so closely identified (:6). This should be our response when we encounter weakness in our brethren, rather than self-righteousness and mental or physical separation from them as persons. The Lord Jesus supremely identified with us as sinners in His time of dying; our similar identity with our sinful brethren is therefore one way of living out the spirit of the cross.

trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat confounded until the evening offering. ⁵ At the evening offering I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn; and I fell on my knees, and spread out my hands to Yahweh my God; ⁶ and I said, My God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have increased over our head, and our guiltiness has grown up to the heavens. ⁷ Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty to this day; and for our iniquities we, our kings and our priests, have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder and to confusion of face, as it is this day. ⁸ Now for a little moment grace has been shown from Yahweh our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a

little reviving in our bondage. ⁹ For we are bondservants; yet our God has not forsaken us in our bondage, but has extended loving kindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments ¹¹ which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets saying, ‘The land, to which you go to possess it, is an unclean land through the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, through their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their filthiness. ¹² Now therefore don’t give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters to your sons, nor seek their peace or their prosperity forever; that you may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever’. ¹³ After all that has come upon us for

9:4 The sins of those who returned are called “the transgression of those that had been carried away”. Yet those who returned to the land weren’t mainly the generation who had been carried away. The intended confusion is surely to suggest that those who returned committed the same sins as had led Judah into captivity a generation earlier. Ezra comments on this fact in his subsequent prayer (:7). One sad thing about spiritual history is that so few learn the lessons from others’ failures; the entire Bible is in one sense a history of spiritual failure, written for our learning (Rom. 15:4).

9:9 Ezra referred to the Jews in Babylon as those “bondservants... in bondage” – when historical records, as well as the book of Esther and the fact Nehemiah the Jew was the king’s cupbearer, show that the Jews were very far from being servants in Babylonian society. Yet Ezra perceived the spiritual poverty and servanthood of remaining in that affluent society, compared to the freedom of giving it all up and going to rebuild the ruins of Zion.

9:13 Ezra said that God had punished them less than their iniquities deserved; yet he appears to have in mind Is. 40:2, where God said that at the time of Zion’s restoration, He would admit to having punished her “double for all her sins”. Yahweh in His love

our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You, our God, has punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and has given us such a remnant, ¹⁴ shall we again break Your commandments, and join in affinity with the peoples that do these abominations? Wouldn't You be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? ¹⁵ Yahweh, the God of Israel, You are righteous; for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is this day. Behold, we are before You in our guiltiness; for we cannot remain before You because of this.

CHAPTER 10 Nov.14

A Plan to End Mixed Marriages

Now while Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before God's house, there was gathered together to him out of Israel a very great assembly of men and women and children; for the people wept very bitterly. ² Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land. Yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing. ³ Now therefore let us make a

and pity felt that He had punished them twice as much as they deserved; but Ezra realized that it was less than what they deserved. His love is so abounding that He almost rushes to take guilt for having justly punished sin. Another example is 9:8: "And now *for a little moment* grace has been shown from Yahweh". This uses the same relatively rare Hebrew construction as in Is. 54:6-8, which likens Judah to a young wife who had been "refused" during the 70 years captivity: "For *a little moment* have I forsaken you... in a little wrath I hid My face from you *for a moment*". Here is Yahweh, likening Himself to a faithful husband feeling more guilty than He was, taking upon Himself the fault for it all, saying that for the "small moment" of the captivity, He had forsaken His people. But Ezra saw that "little moment" as a time when they received *grace*; what may appear to some as forsaking is in fact God's grace to us, when spiritually discerned – whether it be deep within our own lives, or in the state of affairs upon this planet.

9:14 The covenant was not to be broken in the restored Kingdom; the temple had been destroyed before because of breaking covenant with Yahweh (Ez. 44:7). But now, Judah broke covenant [s.w.] with Yahweh at the time of the restoration by marrying Gentiles and worshipping their gods.

9:15 *We cannot remain before You* – Ezra is recognizing that the prophecies of the restored Kingdom which speak of God's returned people standing or remaining [same Hebrew words] before Him for ever were not going to come true (Is. 66:20-22; Ez. 44:15).

10:3 The suggestion to divorce their Gentile wives and send them away to their Gentile families, even with the children they had had by them (:44), was on their initiative. When there was a similar repentance about marriage out of the faith in Nehemiah's time, this wasn't done. There are degrees to which we can repent; the word 'repent' literally means a change of mind. Repentance is a matter of the heart, hence we can't judge others' repentance. But it will be articulated to different levels by different people. The fact there are different levels on which we can respond to God shouldn't

covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God. Let it be done according to the law. ⁴ Arise; for the matter belongs to you, and we are with you. Be courageous, and do it. ⁵ Then Ezra arose, and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they would do according to this word. So they swore. ⁶ Then Ezra rose up from before God's house, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came there, he ate no bread, nor drank water; for he mourned because of the trespass of the captives. ⁷ They made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together to Jerusalem; ⁸ and that whoever didn't come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the

elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the assembly of the captives. ⁹ Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together to Jerusalem within the three days; it was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month: and all the people sat in the broad place before God's house, trembling because of this matter, and because of the great rain. ¹⁰ Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, You have trespassed, and have married foreign women, to increase the guilt of Israel. ¹¹ Now therefore make confession to Yahweh, the God of your fathers, and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the foreign women. ¹² Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, As you have said concerning us, so must we do. ¹³ But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand outside; neither is this a work

encourage a spirit of minimalism within us, but rather a desire to serve Him on as high a level as we can.

10:9 In the context of the restoration, Is. 66:1,2 had stated that having a humble spirit which trembled at God's word was more important than building a physical house for Him. The Jews did tremble at the word at the beginning of the rebuilding. But it was a momentary thing; they came to see the building of the walls as more important than keeping a trembling spirit. Works eclipsed spirituality. Yet Isaiah had taught that the trembling at the word was more essentially important than building temples. But Judah paid no attention in the long term.

10:13 *We are not able to stand outside* – Literally, 'we are not strong enough to be outside'. The returned exiles were prophesied as having increased strength and energy for their task of rebuilding the temple and God's Kingdom; their strength would not fail (Is. 40:29–41:1), in contrast to how for the idolater, "his *strength fails*" (Is. 44:12). But the same word is used here about how the strength of the redeemed exiles *did* become weak; and again in Neh. 4:10 about how the Jewish builders didn't have strength to remove all the rubble to rebuild the walls. God will strengthen us in all our weakness – if we are truly committed to His work, His people, His house and His Kingdom. Resources will be provided and our personal weaknesses overcome – if these things are the true yearning of our hearts.

of one day or two; for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. ¹⁴ Let now our princes be appointed for all the assembly, and let all those who are in our cities who have married foreign women come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and its judges, until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter is resolved. ¹⁵ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah stood up against this; and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. ¹⁶ The children of the captivity did so. Ezra the priest, with certain heads of fathers' households, after their fathers' houses, and all of them by their names, were set apart; and they sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. ¹⁷ They made an end with all the men who had married foreign women by the first day of the first month.

Those Who Had Married Foreign Wives

¹⁸ Among the sons of the priests there were found who had married foreign women: of the sons of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brothers, Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. ¹⁹ They gave their hand that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their guilt. ²⁰ Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. ²¹ Of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah. ²² Of the sons of Pashhur: Elieonai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and

Elasah. ²³ Of the Levites: Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. ²⁴ Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the porters: Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. ²⁵ Of Israel: Of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. ²⁶ Of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. ²⁷ Of the sons of Zattu: Elieonai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. ²⁸ Of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, Athlai. ²⁹ Of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. ³⁰ Of the sons of Pahathmoab: Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. ³¹ Of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, ³² Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. ³³ Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei. ³⁴ Of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, and Uel, ³⁵ Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhai, ³⁶ Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷ Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu, ³⁸ and Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, ³⁹ and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, ⁴⁰ Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹ Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴² Shallum, Amariah, Joseph. ⁴³ Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Matithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Iddo, and Joel, Benaiah. ⁴⁴ All these had taken foreign wives; and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

NEHEMIAH

CHAPTER 1 Nov.15

Difficulties in Jerusalem

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, ² that Hanani one of my brothers came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ They said to me, The remnant who are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.

Nehemiah's Prayer

⁴ It happened, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days. I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven ⁵ and said, I beg you, Yahweh the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, Who keeps covenant and grace with those who love Him and keep His commandments: ⁶ Let

Your ear now be attentive, and Your eyes open, that You may listen to the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants; while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against You. Yes, I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have dealt very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember, I beg You, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses saying, 'If you trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples; ⁹ but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from there, and will bring them to the place that I have chosen, to cause My name to dwell there'. ¹⁰ Now these are Your servants and Your people whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. ¹¹ Lord,

1:2 *Who had escaped* – The urgency of 'fleeing' from Babylon was understood by Nehemiah; he speaks of those who had returned to the land as those who has "escaped" from Babylon – even though they had returned with every blessing from the authorities. He perceived as few did the danger of remaining in the soft life of Babylon. The call to leave Babylon is used in the New Testament as the basis of the appeal to mentally leave this world and start a journey towards the restored Kingdom of God on earth at Christ's return.

1:10 When Nehemiah speaks of them having been redeemed by Yahweh's "strong hand" he is using the language of Is. 40:10, regarding how Yahweh would come and save Israel from Babylon and make them 'come to Jerusalem' "with strong hand". Nehemiah saw the prophecy could have been fulfilled then. The way Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:5-7), Ezra (Ezra 7:8; 8:32) and Nehemiah (Neh. 2:11; 13:7) are described as 'coming to Jerusalem' may hint that they could have fulfilled this coming of Yah-

I beg You, let Your ear be attentive now to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants, who delight to fear Your name; and please prosper Your servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Now I was cup-bearer to the king.

CHAPTER 2 Nov.15

The King Allows Nehemiah to Go to Jerusalem

It happened in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes

the king, when wine was before him, that I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad before in his presence. ² The king said to me, Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, Let the king live forever! Why shouldn't my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates have been consumed with fire? ⁴ Then the king said to me, For what do you make

weh to Zion; they *could have been* Messianic figures. So much potential was set up – and wasted – at the time of the return from exile.

1:11 *Your servant* – It seems that Nehemiah could have been a Messiah figure. He 'came up' from Babylon, and was "the servant" who 'prospered' Yahweh's work (also 2:20), just as the servant prophecies required (Is. 53:10; 48:15); and he was thereby the redeemer of his brethren (5:8). He encouraged the singing of praise on the walls of Zion (9:5; 12:46), surely in a conscious effort to fulfil the words of Is. 60:18 – that Zion's gates in Messiah's Kingdom would be praise. He was "despised" as Messiah would be (2:19; Is. 53:3 s.w.). He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, as Messiah would (2:12 cp. Zech. 9:9); and 2:16 sounds very much like "of the people there was none with me" (Is. 63:3). The Gentiles round about came to sit at Nehemiah's table to eat and drink (5:17), just as Isaiah had prophesied could happen on a grander scale at the restoration of the Kingdom. One wonders if the potential fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies was transferred to him? And yet Nehemiah returned to Babylon at least once, and there is no record that on his second visit to Judah he stayed on, but rather, the implication seems to be, he returned again to the service of Babylon. The total lack of Biblical information about his later life may reflect this disappointing decision. This train of thought enables us to appreciate the joy and pleasure which the Father had when finally His beloved Son lived up to all that He sought and expected. It seems Nehemiah could have been a Messiah figure but failed, as did others, to live up to what was potentially possible for him. We must seek to perceive in our lives all those things which are potentially possible for us in God's strength.

2:2 The king's servants were supposed to be always happy and positive in his presence. But Nehemiah's very body language reflected the pain he felt for his impoverished and spiritually weak brethren in Judah. He didn't allow his own wealth and comfortable social standing to isolate himself from them, and as such is a valuable example to the more wealthy and comfortable members of the body of Christ today.

2:4 *So I prayed* – There are times when we need to pray in a half second, with eyes open and fully engaged in a human situation. But the fact God welcomes and accepts this kind of prayer doesn't mean that we can reduce *all* our prayer life to this level; carefully prepared, prolonged prayer is also to feature.

request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ I said to the king, If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favour in your sight, that you would send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may build it. ⁶ The king said to me (the queen was also sitting by him), How long shall your journey be? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. ⁷ Moreover I said to the king, If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah; ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. The king granted my requests because of the good hand of my God upon me.

Nehemiah Inspects the Walls of Jerusalem

⁹ Then I came to the governors beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me captains of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant,

the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, because a man had come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. ¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. ¹² I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me, except the animal that I rode on. ¹³ I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the jackal's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down, and its gates which were consumed with fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the spring gate and to the king's pool; but there was no place for the animal that was under me to pass. ¹⁵ Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ The rulers didn't know where I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest who did the work.

Nehemiah Encourages Rebuilding

¹⁷ Then I said to them, You see the evil situation that we are in, how Je-

2:6 *The queen was also sitting by him* – The implication seems to be that she influenced him to be positive towards Nehemiah and the Jews. She may have been Esther, or some other Jewess.

2:12 God put the idea of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls into Nehemiah's heart, and yet it's clear from 2:2 (see note there) that his own conscience had led him to this idea. God therefore confirms us in the desires of our hearts, positively or negatively.

2:16 We feel here and in :12; 5:7 ("consulted with myself") Nehemiah's loneliness in his mission; a feature of all God's true servants, no matter whether or not they like Nehemiah are flanked by supporters and resources to perform their mission.

rusalem lies waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we won't be disgraced. ¹⁸ I told them of the hand of my God which was for good upon me, as also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. They said, Let us arise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they ridiculed us and despised us and said, What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king? ²⁰ Then I answered them and said to them, The God of heaven will prosper us. Therefore we, His servants, will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 3 Nov. 16

Those Who Rebuilt the Wall

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the sheep gate. They sanctified it, and set up its doors;

even to the tower of Hammeah they sanctified it, to the tower of Hananel. ² Next to him built the men of Jericho. Next to them built Zaccur the son of Imri. ³ The sons of Hassenaah built the fish gate; they laid its beams, and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ⁴ Next to them, Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz made repairs. Next to them, Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel made repairs. Next to them, Zadok the son of Baana made repairs. ⁵ Next to them, the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles didn't put their necks to the work of their Lord. ⁶ Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the old gate. They laid its beams, and set up its doors, and its bolts, and its bars. ⁷ Next to them, Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, repaired the residence of the governor beyond the River. ⁸ Next to him, Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, made repairs. Next to him, Hananiah one of the perfumers made repairs, and

2:20 Gentiles didn't come and help the Jews in building. It could be that their refusal of Gentile help to build the temple, insisting that *only* Jews work in it (see too Ezra 4:3), was actually going too far; by being so exclusive, they were disallowing the fulfilment of the prophecies both in Zech. 6 and in Isaiah, that Gentiles would help in the final rebuilding of Zion.

3:5 *Their nobles didn't put their necks to the work of their Lord* – All these centuries later, God still has note of who amongst His people were true workers and who weren't (He noted too that some “earnestly” did the work, :20). Significantly it was the nobles, the lords and leaders of the people, who found it hard to submit beneath *the* Lord and Master. The higher our social standing and the more human respect we command in this world, in whatever context, the harder it will be for us to recognize that we are merely humble servants beneath the Lord of all creation.

3:8 Goldsmiths and perfumers were hardly civil engineers and building site labourers; neither were the wealthy daughters of a ruler (:12). But God's work at times requires

they fortified Jerusalem even to the broad wall. ⁹ Next to them, Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. ¹⁰ Next to them, Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs across from his house. Next to him, Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs. ¹¹ Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hasshub the son of Pahathmoab, repaired another portion, and the tower of the furnaces. ¹² Next to him, Shalum the son of Hallohesh, the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, he and his daughters, made repairs. ¹³ Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the valley gate. They built it, and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and one thousand cubits of the wall to the dung gate. ¹⁴ Malchijah the son of Rechab, the ruler of the district of Beth Haccherem, repaired the dung gate. He built it, and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars.

Those Who Rebuilt the Southern Part

¹⁵ Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the spring gate. He built it and covered it, and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and the wall of the pool of Shelah by the king's

garden, even to the stairs that go down from the city of David. ¹⁶ After him, Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of half the district of Beth Zur, made repairs to the place opposite the tombs of David, and to the pool that was made, and to the house of the mighty men. ¹⁷ After him the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani, made repairs. Next to him, Hashabiah, the ruler of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. ¹⁸ After him, their brothers, Bavvai the son of Henadad, the ruler of half the district of Keilah, made repairs. ¹⁹ Next to him, Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, repaired another portion, across from the ascent to the armoury at the turning of the wall. ²⁰ After him, Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired another portion, from the turning of the wall to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹ After him, Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz repaired another portion, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. ²² After him, the priests, the men of the Plain, made repairs. ²³ After them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs across from their house. After them, Azariah the son of

us to do what is quite against the grain of our natural inclination; resulting as it did here in men and women of totally different backgrounds, social positions and specialisms working together to do His work. It should be the same in the ecclesia of today.

3:15 The emphasis in the record on bars, gates and locks was perhaps to highlight how the restoration prophecies of Ezekiel, of a people living confidently without those things, had actually not been fulfilled; and therefore the prophesied events of Ez. 38-40 didn't happen – i.e. an invasion of a restored Judah, dwelling without bars and gates, which would lead in to the rebuilding of the temple and establishment of the Kingdom.

Maaseiah the son of Ananiah made repairs beside his own house. ²⁴ After him, Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another portion, from the house of Azariah to the turning of the wall, and to the corner. ²⁵ Palal the son of Uzai made repairs opposite the turning of the wall, and the tower that stands out from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs. ²⁶ (Now the Nethinim lived in Ophel, to the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that stands out.) ²⁷ After him the Tekoites repaired another portion, over against the great tower that stands out, and to the wall of Ophel. ²⁸ Above the horse gate, the priests made repairs, each one across from his own house. ²⁹ After them, Zadok the son of Immer made repairs across from his own house. After him, Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the east gate, made repairs. ³⁰ After him, Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another portion. After him,

Meshullam the son of Berechiah made repairs across from his place. ³¹ After him, Malchijah one of the goldsmiths to the house of the Nethinim, and of the merchants, made repairs over against the Muster gate, and to the ascent of the corner. ³² Between the ascent of the corner and the sheep gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

CHAPTER 4 Nov.17

Opposition to the Work

But it happened that when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. ² He spoke before his brothers and the army of Samaria and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, since they are burned? ³ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, What they are building? If a fox climbed up it, he would break down their stone wall. ⁴ Hear, our God; for

3:31 Nehemiah did his best to bring the potential Kingdom of God about by urging the people to repentance and conformity to God's will, such was his perception of what was going on; that the coming of God's Kingdom was being limited by the apathy of his own people. No fewer than 24 times in Ez. 40-48 are we told that the temple was to be built by 'measure' (e.g. Ez. 40:3,5,10,21,22,24,28,29); and the same word occurs frequently in describing how Nehemiah gave various groups of Jews their own "portion" [s.w. 'measure'] in the work of rebuilding Jerusalem (:11,19,20,22,24,27). He arranged for 12 gates to be built in the wall, as Ez. 48:31-34 had commanded there to be. He built *miphkad*, "the Muster Gate", the "appointed place" [s.w.] of Ez. 43:21. As he 'measured out' the work of rebuilding Jerusalem, he must have been conscious of the Kingdom prophecy of Jer. 31:38-40. It *could* have been fulfilled, this could have been the potential Kingdom of God, and he set about to seek to fulfil it; but those places were not kept "holy unto the Lord", and therefore the Jews were to be again plucked up and thrown down.

we are despised. Turn back their reproach on their own head, give them up for a spoil in a land of captivity. ⁵ Don't cover their iniquity, and don't let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have insulted the builders. ⁶ So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together to half its height; for the people had a mind to work. ⁷ But it happened that when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be filled, then they were very angry. ⁸ They conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. ⁹ But we made our prayer to our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. ¹⁰ Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is fading, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. ¹¹ Our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, until we come into their midst, and kill them, and cause the work to cease. ¹² It happened that when the Jews who lived by them came, they said to us ten times from all places, Wherever you turn, they will attack

us. ¹³ Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴ I looked, and rose up, and said to the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Don't be afraid of them! Remember the Lord, Who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

Opposition Is Overcome

¹⁵ It happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and God had brought their counsel to nothing, that we returned all of us to the wall, each one to his work. ¹⁶ It happened from that time onwards, that half of my servants worked in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. ¹⁷ They all built the wall while those who bore burdens loaded themselves; each one with one of his hands toiled in the work, and with the other held his weapon; ¹⁸ and the builders, each one wore his sword at his side, and so built. He who sounded the trumpet was by me. ¹⁹ I said to the nobles, to

4:4 Is. 51:3-11 is clearly in a restoration context: "For Yahweh shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places... Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law; fear not the reproach of men [s.w. Neh. 1:3; 2:17; 4:4; 5:9 about the reproach of the Gentiles against the partially rebuilt Jerusalem], neither be afraid of their reviling". Insofar as Nehemiah and the Jews knew this prophecy, they would have taken great encouragement. But maybe they were unfamiliar with it, and yet still did the work, although lacking the encouragement which they could have had. Our familiarity with God's word becomes of great value when in a difficult situation we suddenly perceive how we are being spoken to directly by God's prophetic word.

the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated on the wall, one far from another.²⁰ Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally there to us. Our God will fight for us.²¹ So we worked at rebuilding. Half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning until the stars appeared.²² Likewise at the same time said I to the people, Let each one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labour in the day.²³ So I, my brothers, my servants, and the men of the guard who followed me, did not take off our clothes except to wash.

CHAPTER 5 Nov.18

The Poor Are Suffering

Then there arose a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brothers the Jews.² For there were some that said, We, our sons and our daughters, are many. Let us get grain, that we may eat and live.³ Some also there were that said, We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses. Let us get

grain, because of the famine.⁴ There were also some who said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute using our fields and our vineyards as collateral.⁵ Yet our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children as their children. Indeed, we have to bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants. Some of our daughters have already been brought into bondage. Neither is it in our power to get out of it; for other men have our fields and our vineyards.

Nehemiah Has a Just Solution

⁶I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.⁷ Then I considered the matter, then contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, You exact usury, each one from his brother. I held a great assembly against them.⁸ I said to them, We, as much as we could, have redeemed our brothers the Jews that were sold to the nations. Would you really sell your brothers, and should they be sold to us? Then they held their peace, and found never a word to answer.⁹ Also I said, The thing

5:1-5 The prophecies of the restored Kingdom emphasized that the princes would not then oppress the people (Ez. 45:8,9; 46:18); but we see here that they did (see too Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5). Jer. 7:3-7 made it clear that Judah's return to the land was to be conditional upon them not oppressing the poor – only “*then* will I cause you to dwell in this place”. Yet in His grace and zeal for His people, it seems God overlooked that condition – for the returned exiles *did* oppress each other, and yet they returned to the land. And yet they would've dwelt in Zion “for ever and ever” (Jer. 7:7) if they had not been abusive to others and truly loved God. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi all record social injustice as being the order of the day at the time of the restoration.

5:7 See on 2:16.

5:8 *We... have redeemed our brothers* – God redeemed the exiles from Babylon (Is. 48:20; 51:11; 52:9; 62:12), and our response to that redemption should be to redeem others and not abuse them.

that you do is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the nations our enemies? ¹⁰ For this reason, I my brothers and my servants lend them money and grain. Please let us stop this usury. ¹¹ Please restore to them, even this day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil, that you are charging them. ¹² Then they said, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do, even as you say. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they would do according to this promise. ¹³ Also I shook out my lap and said, So may God shake out every man from His house and from His work that doesn't perform this promise; even thus may he be shaken out, and emptied. All the assembly said, Amen, and praised Yahweh. The people did according to this promise.

Nehemiah's Unselfishness

¹⁴ Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even to the thirty second year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve

years, I and my brothers did not eat the bread of the governor. ¹⁵ But the former governors who were before me were supported by the people, and took bread and wine from them, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants ruled over the people: but I didn't do so, because of the fear of God. ¹⁶ Yes, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land; and all my servants were gathered there to the work. ¹⁷ Moreover there were at my table, of the Jews and the rulers, one hundred and fifty men, besides those who came to us from among the nations that were around us. ¹⁸ Now that which was prepared for one day was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine. Yet for all this I didn't demand the bread due to the governor, because the bondage was heavy on this people. ¹⁹ Remember me, my God, for good, for all that I have done for this people.

CHAPTER 6 Nov.18

Plots against Nehemiah

It was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and to the rest of our enemies, that I

5:15 Is. 58:1,2 is a criticism of Judah in exile and also of those who did return to the land – they sought God daily, and yet abused their brethren (Is. 58:6), just as recorded here. If they had ceased from their sins, “*Then* shall your light break forth as the morning”, *if* they had fed the hungry etc, *then* would’ve been fulfilled the Messianic Kingdom prophecies of the light of Zion rising above the Gentiles etc (Is. 58:10,12 cp. Is. 60:1). These Kingdom predictions will ultimately come true at Christ’s return to earth and the establishment of His Kingdom here, but we will only be there if we learn the lessons from Judah’s failure and don’t abuse our brethren.

6:1 *There was no breach left* – Amos 9:11-15 refers to this: “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I

had built the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though even to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates). ² Then Sanballat and Geshem sent to me saying, Come, let us meet together in the villages in the plain of Ono. But they intended to harm me. ³ I sent messengers to them saying, I am doing a great work, so that I can't come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it, and come down to you? ⁴ They sent to me four times in this manner; and I kept giving them the same answer. ⁵ Then, again Sanballat sent his servant to me the fifth time with an open letter in his hand, ⁶ in which was written, It is reported among the na-

tions, and Gashmu says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel. Because of that, you are building the wall. You would be their king, according to this report. ⁷ You have also appointed prophets to speak up for you at Jerusalem saying, 'There is a king in Judah!' Now it will be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. ⁸ Then I sent to him, saying, 'There are no such things done as you say, but you imagine them out of your own heart'. ⁹ For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands will be weakened from the work, that it not be done. But now, may my hands be

will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old". The passage goes on to prophecy a time of great fertility and victory over "Edom". "I will *raise up*" uses a Hebrew word commonly featured in the records of the restoration, when the people were exhorted to "arise up and build" (Ezra 1:5; 3:2; 10:4,15; Neh. 2:18,20). The statement that they would "close up the breaches thereof" is exactly the language of Neh. 6:1, which records that the walls were rebuilt so that there was no breach [s.w.] therein. It was after the Babylonian invasion that Zion was "fallen" and "ruined" (s.w. Jer. 31:18; 45:4; Lam. 2:2,17). "I will build it" is exactly the theme of the records of the return from Babylon (Ezra 1:2,3,5; 3:2,10; 4:1-4; Neh. 2:5,17,18,20; 3:1-3, 13-15; 4:1,3,5,6,10,17,18; 6:1,6; 7:1). Surely Amos 9 is saying that at the rebuilding at the time of the restoration, God's people could have ushered in the Kingdom age of agricultural plenty and victory over their Arab neighbours. But they intermarried with Edom, and suffered drought because they didn't fulfil the requirements to rebuild Zion correctly. But the words of Amos were still to come true in some form – they are given an application in Acts 15:17 which may appear to be way out of context, i.e. to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Thus words which could have had a plain fulfilment at the restoration were given a delayed fulfilment; but they were not fulfilled in a literal sense, but in a spiritual one. And so it may be with many prophecies about us today; they *could be fulfilled* if God's people are more 'fulfilling' of them.

6:3 *Why should the work cease* – This should be our perspective in such times of conflict; cries of unity and reconciliation can be used as a mantra to make God's work cease, and we shouldn't be afraid to see them for what they are. The way the opponents of God's work created a false allegation – that Nehemiah was setting himself up as king – and then tried to blackmail him over it (:7,8) is typical of what happens in these situations. We can simply insist we are telling the truth and not be afraid to name false accusation for what it is (:8).

strengthened. ¹⁰ I went to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home; and he said, Let us meet together in God's house, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple; for they will come to kill you. Yes, in the night will they come to kill you.

Nehemiah Is Not Afraid

¹¹ I said, Should such a man as I flee? Who is there that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. ¹² I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me. Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ He was hired so that I would be afraid, follow his advice, and sin. Thus they would have material for an evil report, that they might reproach me. ¹⁴ Remember, my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and also the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

The Wall is Finished

¹⁵ So the wall was finished in the

twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶ It happened that when all our enemies heard of it, then all the nations that were about us were afraid, and were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done of our God. ¹⁷ Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. ¹⁸ For there were many in Judah sworn to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and his son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah as wife. ¹⁹ Also they spoke of his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

CHAPTER 7 Nov.19

Protection for Jerusalem

Now it happened, once the wall was built and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, ² that I put my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the governor of the castle, in charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God

6:11 As eunuchs weren't allowed within the temple, this could suggest Nehemiah was a eunuch; for he says that for a man like him to enter the temple would be a sin (:13). He would likely have had to be made one in order to be the king's cupbearer (1:11), but he used the limitations which this world had unreasonably placed upon him in order to funnel his creative energy into God's work and the welfare of His people and the things of His Kingdom.

7:2 Nehemiah's brother Hanani was given "charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man" – not just because he was the boss's brother, which is how the nepotism of those times would have usually required. It can be that human qualification, e.g. being a successful businessman, or the brother of a leading brother, is related to positions of eldership amongst us. Yet the Nehemiah passage shows that although sometimes there may be overlap between both spiritual and human qualification, it is the spiritual qualification which must be paramount.

above many. ³ I said to them, Don't let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. While they stand guard, let them shut the doors, and you bar them; and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, everyone in his watch, with everyone near his house.

A List of Those Who Had Returned

⁴ Now the city was wide and large; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not built. ⁵ My God put into my heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written therein: ⁶ These are the children of the province, who went up out of the captivity of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem

and to Judah, each one to his city. ⁷ They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: ⁸ The children of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two. ⁹ The children of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two. ¹⁰ The children of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two. ¹¹ The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and eighteen. ¹² The children of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four. ¹³ The children of Zattu, eight hundred and forty-five. ¹⁴ The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty. ¹⁵ The children of Binnui, six hundred and forty-eight. ¹⁶ The children of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight. ¹⁷ The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred and twenty-two. ¹⁸ The children of

7:5 Nehemiah made a special study of the genealogies in order to find an acceptable priesthood (:5), and perhaps this was the basis for the genealogies written up in the early chapters of 1 Chronicles. So there were Israel returning from captivity, led by a faithful remnant of the priests, looking back through their history, right back to Abraham and beyond, and seeing that their history was shot through with failure. Such self-examination extended even to considering the names parents gave their children.

7:6 Seeing that the majority of the Jews chose the soft life and remained in Babylon, God was especially sensitive to those who returned; and for over 2500 years these names have been recorded in His word. Such is His awareness of all those who respond to the call of the Kingdom and to forsake this world. Note how the numbers are recorded very exactly. God was sensitive to each and every one who returned.

7:7 This describes Zerubbabel as being at the head of twelve leaders of the returning exiles, who are called "the people of Israel" (cp. Ezra 2:2). Whilst it was Judah who had been taken into captivity, it seems that some of the ten tribes [who had been taken into captivity in Assyria some time earlier] also returned with them; it was God's intention to create a new, unified Israel in the restored Kingdom. But most of God's people then as today chose not to participate in the unity plan He had desired for His people.

Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-seven.¹⁹ The children of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven.²⁰ The children of Adin, six hundred and fifty-five.²¹ The children of Ater, of Hezekiah, ninety-eight.²² The children of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight.²³ The children of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four.²⁴ The children of Hariph, one hundred and twelve.²⁵ The children of Gibeon, ninety-five.²⁶ The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-eight.²⁷ The men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight.²⁸ The men of Beth Azmaveth, forty-two.²⁹ The men of Kiriath Jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three.³⁰ The men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one.³¹ The men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two.³² The men of Bethel and Ai, a hundred and twenty-three.³³ The men of the other Nebo, fifty-two.³⁴ The children of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four.³⁵ The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.³⁶ The children of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five.³⁷ The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-one.³⁸ The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.³⁹ The priests: The children of

Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three.⁴⁰ The children of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two.⁴¹ The children of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven.⁴² The children of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.⁴³ The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, of the children of Hodevah, seventy-four.⁴⁴ The singers: the children of Asaph, one hundred and forty-eight.⁴⁵ The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Harim, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight.⁴⁶ The Nethinim: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,⁴⁷ the children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon,⁴⁸ the children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Salmai,⁴⁹ the children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,⁵⁰ the children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda,⁵¹ the children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah.⁵² The children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephushesim,⁵³ the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,⁵⁴ the children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children

7:54 Comparing the list of names in the list of returnees in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, we find that a number of names recur in both lists, e.g. Bazluth (Ezra 2:52; Neh. 7:54). It could be that some went from Babylon to Judah with Ezra, then returned to Babylon, and returned with Nehemiah. This hardly sounds like the glorious, positive, confident return of the captives to Zion prophesied in the restoration prophecies. Like us at times, God's people lost their nerve in quitting this world and dedicating themselves to the things of His Kingdom.

of Harsha, ⁵⁵ the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Temah, ⁵⁶ the children of Nezhiah, the children of Hatipha. ⁵⁷ The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, ⁵⁸ the children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, ⁵⁹ the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth Hazzebaim, the children of Amon. ⁶⁰ All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred and ninety-two. ⁶¹ These were those who went up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer; but they could not prove their fathers' houses nor their genealogies, whether they were of Israel: ⁶² The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred and forty-two. ⁶³ Of the priests: the children of Hobaiah, the children of Hakkoz, the children of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name. ⁶⁴ These searched for their genealogical records, but couldn't find them. Therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. ⁶⁵ The governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things until there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. ⁶⁶ The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, ⁶⁷ besides their male and their female servants, of whom there were seven thousand

three hundred and thirty-seven: and they had two hundred and forty-five singing men and singing women. ⁶⁸ Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six; their mules, two hundred and forty-five; ⁶⁹ their camels, four hundred and thirty-five; their donkeys, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. ⁷⁰ Some from among the heads of fathers' households gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand darics of gold, fifty basins and five hundred and thirty priests' garments. ⁷¹ Some of the heads of fathers' households gave into the treasury of the work twenty thousand darics of gold, and two thousand two hundred minas of silver. ⁷² That which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand darics of gold, and two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven priests' garments. ⁷³ So the priests, the Levites and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel, lived in their cities. When the seventh month had come, the children of Israel were in their cities.

CHAPTER 8 Nov.20

Ezra Reads God's Law to the People

All the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spoke to Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Yahweh had commanded to Israel. ² Ezra the priest

8:1 *As one man* – Genuine desire to accept God's word and repent for failure (:9) is what brings unity amongst His people.

brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

³ He read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until noon, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those who could understand. The ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁴ Ezra the scribe stood on a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. ⁵ Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; for he was above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶ Ezra blessed Yahweh, the great God. All the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands. They bowed their heads, and worshipped Yahweh with their faces to the ground.

⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah and the Levites

caused the people to understand the law; and the people stayed in their place.⁸ They read in the book, in the law of God, with interpretation; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading. ⁹ Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest, the scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to Yahweh your God. Don't mourn, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, Go your way. Eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Don't be grieved; for the joy of Yahweh is your strength. ¹¹ So the Levites stilled all the people saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be grieved. ¹² All the people went their way to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great joy, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

The Feast of Booths

¹³ On the second day were gathered together the heads of fathers' households of all the people, the priests,

8:10 *Send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared* – The receipt of forgiveness from God should lead to our being materially generous to others. Hence Paul urges the Corinthians to be materially generous to their poorer brethren because of God's grace to them, thus making a play on the fact that the Greek word translated "grace" essentially means a gift. God's gift of forgiveness to us leads to our giving to others.

The joy of Yahweh – In the context, this refers to His desire to forgive His people; He actually is joyful in forgiving us, as we should be in our forgiveness of others; not doing it from a sense of grudging necessity.

8:12 *Because they had understood the words* – The need for correct understanding of God's word is because it motivates to action in practice. See 10:28.

and the Levites, to Ezra the scribe, even to give attention to the words of the law. ¹⁴ They found written in the law, how that Yahweh had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month; ¹⁵ and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem saying, Go out to the mountain, and get olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. ¹⁶ So the people went out, and brought them, and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of God's house, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷ All the assembly of those who had come again out of the captivity made booths, and

lived in the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day the children of Israel had not done so. There was very great gladness. ¹⁸ Also day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. They kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

CHAPTER 9 Nov.21

The People Confess Their Sins

Now in the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth on them. ² The seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. ³ They stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of Yahweh their God a fourth part of the day; and a

8:14-17 Ez. 45:25 had specifically prophesied that the feast of the seventh month would be strictly kept in the restored Kingdom. The fact they hadn't done so until now shows how they didn't want to fulfil the restoration prophecies because the immediate daily issues of life took them away from obedience to God's will. Note that Zech. 7:5 criticised the Jews for keeping this feast only externally, and not "unto Me". Hag. 2:1 records how on the 21st day of the 7th month – i.e. once the seven day feast that began on the 15th had finished – Haggai was sent to rebuke "the prince", Zerubbabel, for being so slack in fulfilling Ezekiel's vision. They subconsciously switched off to Ezekiel's words; just as we can all do. They reasoned that "the time" of which he spoke hadn't come – even though the temple had miraculously been enabled to be rebuilt, for no human benefit at all to Cyrus (Is. 45:13 "not for price nor reward"). Like us, they failed to see the personal reality of God's word to their situation.

9:2 The account of Judah's separation from the surrounding peoples reads similarly to that of the purges from idolatry during the reign of the kings. They separated / purged, and then, within a few years, we read of them doing so again. Initially, the exiles separated from the peoples of the land (Ezra 6:21); by Ezra 9:1 they are in need of separating again; and by Ezra 10:11 likewise; then they separate (Ezra 10:16), only to need another call to separation by the time of Nehemiah 9:2; 13:3. Our spiritual progress often has too much of this kind of pseudo repentance associated with it.

fourth part they confessed, and worshipped Yahweh their God. ⁴ Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani of the Levites stood up on the stairs, and cried with a loud voice to Yahweh their God.

An Account of God's Care of Israel

⁵ Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodi-ah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah said, Stand up and bless Yahweh your God from everlasting to everlasting! Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise! ⁶ You are Yahweh, even You alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their army, the earth and all things that are on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The army of heaven worships You. ⁷ You are Yahweh, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name of Abraham, ⁸ and found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite, to give it to his seed; and have performed Your words; for You are righteous. ⁹ You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heard their cry by the Red Sea.

¹⁰ You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, and against all his servants, and against all the people of his land; for You knew that they dealt arrogantly against them, and made a name for Yourself, as it is this day.

¹¹ You divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and You cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into the mighty waters.

¹² Moreover, You led them by day in a pillar of cloud; and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light in the way in which they should go. ¹³ You came down also on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. ¹⁴ You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them commandments, and statutes, and a law, by Moses Your servant.

¹⁵ You gave them bread from the sky for their hunger, and brought forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and commanded them that they should go in to possess the land which You had sworn to give them. ¹⁶ But they and our fathers dealt proudly and hardened their neck, didn't listen to Your commandments ¹⁷ and refused to obey, neither were they mindful of Your wonders that You did among them, but hardened their neck, and in their rebel-

9:6 *You are Yahweh, even You alone* – There is archaeological evidence that there was another god called 'Yahweh' worshipped by the Canaanites; hence the confession here that Yahweh God of Israel was the only true Yahweh. There are in our world many things which can appear as the true God when they are but fake imitations.

9:10 *Made a name for Yourself* – God's Name isn't simply a word, it is His entire personality as historically demonstrated and articulated in human history.

lion appointed a captain to return to their bondage. But You are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in grace, and didn't forsake them.¹⁸ Yes, they had made them a molten calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt' and had committed awful blasphemies;¹⁹ yet You in Your many mercies didn't forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud didn't depart from over them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way in which they should go.²⁰ You gave also Your good Spirit to instruct them, and didn't withhold Your manna from their mouth, and gave them water for their thirst.²¹ Yes, forty years You sustained them in the wilderness. They lacked nothing. Their clothes didn't grow old, and their feet didn't swell.²² Moreover You gave them kingdoms and peoples which You allotted according to their portions. So they possessed the land of Sihon, even the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.²³ You also multiplied their children as the stars of the sky, and brought them into the land concerning which You had said to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it.²⁴ So the children went in and possessed the land, and You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hands, with their kings,

and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they pleased.²⁵ They took fortified cities, and a rich land, and possessed houses full of all good things, cisterns dug out, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate, were filled, became fat, and delighted themselves in Your great grace.

Disobedience and Deliverance

²⁶ Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against You, and cast Your law behind their back, and killed your prophets that testified against them to turn them again to You, and they committed awful blasphemies.²⁷ Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their adversaries, who distressed them. In the time of their trouble, when they cried to You, You heard from heaven; and according to Your many mercies You gave them saviours who saved them out of the hand of their adversaries.²⁸ But after they had rest, they did evil again before You; therefore You left them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them. Yet, when they returned and cried to You, You heard from heaven; and many times You delivered them according to Your mercies,²⁹ and testified against them, that You might bring them again to Your law. Yet they dealt proudly, and didn't listen to Your commandments, but sinned against Your ordinances, which, if a man does, he shall live

9:19 *Yet the pillar of cloud didn't depart from over them* – Even in periods of sin and failure, God still tries to lead His people towards the Kingdom rather than totally disassociating from them.

in them, turned their backs, stiffened their neck, and would not hear. ³⁰ Yet many years You put up with them, and testified against them by Your spirit through Your prophets. Yet would they not give ear. Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

Confession of Sins

³¹ Nevertheless in Your many mercies You did not make a full end of them, nor forsake them; for You are a gracious and merciful God. ³² Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and grace, don't let all the travail seem little before You, that has come on us, on our kings, on our princes, priests, prophets, and on our fathers, and on all Your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria to this day. ³³ However You are just in all that has come on us; for You have dealt truly, but we have done wickedly. ³⁴ Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers kept Your law, nor listened to Your commandments and Your testimonies that You pronounced against them. ³⁵ For they have not served You in their kingdom, and in Your great goodness that You gave them, and

in the large and rich land which You gave before them, neither did they turn from their wicked works. ³⁶ Indeed, we are servants this day, and as for the land that You gave to our fathers to eat its fruit and its good, we are servants in it. ³⁷ It yields much increase to the kings whom You have set over us because of our sins. They also have power over our bodies, and over our livestock, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. ³⁸ Yet for all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, our Levites, and our priests, seal it.

CHAPTER 10 Nov.22

The People Make a Covenant

Now those who sealed were: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah, ² Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, ⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, ⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, ⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, Sheimaiah; these were the priests. ⁹ The Levites: namely, Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; ¹⁰ and their brothers, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, ¹¹ Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

9:30 *Your Spirit through Your prophets* – The prophets, whose words we have in the Bible, were inspired by God through the process of Divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16). Their words which we read in the Bible are thereby God's words and a channel of His Spirit to us.

9:37 Faithful men like Nehemiah felt so identified with the sinful people that they could speak of "*our sins*". If we are true members of His people then we will feel the state of the community as being our state, rather than seeing ourselves as somehow separate from them. Nehemiah was therefore the first to seal the covenant of repentance (10:1).

¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³ Hodiah, Bani, Beninu. ¹⁴ The chiefs of the people: Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, ¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, ¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, ¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, ¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, ¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nobai, ²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, ²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, ²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiiah, ²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, ²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, ²⁵ Rehun, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, ²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, ²⁷ Malluch, Harim and Baanah. ²⁸ The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, each one who had knowledge, and understanding— ²⁹ they joined with their brothers, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes; ³⁰ and that we would not give our daughters

to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; ³¹ and if the peoples of the land bring wares or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy of them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and that we would forego the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

Various Offerings for the House of God

³² Also we made ordinances for ourselves, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; ³³ for the show bread, and for the continual meal offering, and for the continual burnt offering, for the Sabbaths, for the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. ³⁴ We cast lots, the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of Yahweh our God, as it is written in the law; ³⁵ and to bring the first fruits of our ground, and the first fruits of

10:28, 29 The people “separated themselves *from* the peoples of the lands *unto* the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters... they *joined* with their brothers”. Close fellowship with our brethren arises from having gone out *from* the surrounding world and being separated *unto* the things of God's word. The Hebrew idea of “holiness” carries the idea of being separated *from* the things of this world *unto* the things of God. We see that happening here; separation isn't a merely negative idea. The separation is positively *unto* other things.

Each one who had knowledge, and understanding – See on 8:12.

10:32, 33 The Mosaic Law had required a half shekel temple tax, but this was reduced here, apparently with God's blessing – such was His desire to work with them and have them as His people (Ex. 30:11-16).

all fruit of all kinds of trees, year by year, to the house of Yahweh; ³⁶ also the first born of our sons, and of our livestock, as it is written in the law, and the first born of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; ³⁷ and that we should bring the first fruits of our dough, and our wave offerings, and the fruit of all kinds of trees, the new wine and the oil, to the priests, to the rooms of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground to the Levites; for they, the Levites, take the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. ³⁸ The priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Lev-

ites take tithes; and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms, into the treasure house. ³⁹ For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the wave offering of the grain, of the new wine, and of the oil, to the rooms, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests who minister, and the porters, and the singers. We will not forsake the house of our God.

CHAPTER 11 Nov.23

People Who Lived in Jerusalem

The princes of the people lived in Jerusalem. The rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one-tenth to

10:39 They divorced their Gentile wives, and then took more (in the times of Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi). They vowed not to forsake the house of their God, and yet Nehemiah concludes with the record that this is exactly what they did (13:11). They were slack paying the tithes, then they paid them, they slacked again, then they paid them, then Malachi records how they again didn't – several times this cycle is recorded. Likewise the withholding of agricultural blessing occurred several times – in 5:2,3 (as prophesied in Is. 51:19), in Haggai's time, and later in Malachi 3:10,12; when the restored Zion could have been as the garden of Eden, i.e. paradise restored on earth (Is. 51:3). Here we see frightening similarities with ourselves. We know, but often don't do. We sense this cycle of failure, crying out for mercy, receiving it, failing again, crying for mercy, receiving it, failing again...we see it in Israel, in our brethren and those around us, and in ourselves. We can expound it, lament it, feel the shame and tragedy of it all...and yet continue to have a part in it. Eventually, the people stayed in this groove so long that they degenerated into how they were at the time of Malachi – self-righteous, with no sense of failure any more, living self-centred lives of petty materialism, earning wages as they did in Haggai's time, to put into pockets with holes in, life without satisfaction, achieving nothing, passively angry. This is what Malachi clearly portrays. It's a terrible picture, and one which we at times can sail dangerously close to identifying with.

11:1 Neh. 7:4 obliquely comments on the tragedy – that the city was large and great, but the people who returned from Babylon were few who lived in it, and the houses weren't rebuilt there. When “the time to favour Zion” came, at the end of the 70 years, God's servants were to “take pleasure in her stones, and favour [even] the dust thereof”; and then, “when the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory” (Ps. 102:13-16). But the few Jews who returned chose not to live in Jerusalem, preferring to carve out for themselves farmsteads in the countryside, and the strength of those

dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine-tenths in the other cities.² The people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem.³ Now these are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem. However, in the cities of Judah each person lived in his possession in their cities: Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants.⁴ In Jerusalem lived some of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the children of Perez;⁵ and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Colhozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite.⁶ All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were four hundred and sixty-eight valiant men.⁷ These are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah.⁸ After him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred and twenty-eight.⁹ Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer; and Judah the

son of Hassenuah was second over the city.¹⁰ Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin,¹¹ Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of God's house,¹² and their brothers who did the work of the house, eight hundred and twenty-two; and Adaiiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah,¹³ and his brothers, chiefs of fathers' households, two hundred and forty-two; and Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,¹⁴ and their brothers, mighty men of valour, one hundred and twenty-eight; and their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of Hagedolim.¹⁵ Of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;¹⁶ and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chiefs of the Levites, who had the oversight of the outside business of God's house;¹⁷ and Mattaniah the son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the praise leader who began the thanksgiving in prayer, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brothers; and Abda the son

that shifted the rubble in Jerusalem decayed... they saw her dust and scattered stones as a nuisance, and didn't take pleasure in them (4:10). And so the Lord could not then appear in glory. Short term attitudes, satisfied with our little lives and homes, rather than the bigger picture of God's glory, a failure to perceive our potential as individuals and as a community – this is what limits so many possibilities which God has potentially enabled. God was therefore especially sensitive to those who had the faith to live in Jerusalem, and for millennia He has recorded their names and brought them before Bible readers – hence the detailed list of their names in this chapter. Note that the list of names of those who lived in the towns outside Jerusalem isn't so detailed (:25-33).

of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.¹⁸ All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred and eighty-four.¹⁹ Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brothers, who kept watch at the gates, were one hundred and seventy-two.²⁰ The rest of Israel, of the priests, the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each one in his inheritance.²¹ But the Nethinim lived in Ophel; and Ziha and Gishpa were over the Nethinim.²² The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over the business of God's house.²³ For there was a commandment from the king concerning them, and a settled provision for the singers, as every day required.²⁴ Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

Other Places Where People Settled

²⁵ As for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah lived in Kiriath Arba and its towns, and in Dibon and its towns, and in Jekabzeel and its villages,²⁶ and in Jeshua, and in Moladah, and Beth Pelet,²⁷ and in Hazar Shual, and in Beersheba and its towns,²⁸ and in Ziklag, and in Meconah and in its towns,²⁹ and in En Rimmon, and in Zorah, and in Jarmuth,³⁰ Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, Azekah and its towns. So they encamped from Beersheba to the valley of Hinnom.³¹ The chil-

dren of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Michmash and Aija, and at Bethel and its towns,³² at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,³³ Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,³⁴ Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,³⁵ Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.³⁶ Of the Levites, certain divisions in Judah settled in Benjamin's territory.

CHAPTER 12 Nov.24

List of Priests and Levites

Now these are the priests and the Levites who went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,² Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,³ Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,⁴ Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah,⁵ Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,⁶ Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah.⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.⁸ Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who was the praise leader, he and his brothers.⁹ Also Bakbukiah and Unno, their brothers, were over against them according to their offices.¹⁰ Jeshua became the father of Joiakim, and Joiakim became the father of Eliashib, and Eliashib became the father of Joiada,¹¹ and Joiada became the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan became the father of Jaddua.¹² In the days of Joiakim there were priests, heads of fathers' households: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;¹³ of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;¹⁴ of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;¹⁵ of

Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;¹⁶ of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;¹⁷ of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;¹⁸ of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;¹⁹ and of Joiarib, Matthanai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;²⁰ of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;²¹ of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.²² As for the Levites, in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, there were recorded the heads of fathers' households; also the priests, in the reign of Darius the Persian.²³ The sons of Levi, heads of fathers' households, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.²⁴ The chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers over against them, to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch next to watch.²⁵ Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the watch at the storehouses of the gates.²⁶ These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest the scribe.

The Wall of Jerusalem Is Dedicated

²⁷ At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them

to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with giving thanks, and with singing, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and with harps.²⁸ The sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain around Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Ne-tophathites;²⁹ also from Beth Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Az-maveth. The singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem.³⁰ The priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.³¹ Then I brought up the princes of Judah on the wall, and appointed two great companies who gave thanks and went in procession. One went on the right hand on the wall toward the dung gate;³² and after them went Hoshaiiah, and half of the princes of Judah,³³ and Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,³⁴ Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,³⁵ and some of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph;³⁶ and his brothers, Shemaiah, and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God; and Ezra the scribe was before them.³⁷ By the spring gate, and straight before them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of

12:30 Those who purify others must firstly purify themselves. Whatever spiritual work we try to do for others must be based upon our first having achieved it in our own lives; otherwise our appeal to others will lack integrity and power of persuasion. In our context, our purification is through baptism into Christ.

the wall, above the house of David, even to the water gate eastward.³⁸ The other company of those who gave thanks went to meet them, and I after them, with the half of the people, on the wall, above the tower of the furnaces, even to the broad wall,³⁹ and above the gate of Ephraim, and by the old gate, and by the fish gate, and the tower of Hananel, and the tower of Hammeah, even to the sheep gate; and they stood still in the gate of the guard.⁴⁰ So stood the two companies of those who gave thanks in God's house, and I, and the half of the rulers with me;⁴¹ and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets;⁴² and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer.⁴³ They offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.⁴⁴ On that day were men appointed

over the rooms for the treasures, for the wave offerings, for the first fruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them, according to the fields of the cities, the portions appointed by the law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites who waited.⁴⁵ They performed the duty of their God, and the duty of the purification, and so did the singers and the porters, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son.⁴⁶ For in the days of David and Asaph of old there was a chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.⁴⁷ All Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, as every day required: and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron.

CHAPTER 13 Nov. 25

The Mixed Multitude Separated from Israel

On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found writ-

12:39 Ez. 48:31-34 envisaged the 12 gates of Jerusalem being named after the 12 tribes of Israel. But it seems no accident that twelve separate gates of the city are mentioned in the restoration record – but they weren't renamed after the tribes of Israel. Here are the names of the city gates in Nehemiah: valley (3:13); horse (3:28); east (3:29); Miphkad / muster (3:31); water (8:16); dung (12:31); fountain (12:37); Ephraim, old, fish, sheep and prison gates (12:39). No wonder some wept when the rebuilt temple was finally dedicated – the pattern of Ezekiel's vision hadn't been followed, even on such basic matters as the names of the twelve gates of Jerusalem. They could have renamed them, but lacked the willingness to see God's prophetic word as relevant in detail to their lives, just as we can wish to constantly place a distance between God's word, the black print on white paper, and our lives today.

12:43 *They... rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy* – God is able and willing to confirm us in the mental attitudes we choose to have.

ten, that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the assembly of God forever, ² because they didn't meet the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, to curse them; however our God turned the curse into a blessing. ³ It came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

Nehemiah Makes Other Changes

⁴ Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the rooms of the house of our God, being allied to Tobiah, ⁵ had prepared for him a great room, where before they laid the meal offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the

grain, the new wine, and the oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the wave offerings for the priests. ⁶ But in all this, I was not at Jerusalem; for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king: and after certain days asked I leave of the king. ⁷ When I returned to Jerusalem, and understood the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing him a room in the courts of God's house, ⁸ it grieved me severely: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the room. ⁹ Then I commanded, and they cleansed the rooms; and there brought I again the vessels of God's house, with the

13:1 Their ignorance of God's word seems amazing (cp. 8:17). This may partly be because in an illiterate society, access to God's word depended upon the few literate ones reading it and faithfully explaining it to them. We note that despite ignorance of parts of God's word, and thereby disobedience to them (and sins of ignorance were still counted as sins), God still accepted them. This shouldn't lead us to personal complacency, but to tolerance and patience with those who are disobedient to and even ignorant of parts of God's word.

13:7-9 In the restored Kingdom, there were to be "holy chambers" in the temple for the Levites (Ez. 46:19 and very often in Ezekiel 40-48). The uncircumcised Gentiles were not to be brought into the sanctuary (Ez. 44:7). It was God's intention that when Judah returned from Babylon, the uncircumcised would not come into Zion (the temple), and the Kingdom would be established (Is. 52:1,11). There was to be no Canaanite in the house of Yahweh (Zech. 14:21). Yet Tobiah the Ammonite was given a chamber in the temple for him to use as an office for undermining God's people. All this wasted potential is so tragic; and if it is to us who read from such a great distance in time and understanding, how much more was it for God. We can therefore sense His eagerness to work with us who have vowed to be His new Israel and become the seed of Abraham through baptism (Gal. 3:27-29).

13:8 *It grieved me severely* – Hearts that bleed will feel not only for the world, but for our brethren too. His *grief* led him to discipline Tobiah. Grief should likewise be the motive for ecclesial discipline today (as in 1 Cor. 5:2). The same word is translated "sad" in 2:3. The King observed that his "sorrow of heart" was written all over his face, even though he was trying to conceal it. His sadness for his weak people was engraved in his body language. Instead of being naggingly critical of our brethren, there should be this genuine grief.

meal offerings and the frankincense.

¹⁰ I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them; so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled everyone to his field. ¹¹ Then I contended with the rulers and said, Why is God's house forsaken? I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

¹² Then brought all Judah the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the treasuries. ¹³ I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah. Next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were counted faithful, and their business was to distribute to their brothers.

¹⁴ Remember me, my God, concerning this, and don't wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its observances.

Abuses of the Sabbath

¹⁵ In those days I saw in Judah some men treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves,

and loading donkeys; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day in which they sold food. ¹⁶ There also lived men of Tyre therein, who brought in fish and all kinds of wares, and sold on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. ¹⁷ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah and said to them, What evil thing is this that you do, and profane the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Didn't your fathers do thus, and didn't our God bring all this evil on us, and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.

The Sabbath Sanctified

¹⁹ It came to pass that, when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut, and commanded that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. I set some of my servants over the gates, so that no burden should be brought in on

13:17, 18 The house of the restored Kingdom was not to be profaned (Ez. 44:7); but Judah profaned the Sabbath and profaned the temple by their marriage with Gentiles and their "weariness" with the temple ordinances (Mal. 1:12; 2:10,11). They got bored with the things of the Kingdom, and so they had no part in it.

13:19 Is. 60:10,11 had foretold: "And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto you [as happened in the decree of Cyrus]...Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night"; and then as Ez. 43 had also described, "I will glorify the house of My glory" (Is. 60:7). But due to the Jews' abuse of the Sabbath and their refusal to believe Yahweh would be the promised wall of protecting fire to them, the gates could not be open continually, and had to be shut at night (see too 7:3). And Antiochus quite soon after Nehemiah's time destroyed them [which shows how the spirituality involved in what we do, e.g. the building of the wall, is the essential thing, rather than the achievement of anything in itself]. The implication of the prophecies about Zion's open gates was that whosoever wished could then come at any time to seek Yahweh. But men were potentially turned

the Sabbath day.²⁰ So the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside of Jerusalem once or twice.²¹ Then I testified against them and said to them, Why do you stay around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time on, they didn't come on the Sabbath.²² I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, my God, for this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your loving grace.

Foreign Influences Removed

²³ In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:²⁴ and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.²⁵ I contended with them and cursed them, and struck certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear

by God, You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves.²⁶ Didn't Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him that was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless foreign women caused even him to sin.²⁷ Shall we then listen to you to do all this great evil, in breaking covenant with our God in marrying foreign wives?²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.²⁹ Remember them, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.³⁰ Thus I cleansed them from all foreigners, and appointed duties for the priests and for the Levites, each one in his work;³¹ and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the first fruits. Remember me, my God, for good.

away from Him, and His Kingdom not realized... just because greedy, materialistic Jews wanted to have a few more coins in their pocket as a result of their trading on the Sabbath. And so with us, our meanness towards God's word, our selfishness, our desire to have more than we need to cover us in the case of any eventuality, all this effectively shuts up the Kingdom against men. If the Pharisees could do just this, it is possible for us to do it. The salvation of others has been delegated into our hands.

13:19, 20 Ez. 46:3 had predicted that "The people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the Yahweh in the Sabbaths and in the new moons". But encouraged by the materialism of the Jews, "the people of the land" hung around the gates of the city on the Sabbath in order to do some trading of goods. Petty materialism was one factor which led even to Christ's betrayal; and it so easily does so time and again in the lives of God's children.

13:27 Nehemiah stridently criticized Israel for yet again marrying Gentiles. He described their action as "breaking covenant with our God in marrying strange wives"; the Levites likewise "defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood" (:29) by their marriages. Marriage out of the Faith is this serious; it is a breaking covenant with God.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 1 Nov.26

The King Makes a Feast

Now it happened in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus who reigned from India even to Ethiopia, over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces), ² that in those days, when the King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom which was in Shushan the palace, ³ in the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his princes and his servants; the powerful ones of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him. ⁴ He displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even one hundred and eighty days. ⁵ When those days were fulfilled, the king made a seven day feast for all the people who were present in Shushan the palace, both great and small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. ⁶ There

were hangings of white, green and blue material, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars. The couches were of gold and silver, on a pavement of red, white, yellow and black marble. ⁷ They gave them ample drinks in golden vessels of various kinds, including the wine of the kingdom, according to the bounty of the king. ⁸ In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had instructed all the officials of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. ⁹ Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

Queen Vashti Disobeys the King

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha,

1:6 The language here is exactly that used about God's tabernacle and temple. The cups used in :7 may well have been those taken from Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem (Jer. 52:19; Dan. 5:2). The Persian empire is therefore being presented as a fake Kingdom of God on earth. God's people living there had to break from it and obey the command to return to the desolate land of Judah and rebuild God's true Kingdom there. We have the same call in responding to the Gospel today, in leaving this world, which appears to be God's Kingdom but isn't, and take the hard, self-sacrificial journey in life towards His true Kingdom which will be re-established on earth at Christ's return. "His glorious kingdom" (:4) uses the same two Hebrew words as in Ps. 145:11,12, where we read [in a Psalm that may well have been written or used by the righteous remnant in Babylon] that it is *Yahweh* God of Israel who has a Kingdom of glory, and who ultimately hears the cry of His people in distress, as Ahasuerus did. The Kingdom of Media and Persia had books in which the good and bad deeds of the citizens were written (10:2); and so in the one true Kingdom, there are 'books' from which the ultimate King will judge His people. Clearly, the Kingdom of Ahasuerus is being set up as an anti-Kingdom of God, with an antichrist figure ruling it, faking the Kingdom of God.

Zethar and Carcass, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, ¹¹ to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the royal crown, to show the people and the princes her beauty; for she was beautiful. ¹² But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by the eunuchs. Therefore the king was very angry, and his anger burned in him. ¹³ Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times, (for it was the king's custom to consult those who knew law and judgement; ¹⁴ and those next to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom), ¹⁵ What shall we do to the queen Vashti according to law, because she has not done the bidding of the King Ahasuerus by the eunuchs? ¹⁶ Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen has not done wrong to only the king, but also to all the princes, and to all the people who are in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus. ¹⁷ For this deed of the queen will become known to all women, causing them to show contempt for their husbands when it is reported, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she didn't come'. ¹⁸ Today, the princesses of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's deed will likewise tell all the king's princes. This will cause much contempt and wrath.

The King's Decree

¹⁹ If it please the king, let a royal commandment go from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it cannot be altered, that Vashti may never again come before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate to another who is better than she. ²⁰ When the king's decree which he shall make is published throughout all his kingdom (for it is great), all the wives will give their husbands honour, both great and small. ²¹ This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan: ²² for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to its writing, and to every people in their language, that every man should rule his own house, and that it should be published in the language of each people.

CHAPTER 2 Nov.27

The King Seeks a New Queen

After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was pacified, he remembered Vashti and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. ² Then the king's servants who served him said, Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. ³ Let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the beautiful young virgins to the citadel of Susa, to the women's house, to the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, keeper of the women. Let cosmetics be given them; ⁴ and let the maiden

who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti. The thing pleased the king, and he did so.

Mordecai and Esther

⁵ There was a certain Jew in the citadel of Susa, whose name was Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish a Benjamite, ⁶ who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. ⁷ He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter. ⁸ So it happened that when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together to the citadel of Susa, to the custody of Hegai, Esther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. ⁹ The maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness from

him. He quickly gave her cosmetics and her portions of food, and the seven choice maidens who were to be given her out of the king's house. He moved her and her maidens to the best place in the women's house. ¹⁰ Esther had not made known her people nor her relatives, because Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make it known. ¹¹ Mordecai walked every day in front of the court of the women's house, to find out how Esther was doing, and what would become of her.

Esther Is Made Queen

¹² Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after her purification for twelve months (for so were the days of their purification accomplished, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet fragrances and with preparations for beautifying women). ¹³ The young woman then came to the king like this: whatever she desired was given her to go with her out of the women's house to the king's house. ¹⁴ In the evening she went, and on the

2:5 *Mordecai* – So much of later Isaiah is taken up with mockery and criticism of the Babylonian gods and the Marduk cult. The book of Esther, with Mordecai as the joint hero, named as he was after Marduk, demonstrates how caught up were the Jews with the Babylonian gods. Ezekiel repeatedly reveals the idolatry of the Jewish captives. Isaiah was therefore an appeal for the Jews to quit the Marduk cult and believe in the radical prophecies about the overthrow of Babylon. The situation is analogous to how the New Testament is full of references to the Roman imperial cult of empire worship. So much of the Bible is like Isaiah and the New Testament – a radical, counter-cultural call to see our present world for what it is, and to perceive that the ways of God simply can't be mixed in, watered down or compromised with the way of this world.

2:7 'Esther' in Persian means 'star' and appears a reference to Ishtar or to the Persian *stara*, or 'star', the Babylonian goddess of love. Even her Hebrew name Hadassah means 'myrtle', a tree which is a native of Babylon, not Israel.

2:9 See on 4:1-3.

next day she returned into the second women's house, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who kept the concubines. She came in to the king no more, unless the king delighted in her, and she was called by name.¹⁵ Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, came to go in to the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the keeper of the women, advised. Esther obtained favour in the sight of all those who looked at her.¹⁶ So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal house in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained favour and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.¹⁸ Then the king made a great feast for all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces, and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.

Mordecai Saves the King's Life

¹⁹ When the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate.²⁰ Esther had not yet made known her relatives nor her people, as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther obeyed Mordecai, like she did when she was brought up by him.²¹ In those days, while Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate, two of the

king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, Bigthan and Teresh, were angry, and sought to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus.²² This thing became known to Mordecai, who informed Esther the queen; and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.²³ When this matter was investigated, and it was found to be so, they were both hanged on a tree; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the king's presence.

CHAPTER 3 Nov.28

Haman Seeks to Destroy the Jews

After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.² All the king's servants who were in the king's gate bowed down, and paid homage to Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai didn't bow down or pay him homage.³ Then the king's servants who were in the king's gate said to Mordecai, Why do you disobey the king's commandment?⁴ Now it came to pass, when they spoke daily to him and he didn't listen to them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's position would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai didn't bow down nor pay him homage, Haman was full of wrath.⁶ But he scorned the thought of laying hands on Mordecai alone, for they had made known to him Mordecai's people. Therefore Haman sought to destroy all

the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even Mordecai's people. ⁷ In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, and chose the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. ⁸ Haman said to King Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are different from other people's. They don't keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not for the king's profit to allow them to remain. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let it be written that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who are in charge of the

king's business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.

The Decree to Destroy the Jews

¹⁰ The king took his ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. ¹¹ The king said to Haman, The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you. ¹² Then the king's scribes were called in on the first month, on the thirteenth day of the month; and all that Haman commanded was written to the king's satraps and to the governors who were over every province, and to the princes of every people, to every province according to its writing, and to every people in their language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus, and it was sealed with the king's ring.

3:7 See on 4:1-3; 7:8. Haman decided on his plan to kill the Jews in the first month, Nisan, but his roll of the dice dictated that he execute it in the 12th month. This gave the Jews and Esther / Mordecai nearly a whole year to try to get out of the situation. The fact this plan was made around Jewish Passover time [hence the mention of the month Nisan] perhaps suggested to the thoughtful that God would work a similar Passover deliverance as He had from Egypt. Here we see providence, a Divine hand intervening (Prov. 16:33). And that Divine hand intervenes and works even through our own failure.

3:9 It's apparent that the Jews were no longer sitting weeping by the rivers of Babylon, but had become influential and wealthy throughout the empire – hence Haman's desire to kill and plunder them. The vast sum he offered to the King for permission to do this was presumably on the basis that a percentage of the plunder would be given to the King; for Herodotus estimated Haman's offer to approximate to two thirds of the annual income of the Persian empire. The only way he could realistically have offered this would've been on the basis that the Jews were wealthy and he would totally plunder them. Hence when the whole plan was reversed, the Jews were allowed to plunder their enemies (8:11). They certainly didn't take any wealth with them into captivity; they must have experienced meteoric prosperity and success in all their business dealings. Hence their desire to materially support the exiles who wished to return, but most of them were too caught up in the good life to heed the call to come out from Babylon / Persia. And we, faced with that same call in these last days, must enquire whether we're not the same.

¹³ Letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions. ¹⁴ A copy of the letter, that the decree should be given out in every province, was published to all the peoples, that they should be prepared against that day. ¹⁵ The couriers went forth in haste by the king's commandment, and the decree was given out in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

CHAPTER 4 Nov.28

Mordecai Informs Esther about the King's Decree

Now when Mordecai found out all that was done, Mordecai

tore his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and wailed loudly and a bitterly. ² He came even before the king's gate; for no one was allowed inside the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. ³ In every province, wherever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her this, and the queen was exceedingly grieved. She sent clothing to Mordecai, to replace his sackcloth; but he didn't receive it. ⁵ Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, whom he had appointed to attend her, and commanded him to go to Mordecai, to find out what this was, and why it was. ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai, to the city square which was before the king's

3:13 The decree was made to “destroy... and cause to perish” the Jews throughout the provinces of Persia / Babylon (3:13; 7:4). This phrase uses the two Hebrew words which we find together three times in the list of curses to be brought upon a disobedient Israel (Dt. 28:20,51,63). Yet by her wonderful self-sacrificial mediation, Esther brought about the deferment and even annulment of those justifiable curses. God's prophetic word was again changed – due to a mediator, who of course pointed both backwards to Moses, and forwards to the Lord Jesus. God is so eager to save us that He is willing to change His stated purpose about sinners.

4:1-3 The complete absence of God's Name in Esther indicates how they had forgotten the Name of their God in Babylon. It's also odd that there is no mention of prayer in the story – when prayer was the obvious recourse of God's people. The omission is so obvious – as if to point out that the Jews were not the prayerful community which they should've been. When we read of Mordecai rending his clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes, we expect to read of him praying – for prayer accompanies those two things in 2 Kings 19:1-4 and Joel 1:14. Even Esther appears to accept her possible destruction in a fatalistic way rather than in faith – “If I perish, I perish” (:16). There's a contrast with Daniel, who gathered his friends and gave himself to prayer before going in to the King; she gathered her friends and asked them to fast, but there's no specific mention of prayer. What she did was brave, but it seems to be more human

gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him of all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ He also gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given out in Shushan to destroy them, to show it to Esther, and to declare it to her, and to urge her to go in to the king to make supplication to him, to make request before him for her people.

Messages between Mordecai and Esther

⁹ Hathach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. ¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message to Mordecai: ¹¹ All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that whoever,

whether man or woman, comes to the king into the inner court without being invited, there is one law for him, that he be put to death; except those to whom the king might hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live. I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days. ¹² They told to Mordecai Esther's words. ¹³ Then Mordecai asked them to return answer to Esther, Don't think to yourself that you will escape in the king's house any more than all the Jews. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent now, then relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this? ¹⁵ Then Esther asked them to answer Mordecai, ¹⁶ Go, gather together all

bravery than an act of spiritual faith. The omission of any mention of prayer seems intentional – to highlight that the Jewish community were simply not prayerful as they should've been. The book of Esther was surely to encourage the Jews that despite their weakness, God was prepared to work with them. Esther appears to have slept with ['went in unto'] the King before he married her; eaten unclean food (2:9; cp. Dan. 1:5, 8), and finally married a Gentile. And she didn't tell her husband that she was Jewish for the first 5 years of their marriage (2:16; 3:7). It's almost certain that she would've acted like a Persian woman religiously in order for this to be the case; she certainly wasn't an observant keeper of the Mosaic law. She's almost set up in contrast with Daniel, who refused to defile himself in these ways and maintained his conscience in the same environment at whatever cost. But the point of Esther is to show that God was eager to work with such as Esther, He hadn't quit on His people. And of course if Esther and Mordecai had done the right thing and returned to Judah as commanded, the whole situation would never have arisen, and there would've been no Jews left in Babylon to persecute. It seems that the history in the book of Esther is an example of how God sent 'fishers and hunters' to encourage the Jews to return as He commanded them (Jer. 16:16) – but even then, they didn't.

4:8 God had said that He would cast Judah out of their land, they would go to Babylon and serve other gods there, "where I will not show you favour" (Jer. 16:13). But actually Esther and her people were shown favour there [s.w. Esther 4:8; 8:5]. God was gracious [s.w. 'show favour'] to those in exile (Is. 30:18,9; Am. 5:15; Mal. 1:9). Here we see God's pure grace to His weak people.

4:16 See on :1-3.

the Jews who are present in Shushan and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I and my maidens will also fast the same way. Then I will go in to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish. ¹⁷ So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

CHAPTER 5 Nov.29

Esther Invites the King and Haman to a Banquet

Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal clothing, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, next to the king's house. The king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, next to the entrance of the house. ² When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favour in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther came near, and touched the top of the sceptre. ³ Then the king asked her, What would you like, queen Esther? What is your

request? It shall be given you even to the half of the kingdom. ⁴ Esther said, If it seems good to the king, let the king come with Haman today to the banquet that I have prepared for him. ⁵ Then the king said, Bring Haman quickly, so that it may be done as Esther has said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. ⁶ The king said to Esther at the banquet of wine, What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. ⁷ Then Esther answered and said, My petition and my request is this. ⁸ If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I will prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king has said.

Haman Plots to Have Mordecai Hanged

⁹ Then Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart, but when Ha-

5:4 When Esther's nerve failed and she cops out of making her request by asking the King and Haman to come to a banquet, she finds herself saying: "Let the King come with Haman today". The Hebrew text reads: "Ybw' Hmlk Whmn Hywm" – the first letters of those four Hebrew words spells YHWH, the Name of God which never occurs in the book of Esther. Truly God's strength is made perfect in human weakness. In that very moment of failure, the cop out, God was revealed in His essence. And He proceeded to work through the element of suspense which her request created... to pique the King's desire to help, and to raise Haman's pride at having been invited, so that he would act even more foolishly, leading to his downfall. It could also be noted that Esther's entire intercession could so easily have been spoilt if Haman had suspected her machinations against him. But he didn't; he felt very honoured to have been invited by Esther to the banquet, and he boasted about it. In other words, Esther concealed her true feelings towards him. And where did she learn to do that? Surely in a lifetime of concealing her true Jewish identity and religious feelings, when actually she shouldn't have done so.

man saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he didn't stand up nor move for him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless Haman restrained himself, and went home. There, he sent and called for his friends and Zeresh his wife. ¹¹ Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, all the things in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. ¹² Haman also said, Yes, Esther the queen let no man come in with the king to the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and tomorrow I am also invited by her together with the king. ¹³ Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. ¹⁴ Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high, and in the morning speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on it. Then go in merrily with the king to the banquet. This pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.

CHAPTER 6 Nov.29

The King Remembers Mordecai

On that night, sleep fled from the king. He commanded the book of records of the chronicles to be brought, and they were read to the king. ² It was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who were doorkeepers, who had tried to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus. ³ The king said, What honour and dignity has been bestowed on Mor-

decai for this? Then the king's servants who attended him said, Nothing has been done for him. ⁴ The king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman had come into the outer court of the king's house, to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ The king's servants said to him, Behold, Haman stands in the court. The king said, Let him come in. ⁶ So Haman came in. The king said to him, What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour? Now Haman said in his heart, Who would the king delight to honour more than myself? ⁷ Haman said to the king, For the man whom the king delights to honour, ⁸ let royal clothing be brought which the king wears, and the horse that the king rides on, and on the head of which a crown royal is set. ⁹ Let the clothing and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man whom the king delights to honour with them, and have him ride on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!'

Mordecai Is Honoured But Haman Mourns

¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, Hurry and take the clothing and the horse, as you have said, and do this for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all that you have spoken. ¹¹ Then Haman took the clothing and the horse,

and arrayed Mordecai, and had him ride through the city square, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour! ¹² Mordecai came back to the king's gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and having his head covered. ¹³ Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him. ¹⁴ While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hurried to bring Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

CHAPTER 7 Nov.30

Esther Reveals Haman's Plot to the King

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. ² The king said again to Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is your petition, queen Esther? It shall be granted you. What

is your request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. ³ Then Esther the queen answered, If I have found favour in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. ⁴ For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondservants and bondmaids, I would have held my peace, although the adversary could not have compensated for the king's loss. ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus said to Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he who dared presume in his heart to do so? ⁶ Esther said, The adversary and the enemy is even this wicked Haman!

Haman Put to Death

Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. ⁷ The king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden. Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. ⁸ Then the king returned out of the palace gar-

7:3 Esther made her request for “my life... my people” in parallel; and when her own safety was assured, she didn’t just relax and mop her brow with relief, she went on to petition for them – with all the risks this involved for her (see too 8:3). We can’t possibly just rejoice in our own salvation, that we have found the Lord and are secured in Him; if we have truly experienced this, we will wish to share it with others.

7:4 Esther, in an eloquent type of Christ’s mediation for us, risked her life because she felt that “*we* are sold, *I* and my people, to be destroyed”. If she’d have kept her mouth shut, *she* wouldn’t have been destroyed. But she fought and won the same battle as we have daily or weekly before us: to identify ourselves with our weaker and more suffering brethren.

7:6 The Septuagint here calls the man Haman *ho diabolos* – the devil (with the definite article), referring to Haman, not to any supernatural being. The word simply means an enemy.

den into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman had fallen on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, Will he even assault the queen in front of me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. ⁹ Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who were with the king said, Behold, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman has made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, is standing at Haman's house. The king said, Hang him on it! ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

CHAPTER 8 Nov.30

Esther Pleads for Her People

On that day, King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, to Esther the queen. Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was to her. ² The king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave

it to Mordecai. Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. ³ Esther spoke yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and begged him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ Then the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre. So Esther arose, and stood before the king. ⁵ She said, If it pleases the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right to the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. ⁶ For how can I endure to see the evil that would come to my people? How can I endure to see the destruction of my relatives?

The King Grants Esther's Wish

⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, If I have freely granted you all that was

7:8 Although Esther was weak spiritually, yet God worked through her to save His undeserving people. The story brings out a number of coincidences which on reflection could only have been from God. The way Haman collapses and it appears he's tried to rape Esther is one such. Another is the way that Mordecai isn't rewarded for revealing the plot to kill the King – the King seems to have forgotten about it, overlooked it, and therefore he was all the more inclined to do Esther and Mordecai a real favour when required. This is all especially remarkable when we read historian Herodotus' note that Ahasuerus [or Xerxes] was noted for rewarding loyalty. It was surely no mere human co-incidence that the very morning the King has had a bad night and remembered Mordecai and decides to honour him, that Haman arrives to request Mordecai's death. See on 3:7.

8:5 See on 4:8.

8:7 The God who has given us His Son will, through His mediation, surely "freely give us all things" in response to our prayers (Rom. 8:32-34). This passage is alluding to the LXX here: "If I have freely granted you all that was Haman's, because he laid his hand on the Jews, and hanged him on a gallows [cp. the cross], what do you fur-

Haman's, because he laid his hand on the Jews, and hanged him on a gallows, what do you further seek? ⁸ Write also to the Jews, as it pleases you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring; for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may not be reversed by any man. ⁹ Then the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month Sivan, on the twenty-third day of the first month, which is Nisan; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, and to the satraps, the governors and princes of the provinces which are from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to every province according to its writing, and to every people in their language, and to the Jews in their writing and in their language. ¹⁰ He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by courier on horseback, riding on royal horses that were bred from swift steeds.

The Jews Are to Defend Themselves

¹¹ In those letters, the king granted the Jews who were in every city to gather themselves together, and to defend their life, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all the power of the people and province that would assault them, their little ones and women, and to plunder their

possessions, ¹² on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. ¹³ A copy of the letter, that the decree should be given out in every province, was published to all the peoples, that the Jews should be ready for that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴ So the couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. The decree was given out in the citadel of Susa. ¹⁵ Mordecai went out of the presence of the king in royal clothing of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and was glad. ¹⁶ The Jews had light, gladness, joy, and honour. ¹⁷ In every province, and in every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had gladness, joy, a feast, and a good day. Many from among the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen on them.

CHAPTER 9 Dec. 1

The Jews Destroy Their Enemies

Now in the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the month, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put into effect, on the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to conquer them, (but it was turned about so that the oppo-

ther seek?"; and the King then gives Esther whatever she requests. Note the repetition of ideas: if death on a cross had been granted, then all other things would be freely granted to the mediator / intercessor, for the good of her / His people.

site happened- the Jews conquered those who hated them), ² the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus, to lay hands on those who wanted to harm them. No one could withstand them, because the fear of them had fallen on all the people. ³ All the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and those who did the king's business helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them. ⁴ For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai grew greater and greater. ⁵ The Jews struck all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and with slaughter and destruction, and did what they wanted to those who hated them. ⁶ In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. ⁷ They killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸ Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹ Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, ¹⁰ the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jew's enemy; but they didn't lay their hand on the plunder. ¹¹ On that day, the number of those who were slain in the citadel of Susa was brought before the king. ¹² The king said to Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in the citadel of Susa, including the ten sons of Haman; what then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your further request? It shall be done. ¹³ Then

Esther said, If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do tomorrow also according to this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows. ¹⁴ The king commanded this to be done. A decree was given out in Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons. ¹⁵ The Jews who were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and killed three hundred men in Shushan; but they didn't lay their hand on the spoil. ¹⁶ The other Jews who were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, defended their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they didn't lay their hand on the plunder.

The Custom of Purim Begins

¹⁷ This was done on the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of that month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁸ But the Jews who were in Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth and on the fourteenth days of the month; and on the fifteenth day of that month, they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁹ Therefore the Jews of the villages, who lived in the un-walled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, a good day, and a day of sending presents of food to one another. ²⁰ Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of the

king Ahasuerus, both near and far, ²¹ to enjoin them that they should keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar yearly, ²² as the days in which the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned to them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending presents of food to one another, and gifts to the needy. ²³ The Jews accepted the custom that they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them; ²⁴ because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; ²⁵ but when this became known to the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he had devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶ Therefore they called these days Purim, from the word ‘Pur’. Therefore because of all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and that which had come to them, ²⁷ the Jews established and imposed on themselves and on their descendants, and on all those who joined themselves to them, so that it should not fail, that they would keep

these two days according to what was written, and according to its appointed time, every year; ²⁸ and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor their memory perish from their seed. ²⁹ Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority to confirm this second letter of Purim. ³⁰ He sent letters to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, ³¹ to confirm these days of Purim in their appointed times, as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had decreed, and as they had imposed upon themselves and their descendants, in the matter of the fastings and their cry. ³² The commandment of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

CHAPTER 10 Dec. 1

The Greatness of King Ahasuerus and Mordecai

King Ahasuerus laid a tribute on the land, and on the islands of the sea. ² All the acts of his power and of his might, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him,

¹⁰ Ezekiel had prophesied that those who survived the famine and invasion of Judah would go into captivity, “and I will draw out a sword after them” (Ez. 5:2,12). We would expect from this that the exiles would be persecuted and slain in captivity, and this surely was God’s intended judgment. But in Esther we find the exiles in prosperity, in positions of power and respected by their captors; and Jeremiah concludes

aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? ³ For Mordecai the Jew was next to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted by the multitude of his brothers, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his descendants.

his prophecy with the information that Jehoiachin, Judah's exiled King, was exalted "above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon" and he was given special favour and honour by the King of Babylon (Jer. 52:31-34). We can only understand these things as pure grace. God showed tenderness and favour to His people in captivity, far above what He had intended or what they deserved. And He does the same with us – He gives us so much more than we deserve. And yet most of Judah abused that grace; they were so taken up with the good life God gave them in captivity that they chose to remain there and not participate in the restoration. And we *so* easily can end up abusing His grace likewise. In this sense the book of Esther has a sad ending – the Jews are even more popular, even richer. Our loving Father gives us as His children what we beg Him for materially – but so often, it's not for our good spiritually. God must be *so* torn – between giving us what we want, what we whine for, what humanly we obviously need and would desperately like to have... and yet knowing that this is not for our spiritual good. We wonder what happened to Esther. Ahasuerus was slain soon after the events of the book of Esther – typically, the wife and supporters of the King would've been slain or persecuted. Was this not another prod from God for Esther and Mordecai to return to Judah?

JOB

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 2

The Prologue: Yahweh, Job and the Satan

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and turned away from the evil. ² There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³ His possessions also were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys and a very great household; so that this man

was the greatest of all the children of the east. ⁴ His sons went and held a feast in the house of each one on his birthday; and they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. ⁵ It was so, when the days of their feasting had come to an end, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts. Job did so continually. ⁶ Now it hap-

1:6 The common idea that Satan in Job was a sinful cosmic being who brought evil upon Job against God's will and tried to make him sin is wrong. "Satan" is only mentioned in the first two chapters of Job and nowhere in the book is he defined as a fallen angel. The word means 'adversary' and of itself has no negative connotation; it can be used about good people (Mt. 16:21-23). "Sons of God" can refer to believers (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 3:7). Angels do not bring false accusations against believers "before the Lord" (2 Pet. 2:11). It cannot be conclusively proved that Satan was a son of God – he "came among them". Satan is described as "going to and fro in the earth" – but there is no implication that he was doing anything sinful; Zech. 1:11 implies that this is a Hebraism for observing. How can Satan be in heaven and also on earth in Job's time when, according to popular belief, he was thrown out at the time of Adam, or in 1914, according to some? There cannot be sin or rebellion against God in heaven (Ps. 5:4-5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10; Ps. 103:19-21); Angels don't sin (Lk. 20:35,36 cp. Rom. 6:23). The major theme of the book of Job is that God brought the problems into Job's life and eventually they made him more righteous (2:10; 16:11; 19:21; 23:16; 42:11). Job did not believe that only good things came from God; he nowhere complains about Satan bringing the problems. Job realized that his sufferings had made him come to know God in practice rather than just in theory (42:5). Seeing that problems make us more righteous people if we respond correctly to them (Heb. 12:5-11), why would a sinful, wicked being, who wants to turn us away from God, bring these things into our lives, when actually they only make us more righteous and closer to God? The fact that Satan and the sons of God were in "the presence of the Lord" and presented themselves "before the Lord" (2:7; 1:6) does not necessarily mean that they were in heaven. The representatives of God carry the name of God, e.g. the angel which led Israel through the wilderness was called "the Lord" because it carried God's name (Ex. 23:20-21), but it was not God Himself in person (Ex. 33:12,20). Similarly, priests represent God (2 Chron. 19:6) and to come before them was to come "before the Lord" (Dt. 19:17). Cain "went out from the presence of

pened on the day when the sons of | fore Yahweh, that Satan also came
 God came to present themselves be- | among them. ⁷ Yahweh said to Satan,

the Lord” (Gen. 4:16) – not out of heaven but probably away from the presence of the angel – cherubim. Jesus was presented as a baby “before the Lord” (Lk. 2:22) – i.e. before the priest. Satan had to get power from God (2:3-6); he had none in his own right, indeed, God brought Job to Satan’s notice (1:8). Job often comments about God being the source of his sufferings (9:24). Job didn’t believe anyone apart from God was responsible. There is no indication that anything Satan did was sinful. Satan never actually says or does anything wrong; he simply makes the observation that there may well be a relationship between Job’s service of God and the material blessing which God has given him. He is then empowered by God to bring calamities into Job’s life. Time and again it is stressed that *God* brought the problems upon Job, not satan independently (1:12,16; 2:3,10; 6:4; 8:4; 19:21; 42:18). Even if the “satan” (adversary) to Job was an angel, there is no reason to think it was sinful. An angel asked Abraham to offer Isaac to find out exactly how obedient Abraham would be (Gen. 22:12; see too Dt. 8:2). A righteous angel was called a “satan” in Num. 22:22. If we follow through the argument of the book, the orthodox view requires that the logical answer of Job to the friends’ allegations would have been “I’m suffering because Satan has it in for me! He’s doing this, not God!”. For the friends were reasoning that God was bringing such affliction into Job’s life because Job was a sinner. The fact Job doesn’t make this obvious retort indicates that “the Satan” wasn’t understood by either Job nor the friends as a personal supernatural being of evil. The “sons of God” – the believers at that time – presented themselves before a priest or angel, perhaps at a religious feast. Someone there, maybe one of the worshippers, reflected that it was not surprising that Job was such a strong believer, seeing that God had so richly blessed him. God gave that person the power to afflict Job, to demonstrate that Job’s love of God was not proportionate to the blessings God had given him. Maybe the Satan was composed of Job’s three “friends” – they are rebuked at the end of the book (notice that “satan” is not rebuked there by name). Their discussions with Job indicate that they had their doubts as to his integrity and suspected that his faith was now weak because God had taken away the blessings from him (4:5,7). The prologue to Job is a literary device to place theological problems before us, e.g. of the relationship between service of God and receipt of blessing, and sin and suffering. The friends insist that “the destroyer” [by which they surely meant an early equivalent to ‘the devil’ of popular belief today] had touched Job – whereas Job insists that it is *God* who had destroyed him (15:21 cp. 19:10; 13:21). In some ways the book of Job is a deconstruction of the popular Persian and Canaanite myths about a ‘satan’ figure. Job, both in the story of his sufferings and his specific words, seeks to demonstrate that the essential issue in life is being “just with God”, and not whether or not we are touched by the hand of an evil being; for the hand of God which touched Job (19:21) is the hand of ‘satan’ into which God delivered Job temporarily (1:12). Job says that the attitude of the friends is wrong – they should be looking into themselves, rather than fantasizing about the action of some unseen evil being they imagined (19:28,29). The book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as

Where have you come from? Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, From going back and forth in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. ⁸ Yahweh said to Satan, Have you considered my servant, Job? For there is none like him in the land, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God, and turns away from evil. ⁹ Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Haven't You made a hedge around him and around his family, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will renounce You to Your face. ¹² Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power. Only on himself don't put forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh.

Tragedy Strikes Job

¹³ It fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, ¹⁴ that there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were

ploughing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabceans attacked and took them away. Yes, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you. ¹⁶ While he was still speaking, there also came another and said, The fire of God has fallen from the sky and has burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you. ¹⁷ While he was still speaking, there came also another and said, The Chaldeans made three bands, and swept down on the camels, and have taken them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you. ¹⁸ While he was still speaking, there came also another and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young men, and they are dead. I alone have escaped to tell you. ²⁰ Then Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground and worshiped.

well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil – Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God*, and His Angels – one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan') – are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Bildad's view of Angels in 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

²¹ He said, Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh. ²² In all this, Job did not sin, nor charge God with wrongdoing.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 2

Job's Health is Taken Away

Again it happened on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, that Satan came also among them to present himself before Yahweh. ² Yahweh said to Satan, Where have you come from? Satan answered Yahweh and said, From going back and forth in the land, and from walking up and down in it. ³ Yahweh said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job? For there is none like him in the land, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil. He still maintains his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause. ⁴ Satan answered

Yahweh and said, Skin for skin. Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But put forth Your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce You to Your face. ⁶ Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand. Only spare his life. ⁷ So Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh, and struck Job with painful sores from the sole of his foot to his head. ⁸ He took for himself a potsherd to scrape himself with, and he sat among the ashes. ⁹ Then his wife said to him, Do you still maintain your integrity? Renounce God, and die. ¹⁰ But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job didn't sin with his lips.

The Three Friends Arrive

¹¹ Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come on him, they each came from his own place: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the

2:3 To ruin him without cause – We learn here that God can bring suffering into the lives of His children for reasons *other than* because they have sinned. There is no direct relationship between sin and suffering in this life; for the wicked often prosper. The day of judgment and reward for how life has been lived is ultimately at the final day of judgment when Christ returns. As Job struggles with the question of 'Why suffering?', he is progressively driven to a clearer understanding of the future day of judgment and resurrection of the dead to get the reward which God's justice requires. Thus he was driven by experience and reflection on life to the doctrinal truths which are made explicit in the New Testament. Job begins the book presented as a complete spiritual person and he ends the book presented the same way. The reason for suffering isn't always so that we personally may develop through it; in Job's case, it was so that others would learn principles, not least the friends and the 'satan' character, and us the readers of subsequent generations. Some experiences and sufferings we have are perhaps more for the benefit of others who are observing, rather than for our own development.

Naamathite, and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and to comfort him. ¹² When they lifted up their eyes from a distance and didn't recognize him, they raised their voices and wept; and they each tore his robe, and sprinkled dust on their heads toward the sky. ¹³ So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 3

Job Wishes to Die

After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed the day of his birth. ² Job responded: ³ Let the day perish in which I was born, the night in which it was said, 'There is a boy conceived'. ⁴ Let that day be darkness. Don't let God from above seek for it, neither let the light shine on it. ⁵ Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own. Let a

cloud dwell on it. Let all that makes black the day terrify it. ⁶ As for that night, let thick darkness seize on it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year. Let it not counted in the number of the months. ⁷ Behold, let that night be barren. Let no joyful voice come therein. ⁸ Let them curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan. ⁹ Let the stars of its twilight be dark. Let it look for light, but have none, neither let it see the eyelids of the morning, ¹⁰ because it didn't shut up the doors of my mother's womb, nor did it hide trouble from my eyes. ¹¹ Why didn't I die from the womb? Why didn't I give up the spirit when my mother bore me? ¹² Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breast, that I should nurse? ¹³ For now should I have lain down and been quiet. I should have slept, then I would have been at rest, ¹⁴ with kings and counsellors of the earth, who built up waste places for themselves;

3:3 Job's depressive lament and desire to die in this chapter is quoted and alluded to by Jeremiah when he too was in severe depression and struggling with suicidal tendencies (Jer. 15:10; 20:14). Depression happens to God's people; one simple lesson from all this is that depression itself isn't a sin. It's how we respond to it which can become a moral issue. Jeremiah's way of coping was to associate himself with the words of a depressed faithful believer like Job. Our familiarity with Bible characters will pay great dividends in our hard times, as we see that history – spiritual history, God's patterns of working with men – is repeating; and the sense of existential loneliness, utter aloneness, which is part of the nexus of depression will to some extent be alleviated. Note too that Job's suicidal tendencies here and bitterness that God wouldn't take away his life are not criticized by God; He comments at the end that Job spoke what was right (42:7,8). Yet Job says many hard things about God as the story proceeds; but by grace, God imputed righteousness to him; or made allowance for the pressures upon Job. This isn't to justify any kind of situational ethic – 'I did it because the situation forced me to and I had no choice'. Rather does it simply show God's compassionate, gracious appreciation of situational pressure; and we should bear the same in mind in our consideration of others' words and behaviour under pressure.

¹⁵ or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver: ¹⁶ or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been, as infants who never saw light. ¹⁷ There the wicked cease from troubling. There the weary are at rest. ¹⁸ There the prisoners are at ease together. They don't hear the voice of the taskmaster. ¹⁹ The small and the great are there. The servant is free from his master. ²⁰ Why is light given to him who is in misery, life to the bitter in soul, ²¹ who long for death, but it doesn't come; and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, ²² who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave? ²³ Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? ²⁴ For my sighing comes before I eat. My groanings are poured out like water. ²⁵ For the thing which

I fear comes upon me, that of which I was afraid has happened to me. ²⁶ I was not at ease, neither was I quiet, neither had I rest; but trouble came.

CHAPTER 4 Dec. 3

Eliphaz's First Speech

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered, ² If someone ventures to talk with you, will you be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking? ³ Behold, you have instructed many, you have strengthened the weak hands. ⁴ Your words have supported him who was falling, you have strengthened the feeble knees. ⁵ But now it has come to you, and you faint. It touches you, and you are troubled. ⁶ Isn't your piety your confidence? Isn't the integrity of your ways your hope? ⁷ Remember now, whoever perished, being

3:23 There are many connections between Isaiah and the book of Job; those in Is. 40 are especially marked. Is. 40:14 = Job 21:22; 40:17 = 6:18; 40:22 = 9:8; 40:23 = 12:21; 40:24 = 14:8; 40:26 = 25:3; 40:31 = 29:20. The link between Is.40:27 and Job 3:23 is most significant: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed over from my God?". These are the words of Job here. Thus Job is the prototype of the suffering servant and represents Israel. Israel in captivity in Babylon (which is the context of Isaiah 40) are being bid look to Job, whose family and home were also destroyed by the Chaldeans (1:17) because of their sin. As Job sat in grief and perplexity, so did Judah by the rivers of Babylon. The message of the book of Job to the faithful remnant in captivity was therefore that God had ultimately brought this calamity, and finally He would restore the fortunes of His people. We too in our exiles can see in Job the essence of our own pain, and thereby the sure, ultimate hope of restoration. See on 4:7; 5:14; 21:7; 30:26; 33:27.

3:26 Job complains that although he didn't have a peaceful life anyway, now yet more trouble had come upon him. And yet the impression given by 1:14 is that the animals were quietly grazing and Job was at peace. The simple lesson is that those who appear to others to have a calm, quiet life often have issues going on which are very

4:7 *Whoever perished, being innocent* – The friends were reasoning from the position that suffering only comes as a punishment for sin; and therefore, they concluded, Job must have been a huge secret sinner. Therefore they laid false guilt upon him, and urged him to repent for things he hadn't done. We too live in a world which often

innocent? Or where were the upright cut off? ⁸ According to what I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble, reap the same. ⁹ By the breath of God they perish. By the blast of His anger are they consumed. ¹⁰ The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lions, are broken. ¹¹ The old lion perishes for lack of prey. The cubs of the lioness are scattered abroad. ¹² Now a thing was secretly brought to me; my ear received a whisper of it. ¹³ In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, ¹⁴ fear came on me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake. ¹⁵ Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up. ¹⁶ It stood still, but I couldn't discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes. Silence; then I heard a voice saying, ¹⁷ 'Shall mortal man be more just than God?

Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? ¹⁸ Behold, He puts no trust in His servants. He charges His angels with folly. ¹⁹ How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth! ²⁰ Between morning and evening they are destroyed. They perish forever without any regarding it. ²¹ Isn't their tent cord plucked up within them? They die, and that without wisdom'.

CHAPTER 5 Dec. 4

Eliphaz Continues his Speech

Call now; is there any who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you appeal? ² For resentment kills the foolish man, and jealousy kills the simple. ³ I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation. ⁴ His children are far from safety. They are crushed in the gate. Neither is there

loads us with false guilt. We must take guilt for our actual sins, and allow the reality of our personal relationship with God to free us from the false guilt others wish to place upon us. The righteous remnant in exile had struggled with the question of how the righteous had perished in the Babylonian invasion (Is. 57:1), and the book of Job was an answer to their struggle over this (see on 3:23).

4:8 *According to what I have seen* – Eliphaz appeals to personal experience and secular history and wisdom – hence he asks Job to “remember”, to think back and realize, that only the wicked perish (:7). One theme of the book of Job is that God's ways, as revealed in His word and in His history, contradict human wisdom and traditional conclusions.

4:18 *He charges His angels with folly* – These are Eliphaz's words, and God at the end says that he didn't speak what was right about God (42:7,8). There cannot be sin or rebellion against God in heaven (Ps. 5:4-5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10; Ps. 103:19-21); Angels don't sin (Lk. 20:35,36 cp. Rom. 6:23). The book of Job actually deconstructs such notions, revealing God as the ultimate source of suffering.

5:4 *His children are far from safety* – The friends often allude to Job's situation in describing the fate of the wicked. They assumed that because Job's children had been killed, therefore he was wicked. This kind of indirect hitting on a person is very hurtful; when we experience it, we can think of Job.

any to deliver them, ⁵ whose harvest the hungry eats up, and take it even out of the thorns. They snare gapes for their substance. ⁶ For affliction doesn't come forth from the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground; ⁷ but man is born to trouble, as the arrows of the sons of Resheph fly upward. ⁸ But as for me, I would seek God. I would commit my cause to God, ⁹ who does great things that can't be fathomed, marvellous things

without number; ¹⁰ who gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields; ¹¹ so that He sets up on high those who are low; those who mourn are exalted to safety. ¹² He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands can't perform their enterprise. ¹³ He takes the wise in their own craftiness; the counsel of the cunning is carried away headlong. ¹⁴ They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope at noonday

5:7 *The sons of Resheph* – Significantly, it is the friends who make allusion to the 'Satan' figures and gods as if they are real, whereas Job in his responses always denies their reality and sees God as the direct source of His sufferings. Eliphaz here blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph"; Bildad speaks of how Job's troubles are to be associated with "the king of terrors" (18:14); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery. Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (6:4), and he laments that God is an archer using him as His target for practice (7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

5:12, 13 The New Testament references to Job suggest that he was seen as a symbol of the Jewish system of reliance on human status, self righteousness and works, which all has to be humbled and no longer trusted if we accept God's grace. Thus Paul quotes these verses in 1 Cor. 1:19: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent". Eliphaz is explaining why he thinks Job and his view of life have been brought to nothing. Thus Paul read Job as a type of those who were influenced by the pseudo-wisdom of the Judaizers. Paul continues: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" (1 Cor.1:20). Job's constant desire to dispute with God and the friends, and the claims both he and they made to possessing wisdom, show Job was clearly in Paul's mind. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" he concludes, maybe thinking of the humbled Job. Job was the greatest of the men of the east (1:3), people who were renowned in the ancient world for their wisdom (Mt.2:1; 1 Kings 4:30). Thus Job would have been full of worldly wisdom, and this is maybe behind Paul's words of 1 Cor.3:18,19: "If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written [quoting Job 5:13, which is Eliphaz speaking about Job], He takes the wise in their own craftiness".

5:14 Darkness at noon was understood as Divine judgment; hence when this happened at Christ's death, we are invited to understand His death as being the judgment of this

as in the night. ¹⁵ But He saves from the sword of their mouth, even the needy from the hand of the mighty. ¹⁶ So the poor has hope, and injustice shuts her mouth. ¹⁷ Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects! Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. ¹⁸ For He wounds, and binds up. He injures, and His hands make whole. ¹⁹ He will deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven no evil shall touch you. ²⁰ In famine He will redeem you from death; in war, from the power of the sword. ²¹ You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, neither shall you be afraid of destruction when it comes. ²² At destruction and famine you shall laugh, neither shall you be afraid of the animals of the earth. ²³ For you shall be allied with the stones of the field. The animals of the field shall be at peace with you. ²⁴ You shall know that your tent is in peace. You shall visit your fold, and shall miss nothing. ²⁵ You shall know also that your

seed shall be great, your offspring as the grass of the earth. ²⁶ You shall come to your grave in a full age, like a sheaf of grain comes in its season. ²⁷ Look this, we have examined it, so it is. Hear it, and know it for your good.

CHAPTER 6 Dec. 5

Job's Response to Eliphaz

Then Job answered, ² Oh that my anguish were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances! ³ For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas; therefore have my words been rash. ⁴ For the arrows of the Almighty are within me. My spirit drinks up their poison. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me. ⁵ Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass? Or does the ox low over his fodder? ⁶ Can that which has no flavour be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? ⁷ My soul refuses to touch them. They are as loathsome

world (Jn. 12:31). To come before Christ on the cross is to come before our judgment; hence the connection between self-examination at the breaking of bread and at the last day. There are also links between Job and Deuteronomy 28, as if Job was the personification of Israel suffering for their sins (see on 3:23). Yet he was personally spotless to God (1:1,2). Thus he was a type of Christ, who although personally sinless was totally identified with sinful humanity. Suffering darkness at noon and groping in the daytime as in the night = Dt. 28:29; Job's fits of blindness (22:10,11) = Dt. 29:29; boils from head to foot (2:7) = Dt. 28:35; made an astonishment (= Dt. 28:37) and a byword (17:6; 30:9) = Dt. 28:37; wishing for night in the morning and for the morning at night (7:4) = Dt. 28:67; Job's of children and cattle = Dt. 28:41,51.

6:3 *Therefore have my words been rash* – Job excuses himself by saying that his rash words were an inevitable result of the situational pressure upon him; he likens himself to a donkey who inevitably neighs when there is no grass (:5). Yet seeing the situations came from God, this was effectively blaming God for his failure. We must recognize that sin isn't inevitable. We can only blame ourselves, not the situations which we have caved in to.

6:4 See on 5:7.

food to me. ⁸ Oh that I might have my request, that God would grant the thing that I long for, ⁹ even that it would please God to crush me; that He would let loose His hand, and cut me off! ¹⁰ Be it still my consolation, yes, let me exult throughout my unending pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One. ¹¹ What is my strength, that I should wait further? What is my end, that I should be patient? ¹² Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass? ¹³ Isn't it that I have no help in me, that wisdom is driven quite from me? ¹⁴ To him who is ready to faint, kindness should be shown from his friend; even to him who forsakes the fear of the Almighty. ¹⁵ My brothers have dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away; ¹⁶ which are black by reason of the ice, in which the snow hides itself. ¹⁷ In the dry season, they vanish. When it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. ¹⁸ The caravans that travel beside them turn aside. They go up into the waste, and perish. ¹⁹ The caravans of Tema looked. The companies of Sheba waited for them. ²⁰ They were distressed because they were confident. They came there, and were confounded. ²¹ For now you are nothing. You see a terror, and are afraid. ²² Did I say, 'Give to me?' or, 'Offer a present for me from your substance?' ²³ or, 'Deliver me from the adversary's hand?' or, 'Redeem

me from the hand of the oppressors?'. ²⁴ Teach me, and I will hold my peace. Cause me to understand wherein I have erred. ²⁵ How forcible are words of uprightness! But your reproof, what does it reprove? ²⁶ Do you intend to reprove words, since the speeches of one who is desperate are as wind? ²⁷ Yes, you would even cast lots for the fatherless, and make merchandise of your friend. ²⁸ Now therefore be pleased to look at me, for surely I shall not lie to your face. ²⁹ Please rethink. Let there be no injustice. Yes, think again. My cause is righteous. ³⁰ Is there injustice on my tongue? Can't my taste discern mischievous things?

CHAPTER 7 Dec. 5

Job Continues His Response to Eliphaz

Isn't a man forced to labour on earth? Aren't his days like the days of a hired hand? ² As a servant who earnestly desires the shadow, as a hireling who looks for his wages, ³ so am I made to possess months of misery, wearisome nights are appointed to me. ⁴ When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be gone?' I toss and turn until the dawning of the day. ⁵ My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust. My skin closes up, and breaks out afresh. ⁶ My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. ⁷ Oh remember that

6:25, 26 Job seems to be saying that there is nothing tangible for him to be reproved over apart from some rash words (:3). Thus he minimizes poor speaking; whereas Christ taught that by our words we are justified or condemned, so important are they (Mt. 12:37).

my life is a breath. My eye shall no more see good. ⁸ The eye of him who sees me shall see me no more. Your eyes shall be on me, but I shall not be. ⁹ As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away, so he who goes down to Sheol shall come up no more. ¹⁰ He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. ¹¹ Therefore I will not keep silent. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. ¹² Am I a sea, or a sea monster, that You put a guard over me? ¹³ When I say, 'My bed shall comfort me. My couch shall ease my complaint'; ¹⁴ then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions: ¹⁵ so that my soul chooses strangling, death rather than to see my bones. ¹⁶ I loathe my life. I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath. ¹⁷ What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should

set Your mind on him, ¹⁸ that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment? ¹⁹ How long will You not look away from me, nor leave me alone until I swallow down my spittle? ²⁰ If I have sinned, what do I do to You, You watcher of men? Why have You set me as an archer's target for You, so that I am a burden to myself? ²¹ Why do You not pardon my disobedience, and take away my iniquity? For now shall I lie down in the dust. You will seek me diligently, but I shall not be.

CHAPTER 8 Dec. 6

Bildad's First Speech

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, ² How long will you speak these things? Shall the words of your mouth be a mighty wind? ³ Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness? ⁴ If your children have sinned against him, He has delivered them into the

7:17 *That You should set Your mind on him* – The Hebrew for 'to set the mind on' is also translated "consider" in 2:3, where God asks the 'satan' whether he has "considered My servant Job..?". Thus Job sees *God* as considering him, whilst we are told earlier that satan / the adversary was told to do this. Thus whoever the 'satan' or adversary figure was, Job saw this being as ultimately representing God.

7:18 *Test him every moment* – God's level of involvement in our lives is amazing, considering His greatness and our smallness.

7:20, 21 Job makes several wrong statements here. In his depression, he wonders why God should be so worried about sin, seeing He is so great. But this is exactly the point – God despite His greatness is so highly sensitive to human behaviour. Job takes comfort in his idea that death will as it were hide him from God (:21), and as he doesn't want to live for ever (:16), therefore, Job thinks, he will not. But he totally underestimated God's grace, His desire for us, and to live eternally with us. These things were said by Job in depression and in the grip of suicidal desires (:15); yet at the end, God doesn't rebuke Job but rather justifies him (42:7). This shows the extent to which God does accept depression as a state which leads to a person saying things which aren't reflective of the real person, the one whom God sees, loves and judges. It also reflects the extent of the righteousness which God imputes to those He loves.

hand of their disobedience. ⁵ If you want to seek God diligently, make your supplication to the Almighty. ⁶ If you were pure and upright, surely now He would awaken for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous. ⁷ Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase. ⁸ Please inquire of past generations. Find out about the learning of their fathers. ⁹ For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow. ¹⁰ Shall they not teach you, tell you, and utter words out of their heart? ¹¹ Can the papyrus grow up without mire? Can the rushes grow without water? ¹² While it is yet in its greenness, not cut down, it withers before any other reed. ¹³ So are the paths of all who forget God. The hope of the godless man shall perish, ¹⁴ whose confidence shall break apart, whose trust is in a spider's web. ¹⁵ He shall lean on his house, but it shall not stand. He shall cling to it, but it shall not endure. ¹⁶ He is green before the sun. His shoots go forth over his garden. ¹⁷ His roots are wrapped around the rock pile. He sees the place of stones. ¹⁸ If he is destroyed from his

place, then it shall deny him, saying, 'I have not seen you'. ¹⁹ Behold, this is the joy of his way: out of the earth, others shall spring. ²⁰ Behold, God will not cast away a blameless man, neither will He uphold the evildoers. ²¹ He will still fill your mouth with laughter, your lips with shouting. ²² Those who hate you shall be clothed with shame. The tent of the wicked shall be no more.

CHAPTER 9 Dec. 7

Job's Response to Bildad

Then Job answered, ² Truly I know that it is so, but how can man be just with God? ³ If He wishes to contend with him, he can't answer Him one time in a thousand. ⁴ God who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who has hardened himself against Him, and prospered? ⁵ He removes the mountains, and they don't know it, when He overturns them in His anger. ⁶ He shakes the earth out of its place. Its pillars tremble. ⁷ He commands the sun, and it doesn't rise, and seals up the stars. ⁸ He alone stretches out the heavens, and treads on the back of Yam. ⁹ He makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the rooms of the south.

8:6 *If you were pure and upright* – The words of the friends suggest that their view was in fact that of the satan in the prologue; a case can be made that they are in fact the 'satan' / adversary figure. Satan quibbled with God's pronouncement of Job as perfect and upright (1:8). And here Bildad likewise seems to allude to this when he comments that if Job were indeed pure and upright, then God would help him.

8:8-10 Bildad emphasizes the view of traditional wisdom; and one theme of Job is that traditionally accepted ideas about God are shown by His word and by actual experience to be wrong. Bildad insists that Job must have sinned because traditional wisdom taught that calamity is always the result of sin. We see here how wrong understandings lead to damaged personal relationships and tragic misjudgements in practice.

¹⁰ He does great things past finding out; yes, marvellous things without number. ¹¹ Behold, He goes by me, and I don't see Him. He passes on also, but I don't perceive Him. ¹² Behold, He snatches away. Who can hinder Him? Who will ask Him, 'What are you doing?'. ¹³ God will not withdraw His anger. The cohorts of Rahab stoop under Him. ¹⁴ How much less shall I answer Him, and choose my words to argue with Him? ¹⁵ Though I were righteous, yet I wouldn't answer Him. I would make supplication to my judge. ¹⁶ If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I wouldn't believe that He listened to my voice. ¹⁷ For He bruises me with a storm, and multiplies my wounds without cause. ¹⁸ He will not allow me to catch my breath, but fills me with bitterness. ¹⁹ If it is a matter of

strength, behold, He is mighty! If of justice, 'Who', says He, 'will summon me?'. ²⁰ Though I am righteous, my own mouth shall condemn me. Though I am blameless, it shall prove me perverse. ²¹ I am blameless. I don't respect myself. I despise my life. ²² It is all the same. Therefore I say that He destroys the blameless and the wicked. ²³ If the scourge kills suddenly, He will mock at the trial of the innocent. ²⁴ The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it be not He, then who is it? ²⁵ Now my days are swifter than a runner. They flee away, they see no good, ²⁶ they have passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that swoops on the prey. ²⁷ If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face, and cheer up'; ²⁸ I am afraid of all my sorrows,

9:16 *I wouldn't believe that He listened to my voice* – In times of depression, even clearly answered prayer fails to spiritually register with us. And the ending of the book of Job shows that God in His grace understands that.

9:21 See on 21:7.

9:24 The G.N.B. puts it: "If God didn't do it, who did?". This is a key verse in understanding the book of Job. After all the theories of 'Who's responsible for all this evil in Job's life?', Job concludes that the source simply has to be God – and not anyone else. If He truly is all powerful, then who else could ultimately be responsible? Job states that "the cohorts of Rahab [a Canaanite 'Satan' figure] shall stoop under [God]" (:13), clearly alluding to the helpers of Tiamat in the Babylonian myth. "God *alone* stretches out the heavens, and treads on the back of Yam" – the sea, or sea-monster (:8). Job believed that it was *God* who was seeking to swallow him up in death (10:8) – surely alluding to how Mot, the god of death, was thought to have jaws encompassing the earth and swallowing up people at their death into the underworld. But Job rejected that myth – he saw God as the swallower, and death as a return to the dust, albeit in hope of bodily resurrection at the last day (19:25-27).

9:28 *I know that You* – Note the change of pronoun. As Job talks about God as "He" in replying to Bildad, he moves on to address himself directly to God (see too 16:5-7). Dialogue with others about our faith and turmoils often leads to our direct approach to Him in a way which would never have happened if we'd not bothered to have that dialogue but stored all these things up internally.

I know that You will not hold me innocent. ²⁹ I shall be condemned. Why then do I labour in vain? ³⁰ If I wash myself with snow, and cleanse my hands with lye, ³¹ yet You will plunge me in the ditch. My own clothes shall abhor me. ³² For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, that we should come together in judgment. ³³ There is no umpire between us, that might lay his hand on us both. ³⁴ Let Him take his rod away from me. Let His terror not make me afraid, ³⁵ then I would speak, and not fear Him; but I am not in such a position within myself.

9:32 *Come together in judgment* – The prologue opens with the court of Heaven. The ‘Satan’ figure is not in itself evil, but could refer to an Angel [a ‘good’ one, as there are no ‘sinful’ Angels], or an Angel representative of a fellow worshipper on earth. The debates in Heaven between the Angels are reflected and carried out on earth – rather like how in Daniel 1-6 we have events on earth described in historical terms, and then we are given an insight into what’s been going on in Heaven in Daniel 7-12. Yet the court / legal language continues throughout the book – e.g. Job is “perfect”, i.e. legally blameless. Job appeals for ‘witnesses’ (:33-35; 16:18-22; 19:20-27), an advocate in Heaven (:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (13:19), wishes for God to come to trial (:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a ‘case’ with God (23:4; 40:2). Job 29-31 is effectively Job’s declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (31:35). God pronounces a final legal verdict at the end (42:7). It’s as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of ‘Satan’, suffering and evil in the court of Heaven. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about ‘Satan’ figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the “holy ones”, had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: “To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job’s guilt] is true” (5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters. Job perhaps perceived this, even though the vision of the court of Heaven in chapters 1 and 2 was presumably unknown to him as he endured his sufferings; for in response to the friends’ wrong judgment of him, he comments that “God covers the faces of the judges of the earth” (9:24). The final summing up speeches from both God and Job simply emphasize the omnipotence of God; how ultimately *He* has been the adversary to Job, and there is no room in the cosmos of His creation for any other power, especially any of the various personal ‘Satan’ figures believed in by the worlds of both Canaan and Babylon. The heavenly court of “sons of God” is paralleled with all the stars in 38:7. Bear in mind that the stars were understood as pagan deities. The whole pagan understanding of the cosmos is being deconstructed. The stars are paralleled with the Angelic sons of God who are all totally under God’s control; they are *His* Heavenly court.

9:33 *There is no umpire between us* – Job’s sufferings and mental torments led him to perceive the need for a mediator; he was led through it all to understand his need for Christ. And our experiences are designed the same way. See on 10:4.

CHAPTER 10 Dec. 8***Job Continues His Response to Bildad***

My soul is weary of my life. I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. ² I will tell God, ‘Do not condemn me. Show me why You contend with me. ³ Is it good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked? ⁴ Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees? ⁵ Are Your days as the days of mortals, or Your years as man’s years, ⁶ that You inquire after my iniquity, and search after my sin? ⁷ Although You know that I am not wicked, there is no one who can deliver out of Your hand. ⁸ Your hands have fashioned me

and fashioned me altogether, yet You swallow me up. ⁹ Remember, I beg You, that You have fashioned me as clay. Will You bring me into dust again? ¹⁰ Haven’t You poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese? ¹¹ You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. ¹² You have granted me life and grace. Your visitation has preserved my spirit. ¹³ Yet You hid these things in Your heart. I know that this is with You: ¹⁴ If I sin, then You mark me. You will not acquit me from my iniquity. ¹⁵ If I am wicked, woe to me. If I am righteous, I still shall not lift up my head, being filled with disgrace, and conscious of my affliction. ¹⁶ If my head is held high, You hunt me like a lion. Again You show Yourself wonderful to me.

10:4 See on 9:33. Job through his sufferings came to so wish that God could fully appreciate things from a human perspective. Unknown to him at the time, Job was coming to long for the real, Biblical Christ – a man of our nature yet God’s Son, our representative who could empathize with us and reveal the human face of God.

10:8 See on 9:24.

10:9 *Will You bring me into dust again* – Job had no belief in an ‘immortal soul’; he believed the Biblical position, that we are made from dust and will return to dust again, with no inherent immortality. This is alluding to Gen.3:19 – the curse upon sinful Adam that he would return to the dust. Job seems to be admitting that he is like Adam in that it appeared God was going to end his life as a result of his sin – return him to the dust. But he reasons that this is unfair, seeing he has not sinned (10:7,14,15). Thus he oscillates between saying he has sinned and is like Adam, and then claiming that although he is being treated like Adam this is unfair. Similarly Job complains “He bruises me...without cause” (9:17); the same word translated “bruise” in Gen.3:15, thus implying that he is receiving the result of the punishment in Eden for no reason. 27:2-4 also alludes to the record of God’s creation of Adam in Gen.2:7. In 31:33 Job denies that he is like Adam in that unlike him, he has no sin to hide: “If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity...”. And yet like Adam he was humiliated by God’s questioning at the end of the book. See on 13:20-22; 14:20. We too oscillate between accepting our sinfulness and yet considering our judgment for it as unfair. We are all brought like Job to the crushing and total acceptance of it in the end.

10:16 *Again You show Yourself wonderful to me* – Job felt as we sometimes do that

¹⁷ You renew Your witnesses against me, and increase Your indignation on me. Changes and warfare are within me. ¹⁸ ‘Why, then, have You brought me forth out of the womb? I wish I had given up the spirit, and no eye had seen me. ¹⁹ I should have been as though I had not been. I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. ²⁰ Aren’t my days few? Cease then. Leave me alone, that I may find a little comfort, ²¹ before I go where I shall not return from, to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death; ²² the land dark as midnight, of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as midnight’.

CHAPTER 11 Dec. 9

Zophar’s First Speech

Then Zophar the Naamathite responded, ² Shouldn’t the multitude of words be answered? Should a man full of talk be justified? ³ Should your boastings make men hold their peace? When you mock, shall no man make you ashamed? ⁴ For you say, ‘My doctrine is pure. I am clean in Your eyes’. ⁵ But oh that God would speak, and open His lips against you, ⁶ that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For true wisdom has two sides. Know therefore that God exacts of you less

than your iniquity deserves. ⁷ Can you fathom the mystery of God? Or can you probe the limits of the Almighty? ⁸ They are high as heaven. What can you do? They are deeper than Sheol. What can you know? ⁹ Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. ¹⁰ If He passes by, or confines, or convenes a court, then who can oppose Him? ¹¹ For He knows false men. He sees iniquity also, even though He doesn’t consider it. ¹² An empty-headed man becomes wise when a man is born as a wild donkey’s colt. ¹³ If you set your heart aright, stretch out your hands toward Him. ¹⁴ If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away. Don’t let unrighteousness dwell in your tents. ¹⁵ Surely then you shall lift up your face without spot; yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear: ¹⁶ for you shall forget your misery. You shall remember it as waters that are passed away. ¹⁷ Life shall be clearer than the noonday. Though there is darkness, it shall be as the morning. ¹⁸ You shall be secure, because there is hope. Yes, you shall search, and shall take your rest in safety. ¹⁹ Also you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. Yes, many shall court your favour. ²⁰ But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. They shall have

one moment God is tender and gracious, but the next almost violent and rough with us. But this is only because we fail to perceive the full picture of God.

10:21 *I go where I shall not return from* – Job’s faith in resurrection and ultimate salvation oscillated; for in 19:25-27 he is very clear about it. It could be, however, that Job was forced to a belief in resurrection, judgment and reward at the last day by his sustained reflection on the fact that he as a basically good man was so suffering, the wicked were prospering, and yet God is a God who [for all Job’s doubts of the moment] must ultimately reward the righteous and the wicked.

no way to flee. Their hope shall be the giving up of the spirit.

CHAPTER 12 Dec. 10

Job Responds to Zophar

Then Job answered, ² No doubt, but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. ³ But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Yes, who doesn't know such things as these? ⁴ I am like one who is a joke to his neighbour, because I called on God, and He answered. The just, the blameless man is a joke. ⁵ In the thought of him who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune. It is ready for them whose foot slips. ⁶ The tents of robbers prosper. Those who provoke God are secure, who carry their God in their hands. ⁷ But ask the animals now, and they shall teach you; the birds of the sky, and they shall tell you. ⁸ Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you. The fish of the sea shall declare to you. ⁹ Who doesn't know that in all these, the hand of Yahweh has done this, ¹⁰ in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind? ¹¹ Doesn't the ear try words, even

as the palate tastes its food? ¹² With aged men is wisdom, in length of days understanding. ¹³ With God is wisdom and might. He has counsel and understanding. ¹⁴ Behold, He breaks down, and it can't be built again. He imprisons a man, and there can be no release. ¹⁵ Behold, He withholds the waters, and they dry up. Again, He sends them out, and they overturn the earth. ¹⁶ With Him is strength and wisdom. The deceived and the deceiver are His. ¹⁷ He leads counsellors away stripped. He makes judges fools. ¹⁸ He loosens the bond of kings. He binds their waist with a belt. ¹⁹ He leads priests away stripped, and overthrows the mighty. ²⁰ He removes the speech of those who are trusted, and takes away the understanding of the elders. ²¹ He pours contempt on princes, and loosens the belt of the strong. ²² He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death. ²³ He increases the nations, and He destroys them. He enlarges the nations, and He leads them captive. ²⁴ He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth, and causes them to wander in

11:10 *If He... convenes a court... who can oppose Him?* – Job disagreed. He felt as did Moses and others that we can enter dialogue with God, disagree with Him, ask Him to change His mind. Zophar is reasoning from the perspective that all we can do is to submit to God, in an almost Islamic sense. Yet God thirsts for relationship with us; and therefore we can reason with God, even in the court of Heaven.

12:3 *I am not inferior to you* – Job repeats this in 13:2. Job refused to take false guilt, nor to feel himself inferior to those who accused him of sinning and who insisted he take their advice and adopt their perspectives. He realized that those who were trying to push him down beneath them were mere men like him. We too at times have to consciously refuse to be psychologically pushed down beneath others.

12:19 See on 13:26-28.

a wilderness where there is no way.
 25 They grope in the dark without light. He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

CHAPTER 13 Dec. 11

Job Continues His Speech

Behold, my eye has seen all this. My ear has heard and understood it. ² What you know, I know also. I am not inferior to you. ³ Surely I would speak to the Almighty. I desire to reason with God. ⁴ But you are forgers of lies. You are all physicians of no value. ⁵ Oh that you would be completely silent! Then you would be wise. ⁶ Hear now my reasoning. Listen to the pleadings of my lips. ⁷ Will you speak unrighteously for God, and talk deceitfully for Him? ⁸ Will you show partiality to Him? Will you contend for God? ⁹ Is it good that He should search you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him? ¹⁰ He will

surely reprove you if you secretly show partiality. ¹¹ Shall not His majesty make you afraid, and His dread fall on you? ¹² Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, your defences are defences of clay. ¹³ Be silent, leave me alone, that I may speak. Let come on me what will. ¹⁴ Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand? ¹⁵ Even if He slays me, still I will trust in Him. Nevertheless, I will justify my ways before Him. ¹⁶ This also shall be my salvation, in that a Godless man shall not come before Him. ¹⁷ Hear diligently my speech. Let my declaration be in Your ears. ¹⁸ See now, I have set my cause in order. I know that I am righteous. ¹⁹ Who is he who will contend with me? For then would I hold my peace and give up the spirit. ²⁰ Only don't do two things to me; then I will not hide myself from Your face: ²¹ withdraw Your hand far from me; and

13:15 *Even if He slays me, still I will trust in Him* – The language of ‘slaying’ takes us back to the Mosaic commands about how a ‘slayer’ of a man might be killed by the ‘avenger of blood’ (Dt. 19:6). Job saw God as slaying him; yet he also sees God as the ‘witness’ in the case (16:19), and the avenger of Job’s blood (19:25). Job even asks God to not let the earth cover his blood, so that God as the avenger of Job’s blood may avenge Job’s death (16:18). Job does *not* see ‘Satan’ as his slayer, and God as the avenger of his blood. Instead Job – in a quite breathtaking set of associations – sees God in all these things: the slayer, the legal witness to the slayer, the avenger of blood, and the One who will enforce the doing of justice in this case, the One who will not let the earth cover Job’s blood. If Job really believed in a superhuman Satan, in Satan as the bad guy and God as the avenger of the injustice, he surely would’ve expressed himself differently. As Job imagines God as it were taking vengeance on Himself, so he came to portray for all time the way that evil and good are indeed both ultimately from God.

13:20–22 This alludes to the fall of Adam in Eden. Job was recognizing that he had sinned, that he knew that the sense of spiritual limbo he was in paralleled Adam’s hiding from God in Eden, but that he would only respond to God’s call and come out of hiding to confess his sin as he knew God wanted him to, if God withdrew His

don't let Your terror make me afraid.
 22 Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and You answer me.
 23 How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my disobedience and my sin. 24 Why do You hide Your face, and hold me for Your enemy? 25 Will You harass a driven leaf? Will You pursue the dry stubble?
 26 For You write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth: 27 You also put my feet in the stocks, and mark all my paths. You set a mark on the soles of my feet, 28 though I am decaying like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten.

CHAPTER 14 Dec. 12

Further Words from Job

Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trou-

ble. 2 He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. He also flees like a shadow, and doesn't continue. 3 Do You open your eyes on such a one, and bring me into judgment with You? 4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. 5 Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is with You, and You have appointed his bounds that he can't pass; 6 look away from him, that he may rest, until he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day. 7 For there is hope for a tree, If it is cut down, that it will sprout again, that the tender branch of it will not cease. 8 Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground, 9 yet through the scent of water it will bud, and put forth boughs like a plant. 10 But man dies, and is laid low. Yes, man gives up

hand – i.e. relieved him of the immediate trials he was then experiencing. Thus Job was trying to barter with God – wanting Him to withdraw the trials in return for Job making the confession which he knew God wanted. See on 10:9; 14:20. In various but differing ways, we all madly struggle against the call to totally repent; whether by pure stubbornness, misinterpreting Scripture, or whatever twisted logic and sophistry. One lesson of the book of Job is the way God seeks to bring us to total and utter repentance.

13:27 The mark on him that was a witness wherever he went echoes that which God put on Cain. God's preservation of Cain from death also finds a parallel in Job's feeling that God is preserving him unnaturally (3:21-23; 10:9-15). As with the similarities with Adam (see on 10:9), Job complains that although he is associated with Cain, this is not really fair. "You set a mark on the soles of my feet" because, Job complains, God observes him with unnecessary detail. Zophar possibly recognized that Job was like Cain in that his face had fallen and he was so angry, although also fearful of God (Gen. 4:5); he said that if Job repented he would "lift up his face and not fear" (11:15). See on 16:17,18. As noted on 13:20-22, all feelings we have that our suffering is unfair are all part of our stubborn refusal to face the enormity and just consequences of our sin.

14:4 *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* – Job seems to be justifying his sins by arguing that sin is inevitable because of our nature. This is just a theological form of the stubborn refusal to face up to our sinfulness as noted on 13:20-22. The

the spirit, and where is he? ¹¹ As the waters fail from the sea, and the river wastes and dries up, ¹² so man lies down and doesn't rise. Until the heavens are no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep. ¹³ Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would keep me secret, until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! ¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, until my release should come. ¹⁵ You would call, and I would answer You. You would have a desire to the work of Your hands. ¹⁶ But now You number my steps. Don't You watch over my sin? ¹⁷ My disobedience is sealed up in a bag. You fasten up my iniquity. ¹⁸ But the mountain falling comes to nothing. The rock is removed out of its place; ¹⁹ the waters wear away the stones. The torrents of it wash away the dust of the earth. So

You destroy the hope of man. ²⁰ You forever prevail against him, and he departs. You change his face, and send him away. ²¹ His sons come to honour, and he doesn't know it. They are brought low, but he doesn't perceive it about them. ²² But his flesh on him has pain, and his soul within him mourns.

CHAPTER 15 Dec. 13

Eliphaz's Second Speech

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered, ² Should a wise man answer with vain knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind? ³ Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches with which he can do no good? ⁴ Yes, you do away with fear, and hinder devotion before God. ⁵ For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the language of the crafty. ⁶ Your own mouth condemns you, and not I. Yes, your own lips testify against

Lord Jesus had our nature and yet didn't sin; all that we say about human nature we say about Him. We aren't inevitable sinners, victims of a human nature which wasn't our fault as it were. See on 15:14,15.

14:12 *So man lies down and doesn't rise* – Job's faith in and desire for a future resurrection develops throughout the book; in 19:25-27 he is very clear about it and his earnest longing for it.

14:20 The reference to change and sending away refers to Adam being sent out of Eden, or also to Cain's countenance falling and then being sent away from God. Yet in 15:15 Job is alluding to God's calling to Adam in the garden; and Job is full of reasons which he will give God of his own rightness and innocence. So at this stage, Job is torn between recognizing his sinfulness and yet justifying it, perhaps only seeing it in terms of being a victim of the consequences of Adam's sin in Eden. As the book progresses, he is brought to the total acceptance of personal sinfulness and the justness of Divine punishment which God seeks to bring us all to.

15:6 These words are alluded to by Jesus when He taught that our words will be the basis of our condemnation or acceptance (Mt. 12:37). He also picks up this verse in His words to the one-talent man in the parable: "Out of your own mouth will I judge you" (Lk. 19:22). The only ones to be rejected at the last day are those whose words in

you. ⁷ Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? ⁸ Have you heard the secret counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself? ⁹ What do you know, that we don't know? What do you understand, which is not in us? ¹⁰ With us are both the gray-headed and the very aged men, much elder than your father. ¹¹ Are the consolations of God too small for you, even the word that is gentle toward you? ¹² Why does your heart carry you away? Why do your eyes flash, ¹³ that you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth? ¹⁴ What is man, that he should be clean? What is he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? ¹⁵ Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones. Yes, the heavens are not clean in His sight; ¹⁶ how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water! ¹⁷ I will show you, listen to me; that which I have seen I will declare, ¹⁸ which wise men have told by their fathers, and have not hidden it; ¹⁹ to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them: ²⁰ the wicked man writhes in pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the op-

pressor. ²¹ A sound of terrors is in his ears. In prosperity the destroyer shall come on him. ²² He doesn't believe that he shall return out of darkness. He is waited for by the sword. ²³ He wanders abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?'. He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. They prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. ²⁵ Because he has stretched out his hand against God, and behaves himself proudly against the Almighty; ²⁶ he runs at Him with a stiff neck, with the thick shields of his bucklers; ²⁷ because he has covered his face with his fatness, and gathered fat on his thighs. ²⁸ He has lived in desolate cities, in houses which no one inhabited, which were ready to become heaps. ²⁹ He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall their possessions be extended on the earth. ³⁰ He shall not depart out of darkness. The flame shall dry up his branches. By the breath of God's mouth shall he go away. ³¹ Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; for emptiness shall be his reward. ³² It shall be accomplished before his time. His branch shall not be green. ³³ He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast

this life have asked for it. Our words will as it were be quoted back to us in that day. This is how important they are.

15:14, 15 Eliphaz's view of both human beings and Angels was wrong. We aren't inevitable sinners just because of our nature; it's no sin to be human, to be alive, and the wrath of God isn't kindled upon every baby who is conceived and born just because they are humans. See on 14:4. God perhaps answers the wrong idea that Angels sin by commenting that *all* of them rejoiced in His creation (38:7).

15:21 Eliphaz says that Job's sudden problems amid his prosperity were what would happen to all the wicked. This seems to be alluded to in 1 Thess.5:3 concerning the sudden destruction of rich, spiritually self confident 'believers' at Christ's return.

off his flower as the olive tree. ³⁴ For the company of the Godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery. ³⁵ They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Their heart prepares deceit.

CHAPTER 16 Dec. 14

Job Responds to Eliphaz

Then Job answered, ² I have heard many such things. You are all miserable comforters! ³ Shall vain words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? ⁴ I also could speak as you do. If your soul were in my soul's place, I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you, ⁵ but I would strengthen you with my mouth. The solace of my lips would relieve you. ⁶ Though I speak, my grief is not subsided. Though I forbear, what am I eased? ⁷ But now, God, you have surely worn me out. You have made desolate all my company. ⁸ You have shrivelled me up. This is a witness

against me. My leanness rises up against me. It testifies to my face. ⁹ He has torn me in His wrath, and persecuted me. He has gnashed on me with His teeth. My adversary sharpens His eyes on me. ¹⁰ They have gaped on me with their mouth. They have struck me on the cheek reproachfully. They gather themselves together against me. ¹¹ God delivers me to the ungodly, and casts me into the hands of the wicked. ¹² I was at ease, and He broke me apart. Yes, He has taken me by the neck, and dashed me to pieces. He has also set me up for His target. ¹³ His archers surround me. He splits my kidneys apart, and does not spare. He pours out my gall on the ground. ¹⁴ He breaks me with blow after blow. He runs on me like a giant. ¹⁵ I have sewed sackcloth on my skin, and have thrust my horn in the dust. ¹⁶ My face is red with weeping. Deep darkness is on my eyelids. ¹⁷ Although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is

15:35 *They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Their heart prepares deceit* – Sin is often described as being conceived within the human heart (Acts 5:4; James 1:13-15). Sin is totally our fault; it proceeds out of the human heart (Mk. 7:15-23), not because of any cosmic ‘Satan’ being making us sin.

16:5-7 See on 9:28.

16:9 *My adversary sharpens His eyes on me* – The Hebrew word *satan* means ‘adversary’. Although a different Hebrew word is used here, Job clearly saw God as his adversary and not any wicked cosmic being.

16:9-14 It was so hard for Job to accept that God and not any orthodox ‘Satan’ figure was his adversary. It’s one thing to deduce from the Bible that both good and disaster comes from the Lord, as taught in Is. 45:5-7. It’s of course quite another to accept it in real life, and Job is an inspiring example. The poetry here speaks of Job’s awesome and even angry realization that *God* is in fact [in a sense] his enemy / adversary. See on 19:26.

16:17, 18 Here Job associates himself with unfairly persecuted Abel; he likens his cry for justice to the crying of Abel’s blood from the ground in Gen.4:10. He is trying to justify his refusal to recognize that he, a relatively righteous man, was in fact a serious

pure. ¹⁸ Earth, don't cover my blood. Let my cry have no place to rest. ¹⁹ Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven. He who vouches for me is on high. ²⁰ My friends scoff at me. My eyes pour out tears to God, ²¹ that He would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour! ²² For when a few years have come, I shall go the way of no return.

CHAPTER 17 Dec. 14

Job Continues His Response to Eliphaz

My spirit is consumed. My days are extinct, and the grave is ready for me. ² Surely there are mockers with me. My eye dwells on their provocation. ³ Now give a pledge, be collateral for me with Yourself. Who is there who will strike hands with me? ⁴ For You have hidden their heart from understanding, therefore You shall not exalt them. ⁵ He who denounces his friends for a prey, even the eyes of his children shall fail. ⁶ But He has made me a byword of the people. They spit in my face. ⁷ My eye also is dim by reason of sorrow. All my members are as a shadow. ⁸ Upright men shall be astonished at this. The innocent shall stir up himself against the godless. ⁹ Yet shall the right-

eous hold on to his way. He who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger. ¹⁰ But as for you all, come on now again; I shall not find a wise man among you. ¹¹ My days are past, my plans are broken off, as are the thoughts of my heart. ¹² They change the night into day, saying 'The light is near' in the presence of darkness. ¹³ If I look for Sheol as my house, if I have spread my couch in the darkness, ¹⁴ if I have said to corruption, 'You are my father'; to the worm, 'My mother', and 'my sister'; ¹⁵ where then is my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it? ¹⁶ Shall it go down with me to the gates of Sheol, or descend together into the dust?

CHAPTER 18 Dec. 15

Bildad's Second Speech

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, ² How long will you hunt for words? Consider, and afterwards we will speak. ³ Why are we counted as animals, which have become unclean in your sight? ⁴ You who tear yourself in your anger, shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed out of its place? ⁵ Yes, the light of the wicked shall be put out, the spark of his fire shall not shine. ⁶ The light shall be dark in his tent. His lamp above him shall be put out. ⁷ The steps of his strength

sinner. It's perhaps easier for those the world considers sinners to come to repentance than it is for those whom the world considers 'normal' and even righteous. This includes many of us; hence the biting relevance of Job to us. See on 13:20-22.

17:9 *Shall grow stronger and stronger* – There is an upward spiral in spiritual life, and also a downward spiral, in which, e.g., God hides correct understanding from people (:4) in response to their not really wanting it. Thus He can even delude people to believe lies (2 Thess. 2:11).

shall be shortened. His own counsel shall cast him down. ⁸ For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he wanders into its mesh. ⁹ A snare will take him by the heel. A trap will catch him. ¹⁰ A noose is hidden for him in the ground, a trap for him in the way. ¹¹ Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall chase him at his heels. ¹² His strength shall be famished. Calamity shall be ready at his side. ¹³ The members of his body shall be devoured. The firstborn of death shall devour his members. ¹⁴ He shall be rooted out of his tent where he trusts. He shall be brought to the king of terrors. ¹⁵ There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his. Sulphur shall be scattered on his habitation. ¹⁶ His roots shall be dried up beneath. Above shall his branch be cut off. ¹⁷ His memory shall perish from the earth. He shall have

no name in the street. ¹⁸ He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. ¹⁹ He shall have neither son nor grandson among his people, nor any remaining where he lived. ²⁰ Those who come after shall be astonished at his day, as those who went before were frightened. ²¹ Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous. This is the place of him who doesn't know God.

CHAPTER 19 Dec. 15

Job Responds to Bildad

Then Job answered, ² How long will you torment me, and crush me with words? ³ You have reproached me ten times. You aren't ashamed that you attack me. ⁴ If it is true that I have erred, my error remains with myself. ⁵ If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach;

18:14 *The king of terrors* – Bildad blamed Job's calamity upon pagan versions of the 'Satan' myth such as this supposed king, and the "firstborn of death" (:13). One intention of the book of Job is to deconstruct these ideas and to present God as the ultimate source of both good and disaster.

18:19 Bildad throughout this chapter is alluding to Job's loss of his home and family, and is certain that the next step is for Job himself to die without descendants – because, he assumes, Job has sinned. The restoration of Job's health and the gift of a new family at the end of the book proves Bildad so wrong. We need to learn the lesson not to assume things about others' relationship with God nor about the meaning of events in their lives.

19:2 *Crush me with words* – We should never assume that words are harmless. One lesson from the book of Job, as we see his mental agony progressing throughout his responses to the friends, is that words do indeed crush and hurt; they are often remembered for years after they have been spoken or written. God's law is unique amongst legal codes for criminalizing words and thoughts as much as actions.

19:4 *My error remains with myself* – A very true observation. It's often the case that when someone sins against one individual, others, or indeed a whole congregation, consider that the sin has been against them and that they somehow are called to forgive the sin and to demand repentance towards them. By doing so they are making the same mistake as the friends. We are to forgive sin against ourselves, and not take upon ourselves other sins as if they were against us personally.

⁶ know now that God has subverted me, and has surrounded me with His net. ⁷ Behold, I cry out because of injustice, but I am not heard. I cry for help, but there is no justice. ⁸ He has walled up my way so that I can't pass, and has set darkness in my paths. ⁹ He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. ¹⁰ He has broken me down on every side, and I am gone. My hope He has plucked up like a tree. ¹¹ He has also kindled His wrath against me. He counts me among His adversaries. ¹² His troops come on together, build a siege ramp against me, and encamp around my tent. ¹³ He has put my brothers far from me. My acquaintances are wholly estranged from me. ¹⁴ My relatives have gone away. My familiar friends have forgotten me. ¹⁵ Those who dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger. I am an alien in their

sight. ¹⁶ I call to my servant, and he gives me no answer. I beg him with my mouth. ¹⁷ My breath is offensive to my wife. I am loathsome to the children of my own mother. ¹⁸ Even young children despise me. If I arise, they speak against me. ¹⁹ All my familiar friends abhor me. They whom I loved have turned against me. ²⁰ My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh. I have escaped by the skin of my teeth. ²¹ Have pity on me, have pity on me, you my friends; for the hand of God has touched me. ²² Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? ²³ Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! ²⁴ That with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! ²⁵ But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives. In the end, he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ After my skin is destroyed, then in my

19:8 Num. 22:22 describes how an Angel of God stood in a narrow, walled path before Balaam, so that his donkey fell down beneath him. That Angel is described as a "satan", an adversary, to Balaam. Job comments how the sufferings which the 'satan' brought upon him were God 'walling up my way that I cannot pass'. The connection is clear – and may indicate that Job's satan was a satan-Angel, acting on God's behalf as an adversary to Job just as such an Angel did to Balaam. Job and Balaam have certain similarities – both were prophets (in Job's case see 4:4; 23:12; 29:4 cp. 15:8; Amos 3:7; James 5:10,11); both had genuine difficulty in understanding God's ways, but they to varying degrees consciously rebelled against what they did understand; both thus became angry with God, and were reproved by God through being brought to consider the Angel-controlled natural creation. Job should've learnt from Balaam – or *vice versa* – that God's walling us in is because He wants us to go His way, and we shouldn't try to force our way past Him.

19:21 *The hand of God has touched me* – God put Job into the hand of the 'satan' (1:12). Job saw the satan as basically God in action, not as a cosmic being outside of God's control and not performing His bidding.

19:26 In 2:4-6 we have the 'Satan' commenting that Job's flesh and skin need to be harmed; but here we have Job stating his faith that even though God destroys his flesh and skin, yet God shall ultimately save him.

flesh shall I see God,²⁷ whom I, even I, shall see for myself. My eyes shall see it, and not a stranger's. My heart is consumed within me.²⁸ If you say, 'How we will persecute him!'; because the root of the matter is found in me,²⁹ be afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishments of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment.

CHAPTER 20 Dec. 16

Zophar's Second Speech

Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,² Therefore do my thoughts make me answer, even by reason of my haste that is in me.³ I have heard the reproof which seeks to shame me. The spirit of my understanding makes me answer.⁴ Don't you know this from old time, since man was placed on earth,⁵ that the triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the godless but for a moment?⁶ Though his height mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds,⁷ yet he shall perish forever like his own dung. Those who have seen him shall say, 'Where is

he?'.⁸ He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found. Yes, he shall be chased away like a vision of the night.⁹ The eye which saw him shall see him no more, neither shall his place any more see him.¹⁰ His children shall seek the favour of the poor. His hands shall give back his wealth.¹¹ His bones are full of his youth, but youth shall lie down with him in the dust.¹² Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue,¹³ though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth;¹⁴ yet his food in his bowels is churned. It is cobra venom within him.¹⁵ He has swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again. God will cast them out of his belly.¹⁶ He shall suck cobra venom. The viper's tongue shall kill him.¹⁷ He shall not look at the rivers, the flowing streams of honey and butter.¹⁸ That for which he laboured he shall restore, and shall not swallow it down. According to the substance that he has gotten, he shall not rejoice.¹⁹ For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor.

19:27 The light at the end of our tunnel is that we will personally see God, with our own eyes we will behold Him, and not through anyone else's eyes (see too Is. 33:17). Job understood God as a personal being.

20:19 Job denies doing these things; if he had, it's unlikely that God would describe his earlier life in such positive terms (1:2). Zophar was once Job's friend, but he now speaks with a seething anger against him and claims all kind of false things against Job – which as his "friend" he surely knew weren't true. This radical change was related to Zophar's false understanding that suffering always comes as a result of sin. He became convinced Job was a sinner, and when he couldn't prove that, he simply fabricated things in his mind and then became persuaded they were true. If Zophar had to admit that Job was righteous, then he would have to revise his view of suffering; admit he had been wrong; and be prepared to accept that suffering may strike him too, despite his own apparent righteousness. And it would seem that his jealousy at Job's wealth was then vented out. He felt that if Job was a sinner, then he could treat him in

He has violently taken away a house, and he shall not build it up. ²⁰ Because he knew no quietness within him, he shall not save anything of that in which he delights. ²¹ There was nothing left that he didn't devour, therefore his prosperity shall not endure. ²² In the fullness of his sufficiency, distress shall overtake him. The hand of each one who is in misery shall come on him. ²³ When he is about to fill his belly, God will cast the fierceness of His wrath upon him. It will rain on him while he is eating. ²⁴ He shall flee from the iron weapon. The bronze arrow shall strike him through. ²⁵ He draws it forth, and it comes out of his body. Yes, the glittering point comes out of his liver. Terrors are upon him. ²⁶ All darkness is laid up for his treasures. An unfanned fire shall devour him. It shall consume that which is left in

his tent. ²⁷ The heavens shall reveal his iniquity. The earth shall rise up against him. ²⁸ The increase of his house shall depart. They shall rush away in the day of His wrath. ²⁹ This is the portion of a wicked man from God, the heritage appointed to him by God.

CHAPTER 21 Dec. 17

Job Responds to Zophar

Then Job answered, ² Listen diligently to my speech. Let this be your consolation. ³ Allow me, and I also will speak; after I have spoken, mock on. ⁴ As for me, is my complaint to man? Why shouldn't I be impatient? ⁵ Look at me, and be astonished. Lay your hand on your mouth. ⁶ When I remember, I am troubled. Horror takes hold of my flesh. ⁷ Why do the wicked live, become old, yes, and grow mighty in

a less than human way. Fear of revising ones' own understandings, admission of being wrong forced upon people by others' experiences, dashed expectations and false assumptions... can lead to this kind of seething hatred and false accusation, and is the root of much relationship breakdown today.

21:4 *Why shouldn't I be impatient?* – Job falls into the trap of justifying poor behaviour because of the extremity of the circumstances. Eventually he is led to the final climax of chapter 42, where he stops making excuses, blaming his nature, his situation and the machinations of others – and accepts his sinfulness *in toto*. It was so hard for him to do this because relatively speaking he was righteous. But spiritually middle class believers who keep their noses clean publically and avoid major personal scandals have got to all the same radically repent; and this is the pointed relevance of Job to so many believers today.

21:7 In 9:21 and by implication in other places, Job effectively says that there is no point in serving God or striving for obedience to God. This is what the priests of Israel later said at the time of the restoration from exile (Mal. 3:14). Malachi is alluding to Job's words here and in 9:21. Note that Elihu also claimed that Job had said that serving God was of no profit (34:9). Job has much relevance to the returning exiles – see on 3:23. Job was ignoring the very fine sensitivity of God to human behaviour; the fact He is so high and we are so morally low doesn't mean that our behaviour is irrelevant. Job's problem was a refusal to repent, and he is here making the excuse that

power? ⁸ Their child is established with them in their sight, their offspring before their eyes. ⁹ Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. ¹⁰ Their bulls breed without fail. Their cows calve, and don't miscarry. ¹¹ They send forth their little ones like a flock. Their children dance. ¹² They sing to the tambourine and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the pipe. ¹³ They spend their days in prosperity. In an instant they go down to Sheol. ¹⁴ They tell God, 'Depart from us, for we don't want to know about Your ways. ¹⁵ What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? What profit should we have, if we pray to Him?'. ¹⁶ Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand. The counsel of the wicked is far from me. ¹⁷ How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out, that their calamity comes on them, that God distributes sorrows to them in His anger? ¹⁸ How often is it that they are as stubble before the wind, as chaff that the storm carries away? ¹⁹ You say, 'God lays up his iniquity for his children'. Let him recompense it to himself, that he may know it. ²⁰ Let his own eyes see his destruction. Let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. ²¹ For what does he care for his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off? ²² Shall any teach God knowledge, since He judges those who are high? ²³ One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and

quiet. ²⁴ His pails are full of milk. The marrow of his bones is moistened. ²⁵ Another dies in bitterness of soul, and never tastes of good. ²⁶ They lie down alike in the dust. The worm covers them. ²⁷ Behold, I know your thoughts, the devices with which you would wrong me. ²⁸ For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?' ²⁹ Haven't you asked wayfaring men? Don't you know their evidences, ³⁰ that the evil man is reserved to the day of calamity, that they are led forth to the day of wrath? ³¹ Who shall declare his way to his face? Who shall repay him what he has done? ³² Yet he will be carried to the grave. Men shall keep watch over the tomb. ³³ The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him. All men shall draw after him, as there were innumerable before him. ³⁴ So how can you comfort me with nonsense, because in your answers there remains only falsehood?

CHAPTER 22 Dec. 18

Eliphaz's Third Speech

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered, ² Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself. ³ Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that you are righteous? Or does it benefit Him, that you make your ways perfect? ⁴ Is it for your piety that He reproves you, that He enters with you into judgment? ⁵ Isn't your wickedness

God's insensitivity to sin meant he didn't have to repent. We must learn the lesson – God's sensitivity to sin is the very reason we should repent of it.

22:3 *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that you are righteous?* – See on 21:7.

great? Neither is there any end to your iniquities. ⁶ For you have taken pledges from your brother for nothing, and stripped the naked of their clothing. ⁷ You haven't given water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. ⁸ But as for the mighty man, he had the earth from you. The honourable man, he lived in it. ⁹ You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless you have broken. ¹⁰ Therefore snares are around you. Sudden fear troubles you, ¹¹ or darkness, so that you can not see, and floods of waters cover you. ¹² Isn't God in the heights of heaven? See the height of the stars, how high they are! ¹³ You say, 'What does God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness?' ¹⁴ Thick clouds are a covering to Him, so that He

doesn't see. He walks on the vault of the sky'. ¹⁵ Will you keep the old way, which wicked men have trodden, ¹⁶ who were snatched away before their time, whose foundation was poured out as a stream, ¹⁷ who said to God, 'Depart from us'; and, 'What can the Almighty do for us?'. ¹⁸ Yet He filled their houses with good things, but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. ¹⁹ The righteous see it, and are glad. The innocent ridicule them, ²⁰ saying, 'Surely those who rose up against us are cut off. The fire has consumed their remnant'. ²¹ Acquaint yourself with Him, now, and be at peace. Thereby good shall come to you. ²² Please receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart. ²³ If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up, if you put away unright-

22:6 *You have taken pledges from your brother for nothing, and stripped the naked* – This was absolutely not the case. But Eliphaz was so convinced that suffering comes as a result of sin that he concluded Job must have sinned and therefore imagined these things until he became convinced Job had done them. People who start imagining false things about others because of gut feelings about them end up genuinely believing those things are true. It all arises from an inability to accept we may be wrong in our worldview and therefore in our judgment of others.

22:13 *You say, 'What does God know?'* – The fact God sees and knows all things leads us to right behaviour. Eliphaz here is reasoning that because Job refused to accept that sin and suffering were related in his case, therefore this implied something about Job's view of God. We must be careful of extrapolating like this – if you believe X then you believe Y about God which means you think God is Z. Such false logic leads to a perilous path of reasoning which results in the breakdown of relationships, slander, misrepresentation and judgmentalism which in itself is so wrong before God. If Eliphaz had left judgment to God and focused instead upon practically helping Job, he wouldn't have slid into this path of false logic.

22:22 *Please receive instruction from His mouth* – Eliphaz is playing God here. What he means is, 'Please receive instruction from me'; he assumes too quickly that his views are God's. If we accept the Bible as God's word, then our own intuitions and life wisdom must be seen by us as just that – and not God's word. The very specific existence of God's word means quite simply that our word isn't His.

eousness far from your tents. ²⁴ Lay your treasure in the dust, the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks. ²⁵ The Almighty will be your treasure, and precious silver to you. ²⁶ For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty, and shall lift up your face to God. ²⁷ You shall make your prayer to Him, and He will hear you. You shall pay your vows. ²⁸ You shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established to you. Light shall shine on your ways. ²⁹ When they cast down, you shall say, 'Be lifted up'. He will save the humble person. ³⁰ He will even deliver him who is not innocent. Yes, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of your hands.

CHAPTER 23 Dec. 19

Job's Response to Eliphaz

Then Job answered, ² Even today my complaint is grievous. His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. ³ Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! ⁴ I would set my cause in

order before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. ⁵ I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would tell me. ⁶ Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, but He would listen to me. ⁷ There the upright might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge. ⁸ If I go east, He is not there; if west, I can't find Him; ⁹ He works to the north, but I can't see Him. He turns south, but I can't catch a glimpse of Him. ¹⁰ But He knows the way that I take. When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold. ¹¹ My foot has held fast to His steps. I have kept His way, and not turned aside. ¹² I haven't gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have treasured up the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. ¹³ But He stands alone, and who can oppose Him? What His soul desires, even that He does. ¹⁴ For He performs that which is appointed for me. Many such things are with Him. ¹⁵ Therefore I am terrified at His presence.

23:10 *When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold* – The allusion may be to a refiner of gold who heats the gold until the dross is purged and becomes so pure that he sees his own face reflected in the molten gold. This is what the heat of trial is intended to achieve in our lives. Job perceived God and not any evil 'satan' being as responsible for his trials, and he realized even in his depression that they had a purpose – to bring forth God's likeness in him.

23:12 *The words of His mouth more than my necessary food* – As eating is a regular necessity which we automatically find time for, so our feeding upon God's word each day should likewise be regular and natural. In our generation, it ought to be that we can't easily lay our head down each night unless we have read or heard His word some time during the day.

23:15 *I am terrified at His presence* – Job's speeches are full of contradictions. He feels he is in God's presence, right before His judgment seat; but at other times he feels he's desperately searching for God and trying to get an audience, but God is being elusive (:8,9). These oscillations in perception of God are part of depression and

When I consider, I am afraid of Him. ¹⁶ For God has made my heart faint. The Almighty has terrified me. ¹⁷ Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither did He cover my face with the thick darkness.

CHAPTER 24 Dec. 19

Job Continues His Response

Why aren't times laid up by the Almighty? Why don't those who know Him perceive His days? ² There are people who remove the landmarks. They violently take away flocks, and feed them. ³ They drive away the donkey of the fatherless, and they take the widow's ox for a pledge. ⁴ They turn the needy out of the way. The poor of the earth all hide themselves. ⁵ Behold, as wild donkeys in the desert, they go forth to their work, seeking diligently for food. The wilderness yields them bread for their children. ⁶ They cut

their provender in the field. They glean the vineyard of the wicked. ⁷ They lie all night naked without clothing, and have no covering in the cold. ⁸ They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for lack of a shelter. ⁹ There are those who pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor, ¹⁰ so that they go around naked without clothing. Being hungry, they carry the sheaves. ¹¹ They make oil within the walls of these men. They tread wine presses, and suffer thirst. ¹² From out of the populous city, men groan. The soul of the wounded cries out, yet God doesn't regard the folly. ¹³ These are of those who rebel against the light. They don't know its ways, nor stay in its paths. ¹⁴ The murderer rises with the light. He kills the poor and needy. In the night he is like a thief. ¹⁵ The eye also of the adulterer waits for the

the bi-polar problems Job was obviously experiencing; hence he one moment eagerly looks ahead to the resurrection, at others he denies a resurrection can happen, or says he doesn't want to participate in it. Through it all, God loved and accepted him, so that at the end of the book He commends Job (42:7). In spiritual terms, we're all bi-polar. If we rejoice in God's gracious acceptance of us and His focus upon our better side, we urgently need to have this attitude to our brethren, whose weaker side is often right in our face.

24:1 Whilst God may work according to time periods, those periods aren't known by man. We don't know how long we nor anyone else shall live, nor the exact date of Christ's return. Any study of prophetic 'time periods' should bear this in mind; that God wishes us to live as it were in an eternal now, not pacing ourselves according to our expectations of time, but fully devoted to Him each moment.

24:2 Job in this chapter labours the point that the wicked prosper in this life, and yet because sin is significant to God, Job concluded that death is the punishment for their sin. This is stated explicitly in the New Testament (Rom. 6:23). We shouldn't miss the significance of death; it is in the end the answer as to why the wicked appear to prosper in this life. Again, by implication and inference, Job is driven towards hope in a resurrection from the dead and a recompense in this earth as the result of living righteously before God.

twilight, saying, 'No eye shall see me'. He disguises his face. ¹⁶ In the dark they dig through houses. They shut themselves up in the daytime. They don't know the light. ¹⁷ For the morning is to all of them like thick darkness, for they know the terrors of the thick darkness. ¹⁸ They are foam on the surface of the waters. Their portion is cursed in the earth. They don't turn into the way of the vineyards. ¹⁹ Drought and heat consume the snow waters, so does Sheol those who have sinned. ²⁰ The womb shall forget him. The worm shall feed sweetly on him. He shall be no more remembered. Unrighteousness shall be broken as a tree. ²¹ He devours the barren who don't bear. He shows no kindness to the widow. ²² Yet God preserves the mighty by His power. He rises up who has no assurance of life. ²³ God gives them security, and they rest in it. His eyes are on their ways. ²⁴ They are exalted; yet a little while, and they are gone. Yes, they are brought low, they are taken out of the way as all others, and are cut off as the tops of the ears of grain. ²⁵ If it isn't so now, who will prove

me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?

CHAPTER 25 Dec. 20

Bildad's Third Speech

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, ² Dominion and fear are with Him. He makes peace in His high places. ³ Can His armies be counted? On whom does His light not arise? ⁴ How then can man be just with God? Or how can he who is born of a woman be clean? ⁵ Behold, even the moon has no brightness, and the stars are not pure in His sight; ⁶ how much less man, who is a worm, the son of man, who is a worm!

CHAPTER 26 Dec. 20

Job's Response to Bildad

Then Job answered, ² How have you helped him who is without power! How have you saved the arm that has no strength! ³ How have you counselled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge! ⁴ To whom have you uttered words? Whose spirit came forth from you? ⁵ Those who are deceased tremble, those beneath the waters

25:4 The argument here presented is that because God is so great, man can never be right with Him. Job who had lived a good life and been declared as righteous by God must therefore have been driven to wonder how he could be right with God when he was a sinner, whilst also accepting God's supreme moral height and the depth of human failure to be like Him. The answer he was surely driven to is that God would have to impute His very own righteousness to man. And this is what He does to those reckoned as "in" Christ. Again we see how the sufferings of Job's life and his struggle to understand them led him by inference to the essence of the Christian Gospel, even if it wasn't specifically revealed to him in so many words. For the Gospel of imputed righteousness in Christ had in essence been preached to Abraham (Rom. 4:9; Gal. 3:8). **26:6** Job is alluding to the myths about the supposed 'satan' figure Mot having the underworld open before him and pushing into it whoever he wishes. When he speaks of how "Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering" he is saying that God

and all that live in them. ⁶ Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering. ⁷ He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth upon nothing. ⁸ He binds up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not burst under them. ⁹ He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it. ¹⁰ He

has defined a boundary on the surface of the waters, and to the confines of light and darkness. ¹¹ The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His rebuke. ¹² He stirs up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He strikes through Rahab. ¹³ By His Spirit the heavens are garnished. His hand has pierced the swift serpent.

and not Mot has this power; and in that context speaks as if God is the real attacker, not, therefore, Mot or any other such being. Num. 16:31-35 likewise describes *God* as swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram into death in the earth – as if to deconstruct the idea that Mot did things like this.

26:10 Job understands that it is *God* who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that *God even marks out the boundary between light and darkness* – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The ‘darkness’, however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God’s power. God confirms Job’s understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil in pagan thought] in bands of darkness (38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. Job’s idea that God fixes limits for the darkness is repeated by God saying that He sets limits for the raging sea (38:10). God controls evil, or human perception of it (e.g. of the sea as being evil), and He sets limits for it – which was exactly what He did to the power of ‘Satan’ in the prologue to Job. All these statements by God about His use of and power over things like darkness and sea, which were perceived as being independent forces of evil, are quite different to Canaanite and Babylonian worldviews. In them, gods like Baal had to fight Yam, the evil sea god, with clubs provided by other deities; in the Babylonian version, Marduk has to arm himself with various weapons in order to try to get supremacy over Tiamat. But Yahweh as revealed in the book of Job has utter and absolute power over the sea [monster] and the [supposed god of] darkness – for He created the sea and the darkness and uses them creatively for His purpose. That’s the whole purpose of the many ‘nature passages’ in the book of Job.

26:11-14 Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on ‘up there’ which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks here of how God’s hand forms and can pierce the “crooked serpent” and smite any monster. It’s as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the “hand of God” which has brought His affliction (19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical ‘Satan’ figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the ‘Satan’ figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

26:13 *His Spirit... His hand* – The Spirit of God isn’t a person nor any part of a sup-

¹⁴ Behold, these are but the outskirts of His ways. How small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?

CHAPTER 27 Dec. 21

Job's Parables Continue

Job again took up his parable and said, ² As God lives, who has taken away my right, the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter. ³ For the length of my life is still in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; ⁴ surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, neither shall my tongue utter deceit. ⁵ Far be it from me that I should justify you. Until I die I will not put away my integrity from me. ⁶ I hold fast to my righteousness, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. ⁷ Let my enemy be as the wicked. Let him who rises up against me be as the unrighteous. ⁸ For what is the hope of the godless, when he is

cut off, when God takes away his life? ⁹ Will God hear his cry when trouble comes on him? ¹⁰ Will he delight himself in the Almighty, and call on God at all times? ¹¹ I will teach you about the hand of God. That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. ¹² Behold, all of you have seen it yourselves; why then have you become altogether vain? ¹³ This is the portion of a wicked man with God, the heritage of oppressors, which they receive from the Almighty. ¹⁴ If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword. His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. ¹⁵ Those who remain of him shall be buried in death. His widows shall make no lamentation. ¹⁶ Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare clothing as the clay; ¹⁷ he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. ¹⁸ He builds his house as the moth, as a booth which the watchman makes.

posed 'Trinity' – a word which never occurs in the Bible. His Spirit is His 'hand', His power in practical operation.

26:14 *How small a whisper do we hear of Him!* – We must ever bear this in mind when speaking of 'the truth' and the need for correct Biblical interpretation. When in difference with other believers about Biblical interpretation, we must remember that we ourselves only know a fraction of God's truth. We mustn't assume that because we know the Gospel and have responded to it, therefore we know all the truth there is to know. We know just a whisper about the final fullness of God.

27:2-4 See on 10:9.

27:14 Job comments that if the children of the wicked "are multiplied, it is for the sword". Seeing his own children had been destroyed, Job presumably was accepting that he was among the "wicked", as he does elsewhere (e.g. 9:2). Hos. 9:13,16 repeats such language regarding the punishment of sinful Israel: "Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer". Dt. 28:41 has the same idea. Job was a symbol of the suffering servant, Israel, struggling in Babylon to come to terms with their sinfulness and the rightness of God's judgments against them (see on 3:23). On a personal level, Job is here moving closer to the final total acceptance of sinfulness and personal guilt which brings his sufferings to a close in chapter 42.

¹⁹ He lies down rich, but he shall not do so again. He opens his eyes, and he is not. ²⁰ Terrors overtake him like waters. A storm steals him away in the night. ²¹ The east wind carries him away, and he departs. It sweeps him out of his place. ²² For it hurls at him, and does not spare, as he flees away from his hand. ²³ Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

CHAPTER 28 Dec. 22

Job's Parable about Wisdom

Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine. ² Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted out of the ore. ³ Man sets an end to darkness, and searches out, to the furthest bound of thick darkness, in order to find the stones of obscurity. ⁴ He breaks open a shaft away from where people live. They are forgotten by the foot walking above. They hang far from men, they swing back and forth. ⁵ As for the earth, out of it comes bread; underneath it is turned up as it were by fire. ⁶ Sapphires come from its rocks. It has dust of gold. ⁷ That path no bird of prey knows, neither has the falcon's eye seen it. ⁸ The proud animals have not trodden it, nor has the fierce lion passed by there. ⁹ He puts forth his hand on the flinty rock, and he overturns the mountains by the roots. ¹⁰ He cuts out channels among the rocks. His eye sees every precious thing. ¹¹ He binds the streams

that they don't trickle. The thing that is hidden he brings forth to light. ¹² But where shall wisdom be found? Where is the place of understanding? ¹³ Man doesn't know its price; neither is it found in the land of the living. ¹⁴ The deep says, 'It isn't in me'. The sea says, 'It isn't with me'. ¹⁵ It can't be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for its price. ¹⁶ It can't be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. ¹⁷ Gold and glass can't equal it, neither shall it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. ¹⁸ No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal. Yes, the price of wisdom is above rubies. ¹⁹ The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. ²⁰ Where then does wisdom come from? Where is the place of understanding? ²¹ Seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the birds of the sky. ²² Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a rumour of it with our ears'. ²³ God understands its way, and He knows its place. ²⁴ For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole sky. ²⁵ He establishes the force of the wind. Yes, He measures out the waters by measure. ²⁶ When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; ²⁷ then He saw it, and declared it. He established it, yes, and searched it out. ²⁸ To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding'.

28:28 This verse is the crunch line of this chapter's lengthy description of how wisdom cannot be found in any specific location or hidden part of the planet. The very length of the preamble is only to build up to the colossal significance of this verse: that

CHAPTER 29 Dec. 22***Job Describes His Earlier Life***

Job again took up his parable and said, ² Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me; ³ when His lamp shone on my head, and by His light I walked through darkness, ⁴ as I was in the ripeness of my days, when the friendship of God was in my tent, ⁵ when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me, ⁶ when my steps were washed with butter, and the rock poured out streams of oil for me, ⁷ when I went

forth to the city gate, when I prepared my seat in the street. ⁸ The young men saw me and hid themselves. The aged rose up and stood. ⁹ The princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. ¹⁰ The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth. ¹¹ For when the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it commended me: ¹² because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless also, who had none to help him, ¹³ the blessing of him who was ready to perish came

wisdom isn't located anywhere, it is experienced in the life of the person who fears God and departs from evil. Especially in the age of over information in which we live, the idea is strongly felt in us all that wisdom is a set of facts, theological propositions, pithy sayings, located with somebody, in the care of some group of people, in some book. But the point is that wisdom isn't theoretical nor abstract, but intensely practical. We would all far rather make an academic study of something 'spiritual' than in practice root out evil from our lives; in this lies the attraction of intellectualizing spirituality. But wisdom as defined here is in experience; hence Job realizes that before his sufferings, he had only heard of God in the ear, but through practical experience he had as it were seen Him (42:5).

29:12 *I delivered the poor who cried* – False allegation leads us to self defence, and Job seems to fall into the trap of being so self-defensive, listing his good works in such detail, that he forgets his own sinfulness. False accusation, refusal to accept false guilt, not being understood and being rejected by others mustn't lead us to forget our real and actual sins. In the bigger picture, God used the false accusations to try to make Job take a serious inward look at his life in order to try to bring him to total repentance for what he actually had done wrong. But it seems Job didn't respond, he got caught up on the level of answering the false accusations and didn't allow the process of self-examination to go any further as God intended.

29:13 Job's words of 30:1 certainly smack of arrogance: "Whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs". This would mean that his merciful acts to the poor were done in a 'charitable' spirit, thinking that such public acts declared him outwardly righteous; he thought that his charity towards the widow were thereby his righteousness, a clothing and diadem of glory and beauty. This has clear reference to the clothing of the Mosaic High Priest with his outward show of righteousness. God was trying to lead Job beyond this to a trust in the righteousness which God imputes and which isn't our own – see on 25:4. There are times when he realizes this, but the need he felt to clear himself before the friends led him to overlook it; it took God's final intervention to bring him to throw himself totally upon God's righteousness and not his own.

on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. ¹⁴ I put on righteousness, and it clothed me. My justice was as a robe and a diadem. ¹⁵ I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. ¹⁶ I was a father to the needy. The cause of him who I didn't know, I searched out. ¹⁷ I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth. ¹⁸ Then I said, 'I shall die in my own house, I shall number my days as the sand. ¹⁹ My root is spread out to the waters. The dew lies all night on my branch. ²⁰ My glory is fresh in me. My bow is renewed in my hand'. ²¹ Men listened to me, waited, and kept silence for my counsel. ²² After my words they didn't speak again. My speech fell on them. ²³ They waited for me as for the rain. Their mouths drank as with the spring rain. ²⁴ I smiled on them when they had no confidence. They didn't reject the light of my face. ²⁵ I chose out their way, and sat as chief. I lived as a king in the army, as one who comforts the mourners.

CHAPTER 30 Dec. 23

Job Describes His Present Situation

But now those who are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs. ² Of what use is the strength of their hands to me, men in whom ripe age has perished? ³ They are gaunt from lack and famine. They gnaw the dry

ground, in the gloom of waste and desolation. ⁴ They pluck salt herbs by the bushes. The roots of the broom are their food. ⁵ They are driven out from the midst of men. They cry after them as after a thief; ⁶ so that they dwell in frightful valleys, and in holes of the earth and of the rocks. ⁷ Among the bushes they bray; and under the nettles they are gathered together. ⁸ They are children of fools, yes, children of base men. They were flogged out of the land. ⁹ Now I have become their song. Yes, I am a byword to them. ¹⁰ They abhor me, they stand aloof from me, and don't hesitate to spit in my face. ¹¹ For He has untied his cord, and afflicted me; and they have thrown off restraint before me. ¹² On my right hand rise the rabble. They thrust aside my feet, they cast up against me their ways of destruction. ¹³ They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, without anyone's help. ¹⁴ As through a wide breach they come, in the midst of the ruin they roll themselves in. ¹⁵ Terrors have turned on me. They chase my honour as the wind. My welfare has passed away as a cloud. ¹⁶ Now my soul is poured out within me. Days of affliction have taken hold on me. ¹⁷ In the night season my bones are pierced in me, and the pains that gnaw me take no rest. ¹⁸ By great force is my garment disfigured. It binds me about as the collar of my coat. ¹⁹ He has cast me into

29:16 *The cause of him who I didn't know, I searched out* – Our goodness to others shouldn't be merely a positive response to their requests; rather should we like God think and plan how we can show grace to others, and therefore 'search out' their situations and how we could be kind and gracious to them.

the mire. I have become like dust and ashes. ²⁰ I cry to You, and You do not answer me. I stand up, and You gaze at me. ²¹ You have turned to be cruel to me. With the might of Your hand You persecute me. ²² You lift me up to the wind, and drive me with it. You dissolve me in the storm. ²³ For I know that You will bring me to death, to the house appointed for all living. ²⁴ However, doesn't one stretch out a hand to stop a fall? Or in his calamity therefore cry for help? ²⁵ Didn't I weep for him who was in trouble? Wasn't my soul grieved for the needy? ²⁶ When I looked for good, then evil came; when I waited for light, there came darkness. ²⁷ My heart is troubled, and doesn't rest. Days of affliction have come on me. ²⁸ I go mourning without the sun. I

stand up in the assembly, and cry for help. ²⁹ I am a brother to jackals, and a companion to ostriches. ³⁰ My skin grows black and peels from me. My bones are burned with heat. ³¹ Therefore my harp has turned to mourning, and my pipe into the voice of those who weep.

CHAPTER 31 Dec. 23

Job Clears Himself

I made a covenant with my eyes, How then should I look lustfully at a young woman? ² For what is the portion from God above, and the heritage from the Almighty on high? ³ Is it not calamity to the unrighteous, and disaster to the workers of iniquity? ⁴ Doesn't He see my ways, and number all my steps? ⁵ If I have walked with falsehood, and my

30:19 *I have become like dust and ashes* – But we are by nature “dust and ashes”. Job came to realize his own humanity through his sufferings; God often teaches us those basic truths again and again because we like to see ourselves as more than we really are.

30:21 Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him (:24). This was exactly the brief given to ‘satan’ in the prologue – God put Job into Satan’s ‘hand’ in order to try Job, but commanded ‘satan’: “preserve his life”. Again we see that God was effectively the satan or adversary to Job. In similar vein God (in the Angel of the presence) “was turned to be (Israel’s) enemy” because of their sin (Is. 63:10). Job complains that God through the satan-Angel has “turned to be cruel to me”.

30:26 *When I looked for good, then evil came; when I waited for light, there came darkness* – Job is learning, slowly. He had previously thought that only good would come because of his righteousness. He even expected blessing from God; he believed as do many today who have swallowed the prosperity Gospel. But he learnt otherwise; and he learnt the truth which God tried to teach Judah in captivity, that good and evil, light and darkness, all come from God (Is. 45:5-7); see on 3:23.

31:4 *Doesn't He see my ways, and number all my steps?* – Job dismissed as monstrous the idea that he had committed adultery or even looked lustfully upon a woman – simply because God sees and knows all things. We cannot passively accept that fact; it will mean that sexual sin, which for the most part is committed in ‘secret’, cannot be a serious option for us because nothing in our lives is secret before God.

foot has hurried to deceit ⁶ (let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity); ⁷ if my step has turned out of the way, if my heart walked after my eyes, if any defilement has stuck to my hands, ⁸ then let me sow, and let another eat. Yes, let the produce of my field be rooted out. ⁹ If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have laid wait at my neighbour's door, ¹⁰ then let my wife grind for another, and let others sleep with her. ¹¹ For that would be a heinous crime. Yes, it would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges: ¹² for it is a fire that consumes to destruction, and would root out all my increase. ¹³ If I have despised the cause of my male servant or of my female servant, when they contended with me; ¹⁴ what then shall I do when God rises up? When He visits, what shall I answer Him? ¹⁵ Didn't He who made me in the womb make him? Didn't One fashion us in the womb? ¹⁶ If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, ¹⁷ or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it ¹⁸ (no, from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, her have I guided from my mother's womb); ¹⁹ if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or that the needy had no covering; ²⁰ if his heart

hasn't blessed me, if he hasn't been warmed with my sheep's fleece; ²¹ if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, ²² then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade, and my arm be broken from the bone. ²³ For calamity from God is a terror to me. Because of His majesty, I can do nothing. ²⁴ If I have made gold my hope, and have said to the fine gold, 'You are my confidence'; ²⁵ if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much; ²⁶ if I have seen the sun when it shined, or the moon moving in splendour, ²⁷ and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, ²⁸ this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges; for I should have denied the God who is above. ²⁹ If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; ³⁰ (yes, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking his life with a curse); ³¹ if the men of my tent have not said, 'Who can find one who has not been filled with his meat?' ³² (the foreigner has not lodged in the street, but I have opened my doors to the traveller); ³³ if like Adam I have covered my transgressions, by hiding my iniquity in my heart, ³⁴ because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt

31:33 See on 10:9.

31:34 *Because I feared the great multitude* – It's so often the fear of losing face and image, the fear of the multitude, which stops us from confessing sin. But seeing that all will be open to all our brethren eternally, we should have no need to be hypocritical in this life. God glories to forgive us, so we should have the same openness and zeal in repentance.

of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and didn't go out of the door—³⁵ oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me; let the accuser write my indictment! ³⁶ Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; and I would bind it to me as a crown. ³⁷ I would declare to Him the number of my steps. As a prince would I go near to Him. ³⁸ If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together; ³⁹ if I have eaten its fruits without money, or have caused its owners to lose their life, ⁴⁰ let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

CHAPTER 32 Dec. 24

Elihu Is Introduced

So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. ² Then the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel, the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was kindled against Job. His wrath was kindled because he justified himself rather than God. ³ Also his wrath was kindled against his three friends, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. ⁴ Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were elder than he.

⁵ When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled. ⁶ Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered, I am young, and you are very old; therefore I held back, and didn't dare show you my opinion. ⁷ I said, 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'. ⁸ But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding. ⁹ It is not the great who are wise, nor the aged who understand justice. ¹⁰ Therefore I said, 'Listen to me; I also will show my opinion'. ¹¹ Behold, I waited for your words, and I listened for your reasoning, while you searched out what to say. ¹² Yes, I gave you my full attention, but there was no one who convinced Job, or who answered his words, among you. ¹³ Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom, God may refute him, not man'; ¹⁴ for he has not directed his words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches. ¹⁵ They were amazed. They answered no more. They didn't have a word to say. ¹⁶ Shall I wait, because they don't speak, because they stand still, and answer no more? ¹⁷ I also will answer my part, and I also will show my opinion. ¹⁸ For I am full of words. The spirit within me

31:38 *If my land cries out against me* – Job was sensitive to the natural creation, even to his land, in the way he farmed it.

32:18 It's unclear whether Elihu refers to his own spirit, or the fact that he was inspired to speak by God's Spirit, and therefore like Jeremiah (Jer. 6:11) was weary at trying not to speak forth the words he was inspired to speak. If we accept Elihu as speaking on God's behalf, as the mediator which Job so begged for, then we have to take a somewhat negative view of Job – in that Elihu is critical of Job and accuses him of arrogant self-righteousness. Note that in God's final summing up, the friends and

constrains me. ¹⁹ Behold, my breast is as wine which has no vent; like new wineskins it is ready to burst. ²⁰ I will speak, that I may be refreshed. I will open my lips and answer. ²¹ Please don't let me respect any man's person, neither will I give flattering titles to any man. ²² For I don't know how to give flattering titles; or else my Maker would soon take me away.

CHAPTER 33 Dec. 25

Elihu Criticizes Job

However, Job, please hear my speech, and listen to all my words. ² See now, I have opened my mouth. My tongue has spoken in my mouth. ³ My words shall utter the uprightness of my heart. That which my lips know they shall speak sincerely. ⁴ The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. ⁵ If you can, answer me. Set your words in order before me, and stand forth. ⁶ Behold, I am toward God even as you are. I am also formed out of the clay. ⁷ Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my pressure be heavy on you. ⁸ Surely you have spoken in my hearing, I have heard the voice

of your words, saying, ⁹ 'I am clean, without disobedience. I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me. ¹⁰ Behold, He finds occasions against me. He counts me for His enemy. ¹¹ He puts my feet in the stocks. He marks all my paths'. ¹² Behold, I will answer you. In this you are not just, for God is greater than man. ¹³ Why do you strive against Him, because He doesn't give account of any of His matters? ¹⁴ For God speaks once, yes twice, though man pays no attention. ¹⁵ In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbering on the bed; ¹⁶ then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, ¹⁷ that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. ¹⁸ He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. ¹⁹ He is chastened also with pain on his bed, with continual strife in his bones; ²⁰ so that his life hates bread, and his soul dainty food. ²¹ His flesh is so consumed away, that it can't be seen. His bones that were not seen stick out. ²² Yes, his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the destroyers. ²³ If there is beside him an angel, an interpreter, one among a thou-

Job are criticized, but He says nothing against Elihu. In this case, God's final commendation of Job in 42:7 would be strictly within the context of Job's repentance. However, whilst Elihu often speaks in harmony with God's direct words later in the book, he remains somewhat enigmatic; for his fierce criticism of Job, mixed with what appears to be youthful arrogance and dogmatism, is hard to fully square with God's opening and closing statement that Job was spotless in His sight. Perhaps God didn't want to have to personally intervene in revealing Job's sinfulness to him; He always seeks to work through people rather than by direct intervention. And so perhaps God sent this arrogant young man to Job as a final attempt to appeal to him.

33:13 All refusal to repent is a striving against God in that He is constantly working in our lives to bring us to repentance.

sand, to show to man what is right for him; ²⁴ then God is gracious to him, and says, ‘Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom’. ²⁵ His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s. He returns to the days of his youth. ²⁶ He prays to God, and He is gracious to him, so that he sees His face with joy. He restores to man his righteousness. ²⁷ He sings before men, and says, ‘I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it didn’t profit me. ²⁸ He has redeemed my soul from going into the pit. My life shall see the light’. ²⁹ Behold, God works all these things, twice, yes three times, with a man, ³⁰ to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living. ³¹ Mark well, Job, and listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will speak. ³² If you have anything to say, answer me. Speak, for I desire to justify you.

³³ If not, listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom.

CHAPTER 34 Dec. 26

Elihu Criticizes the Friends

Moreover Elihu answered, ² Hear my words, you wise men. Give

ear to me, you who have knowledge.

³ For the ear tries words, as the palate tastes food. ⁴ Let us choose for us that which is right. Let us know among ourselves what is good. ⁵ For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, God has taken away my right: ⁶ notwithstanding my right I am considered a liar. My wound is incurable, though I am without disobedience’. ⁷ What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water, ⁸ who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men? ⁹ For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with God’. ¹⁰ Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: far be it from God, that He should do wickedness, from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity. ¹¹ For the work of a man He will render to him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. ¹² Yes surely, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert justice. ¹³ Who put Him in charge of the earth? Or who has appointed Him over the whole world? ¹⁴ If He set His heart on Himself, if He gathered to Himself His spirit and His breath, ¹⁵ all

33:27 Job’s decision to say “I have sinned... and it didn’t profit me” connects with the prodigal son (Lk. 15:21), thus again associating Job with the Jews in their suffering, repentance and final return to God from exile in the Gentile world; see on 3:23.

34:8 *Goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men* – This wasn’t true of Job. Elihu may however be sarcastically referring to the three friends of Job as “wicked men”.

34:9 See on 21:7.

34:14 *If He set His heart on Himself* – If God were selfish, He wouldn’t have created nor maintain the world. We therefore see God’s unselfishness and outgiving grace every microsecond of our existence.

If He gathered to Himself His spirit and His breath – The Spirit of God is His breath, His power by which He sustains all creation. It isn’t a person, as the false doctrine of

flesh would perish together, and man would turn again to dust. ¹⁶ If now you have understanding, hear this. Listen to the voice of my words. ¹⁷ Shall even one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty? ¹⁸ Who says to a king, ‘Vile!’ or to nobles, ‘Wicked!’? ¹⁹ Who doesn’t respect the persons of princes, nor respects the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of His hands. ²⁰ In a moment they die, even at midnight. The people are shaken and pass away. The mighty are taken away without a hand. ²¹ For His eyes are on the ways of a man. He sees all his goings. ²² There is no darkness, nor thick gloom, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. ²³ For He doesn’t need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment. ²⁴ He breaks in pieces mighty men in ways past finding out, and sets others in their place. ²⁵ Therefore He takes knowledge of their works. He overturns them in the night, so that they are destroyed. ²⁶ He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others; ²⁷ because they turned aside from following Him, and wouldn’t pay attention to any of His ways, ²⁸ so that they caused the cry of the poor to come

to Him. He heard the cry of the afflicted. ²⁹ When He gives quietness, who then can condemn? When He hides His face, who then can see Him? Alike whether to a nation, or to a man, ³⁰ that the Godless man may not reign, that there be no one to ensnare the people. ³¹ For has any said to God, ‘I am guilty, but I will not offend any more. ³² Teach me that which I don’t see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more?’ ³³ Shall His recompense be as you desire, that you refuse it? For you must choose, and not I. Therefore speak what you know. ³⁴ Men of understanding will tell me, yes, every wise man who hears me: ³⁵ ‘Job speaks without knowledge. His words are without wisdom’. ³⁶ I wish that Job were tried to the end, because of his answering like wicked men. ³⁷ For he adds rebellion to his sin. He claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God.

CHAPTER 35 Dec. 26

Elihu Appeals for Job to Repent

Moreover Elihu answered, ² Do you think this to be your right, or do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’, ³ that you ask, ‘What advantage will it be to you? What profit shall I have, if I had not

the Trinity supposes; although at times His Spirit, His power, can be personified as many abstract things are.

34:23 The day of judgment is therefore not in order for God to acquire knowledge or facts about us; He knows that already. The process of judgment day will be for our benefit. For if Christ came and we immediately entered the Kingdom without that necessary process, we would have so little appreciation of His grace nor of each other nor of ourselves. The purpose of judgment, even when it is received in part in this life as in Job’s case, is to teach us, rather than provide God with information.

sinned?’⁴ I will answer you, and your companions with you.⁵ Look to the heavens, and see. See the skies, which are higher than you.⁶ If you have sinned, what effect do you have against Him? If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?⁷ If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?⁸ Your wickedness may hurt a man as you are, and your righteousness may profit a son of man.⁹ By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out. They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty.¹⁰ But none says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,¹¹ who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?’¹² There they cry, but none gives answer, because of the pride of evil men.¹³ Surely God will not hear an empty cry, neither will the Almighty regard it.¹⁴ How much less when you say you don’t see Him. The cause is before Him, and you wait for Him!¹⁵ But now, because He has not visited in His anger, neither does He greatly regard arrogance-¹⁶ therefore Job opens his mouth with empty talk, and he multiplies words without knowledge.

CHAPTER 36 Dec. 27

Elihu Speaks Up for God

Elihu also continued and said,
² Bear with me a little, and I will

show you; for I still have something to say on God’s behalf.³ I will get my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.⁴ For truly my words are not false. One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.⁵ Behold, God is mighty, and doesn’t despise anyone. He is mighty in strength of understanding.⁶ He doesn’t preserve the life of the wicked, but gives to the afflicted their right.⁷ He doesn’t withdraw His eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne, He sets them forever, and they are exalted.⁸ If they are bound in fetters, and are taken in the cords of afflictions,⁹ then He shows them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly.¹⁰ He also opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity.¹¹ If they listen and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.¹² But if they don’t listen, they shall perish by the sword; they shall die without knowledge.¹³ But those who are Godless in heart lay up anger. They don’t cry for help when He binds them.¹⁴ They die in youth. Their life perishes among the unclean.¹⁵ He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear in oppression.¹⁶ Yes, He would have allured you out of distress, into a broad place, where there is no restriction. That which is set on your table would be full of fatness.¹⁷ But you

36:15 *He opens their ear in oppression* – Our sensitivity to and understanding of God’s word is heightened during times of trial. Sadly we are such empirical learners that we have to suffer many things to make us open our ear to His word; and we needn’t suffer them if we accepted with full meaning the simple foundation truth that

are full of the judgment of the wicked. Judgment and justice take hold of you. ¹⁸ Don't let riches entice you to wrath, neither let the great size of a bribe turn you aside. ¹⁹ Would your wealth sustain you in distress, or all the might of your strength? ²⁰ Don't desire the night, when people are cut off in their place. ²¹ Take heed, don't regard iniquity; for you have chosen this rather than affliction. ²² Behold, God is exalted in His power. Who is a teacher like Him? ²³ Who has prescribed His way for Him? Or who can say, 'You have committed unrighteousness?'. ²⁴ Remember that you magnify His work, whereof men have sung. ²⁵ All men have looked thereon. Man sees it afar off. ²⁶ Behold, God is great, and we don't know Him. The number of His years is unsearchable. ²⁷ For He draws up the drops of water, which distil in rain from His vapour, ²⁸ which the skies pour down and which drop on man abundantly. ²⁹ Yes, can any understand the spreading of the clouds,

and the thunderings of His pavilion? ³⁰ Behold, He spreads His light around Him. He covers the bottom of the sea. ³¹ For by these He judges the people. He gives food in abundance. ³² He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark. ³³ Its noise tells about Him, and the livestock also concerning the storm that comes up.

CHAPTER 37 Dec. 28

Elihu Speaks of God's Power

Yes, at this my heart trembles, and is moved out of its place. ² Hear, oh, hear the noise of His voice, the sound that goes out of His mouth. ³ He sends it forth under the whole sky, and His lightning to the ends of the earth. ⁴ After it a voice roars. He thunders with the voice of His majesty. He doesn't hold back anything when His voice is heard. ⁵ God thunders marvellously with His voice. He does great things, which we can't comprehend. ⁶ For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; likewise to

the Bible is indeed God's word speaking to us. The wonder of the very existence of God's inspired word ought to of itself make us open our ears in sensitivity to it. But because we fail to believe it as we ought to in practice, we are sent tribulation to make us sensitive to it.

36:30, 31 *He covers the bottom of the sea. For by these He judges the people* – The sea was seen by ancient peoples as the abode of 'satan' type gods of evil. God is showing that He is in full control of the sea, and any beings there which people might imagine would be in any case under His total control and not hidden from Him.

36:33 *The storm that comes up* – A thunderstorm was brewing as Elihu spoke. Lightning and thunderstorms were seen as the wrath of supposed gods of evil, who were similar to the 'satan' being many believe in today. The point of the thunderstorm was to demonstrate that it was God in control, it was from Him, and not from the 'satan' entities people generally believed in at that time. See on 37:2,15.

37:2 *Hear the noise of His voice* – See on 36:33. The crash of the thunder in the storm which came down upon them wasn't the voice of any radically independent god of evil, but *God's* voice.

the shower of rain, and to the showers of His mighty rain. ⁷ He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom He has made may know it. ⁸ Then the animals take cover, and remain in their dens. ⁹ Out of its room comes the storm, and cold out of the north. ¹⁰ By the breath of God, ice is given, and the breadth of the waters is frozen. ¹¹ Yes, He loads the thick cloud with moisture. He spreads abroad the cloud of His lightning. ¹² It is turned around by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the surface of the habitable world, ¹³ whether it is for correction, or for His land, or for grace, that He causes it to come. ¹⁴ Listen to this, Job. Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. ¹⁵ Do you know how God controls them, and causes the lightning of His cloud to shine? ¹⁶ Do you know the workings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge? ¹⁷ You whose clothing is warm, when the earth is still by reason of the south wind? ¹⁸ Can you, with Him, spread out the sky, which is strong as a cast metal mirror? ¹⁹ Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by

reason of darkness. ²⁰ Shall it be told Him that I would speak? Or should a man wish that he were swallowed up? ²¹ Now men don't see the light which is bright in the skies, but the wind passes, and clears them. ²² Out of the north comes golden splendour. With God is awesome majesty. ²³ We can't reach the Almighty. He is exalted in power. In justice and great righteousness, He will not oppress. ²⁴ Therefore men revere Him. He doesn't regard any who are wise of heart.

CHAPTER 38 Dec. 29

God Himself Speaks about His Creation

Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind, ² Who is this who makes counsel dark by words without knowledge? ³ Brace yourself like a man, for I will question you, then you answer Me! ⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measures, if you know? Or who stretched the line on it? ⁶ Whereupon were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of

37:7 *He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom He has made may know it* – Our hand or power is often limited by God through weakness, illness, dysfunction of ourselves or others, so that we may know the strength of *His* hand and power.

37:15 *Do you know how God controls them, and causes the lightning* – See on 36:33; the natural creation isn't just ticking on clockwork, God is actively in control of it all. We are therefore never far from evidence of God's active, passionate awareness and power.

38:7 See on 9:32.

All the sons of God shouted for joy – Note that *all* the Angels are obedient to God and on His side as it were. Angels don't sin (Lk. 20:35,36 cp. Rom. 6:23).

God shouted for joy? ⁸ Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth from the womb, ⁹ when I made clouds its garment, and wrapped it in thick darkness, ¹⁰ marked out for it My bound, set bars and doors, ¹¹ and said, ‘Here you may come, but no further. Here your proud waves shall be stayed?’. ¹² Have you commanded the morning in your days, and caused the dawn to know its place; ¹³ that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and shake the wicked out of it? ¹⁴ It is changed as clay under the seal, and stands forth as a garment. ¹⁵ From the wicked, their light is withheld. The high arm is broken. ¹⁶ Have you entered into the springs

of the sea? Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep? ¹⁷ Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? ¹⁸ Have you comprehended the earth in its breadth? Declare, if you know it all. ¹⁹ What is the way to the dwelling of light? As for darkness, where is its place, ²⁰ that you should take it to its bound, that you should discern the paths to its house? ²¹ Surely you know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great! ²² Have you entered the treasures of the snow, or have you seen the treasures of the hail, ²³ which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day

38:8-11 *Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth from the womb* – The supposed sea gods of evil (see on 36:30,31) were under God’s control and limitation even if they existed, just as He specified and limited the power of ‘satan’ in the prologue. There are several allusions in Job to Babylonian legends concerning Marduk – indicating that the book may have been re-written in Babylon with allusion to these legends in order to deconstruct them. The *Enuma Elish* 4.139,140 speaks of how Marduk limited the waters of Tiamat, and set up a bar and watchmen so that the waters wouldn’t go further than he permitted. But this very language is applied to God here and in 7:12. One of the purposes of Job was to urge Judah that Yahweh was greater than Marduk, He and not Marduk was to be Israel’s God. The sea was understood to be the abode of evil monsters. Yet Job stresses how God is in control of the raging sea. Just look out for all the references to the sea in Job. God artlessly claims to have created the sea. In the Canaanite pantheon, Baal was seen as well matched in conflict by Yam, the sea god. But it’s emphasized by God that He created the sea, shuts it up within bounds, brought it out from the womb. In Canaanite myth, Aquhat [another ‘Satan’ figure in their theology] could alone “count the months” – but the same phrase is used in 39:2 about how God alone has this power. As God ‘shut up’ Job (1:10 Heb.), so He could ‘shut up’ the sea, with all the evil associated with it in peoples’ minds at the time (38:8). For at creation, He had commanded the waters where to go and they obeyed just one word from Him. God is using poetry to reframe these pagan myths in the context of His omnipotence, to show that His awesome power means that there’s no room left for these supposed beings to exist. Often the Bible speaks of the power of God over raging seas – for the sea was so deeply associated with evil in the minds of Semitic peoples (e.g. Ps. 77:19; 93:4 and the fact that three of the Gospels emphasize how Jesus walked over raging sea – Mt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:36-41; Lk. 8:22-25).

38:10 See on 26:10.

of battle and war? ²⁴ By what way is the lightning distributed, or the east wind scattered on the earth? ²⁵ Who has cut a channel for the flood water, or the path for the thunderstorm; ²⁶ to cause it to rain on a land where no man is; on the wilderness, in which there is no man; ²⁷ to satisfy the waste and desolate ground, to cause the tender grass to spring forth? ²⁸ Does the rain have a father? Or who fathers the drops of dew? ²⁹ Out of whose womb came the ice? The gray frost of the sky, who has given birth to it? ³⁰ The waters become hard like stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen. ³¹ Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion? ³² Can you lead forth the constellations in their season? Or can you guide the Bear with her cubs? ³³ Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you establish its dominion over the earth? ³⁴ Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover you? ³⁵ Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go? Do they report to you, 'Here we are?'. ³⁶ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind? ³⁷ Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of the sky, ³⁸ when the dust runs into a mass, and the clods of earth stick together?

God Speaks about the Animals

³⁹ Can you hunt the prey for the lioness, or satisfy the appetite of the

young lions, ⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens, and lie in wait in the thicket? ⁴¹ Who provides for the raven his prey, when his young ones cry to God, and wander for lack of food?

CHAPTER 39 Dec. 30

Do you know the time when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears fawns? ² Can you number the months that they fulfil? Or do you know the time when they give birth? ³ They bow themselves, they bring forth their young, they end their labour pains. ⁴ Their young ones become strong. They grow up in the open field. They go forth, and don't return again. ⁵ Who has set the wild donkey free? Or who has loosened the bonds of the swift donkey, ⁶ whose home I have made the wilderness, and the salt land his dwelling place? ⁷ He scorns the tumult of the city, neither does he hear the shouting of the driver. ⁸ The range of the mountains is his pasture, he searches after every green thing. ⁹ Will the wild ox be content to serve you? Or will he stay by your feeding trough? ¹⁰ Can you hold the wild ox in the furrow with his harness? Or will he till the valleys after you? ¹¹ Will you trust him, because his strength is great? Or will you leave to him your labour? ¹² Will you confide in him, that he will bring home your seed, and gather the grain of your threshing floor? ¹³ The wings of the ostrich wave proudly; but are

38:29 *Out of whose womb* – One of many places where God likens Himself to a woman.

they the feathers and plumage of love? ¹⁴ For she leaves her eggs on the earth, warms them in the dust, ¹⁵ and forgets that the foot may crush them, or that the wild animal may trample them. ¹⁶ She deals harshly with her young ones, as if they were not hers. Though her labour is in vain, she is without fear, ¹⁷ because God has deprived her of wisdom, neither has He imparted to her understanding. ¹⁸ When she lifts up herself on high, she scorns the horse and his rider. ¹⁹ Have you given the horse might? Have you clothed his neck with a quivering mane? ²⁰ Have you made him to leap as a locust? The glory of his snorting is awesome. ²¹ He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength. He goes out to meet the armed men. ²² He mocks at fear, and is not dismayed, neither does he turn back from the sword. ²³ The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear and the javelin. ²⁴ He eats up the ground with fierceness and rage, neither does he stand still at the sound of the trumpet. ²⁵ As often as the trumpet sounds he snorts, 'Aha!'. He smells the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. ²⁶ Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and stretches her wings toward the south? ²⁷ Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up, and makes his nest on high? ²⁸ On the cliff he dwells, and makes his home, on the point of the cliff, and the stronghold. ²⁹ From there he spies out the prey.

His eyes see it afar off. ³⁰ His young ones also suck up blood. Where the slain are, there he is.

CHAPTER 40 Dec. 31

Moreover Yahweh answered Job, ² Shall he who argues contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.

Job Admits He Cannot Answer

³ Then Job answered Yahweh, ⁴ Behold, I am of small account. What shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. ⁵ I have spoken once, and I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.

God Questions Job

⁶ Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind, ⁷ Now brace yourself like a man. I will question you, and you will answer Me. ⁸ Will you even annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me, that you may be justified? ⁹ Or do you have an arm like God? Can you thunder with a voice like Him? ¹⁰ Now deck yourself with excellency and dignity. Array yourself with honour and majesty. ¹¹ Pour out the fury of your anger. Look at each one who is proud, and bring him low. ¹² Look at each one who is proud, and humble him. Crush the wicked in their place. ¹³ Hide them in the dust together. Bind their faces in the hidden place. ¹⁴ Then I will also admit to you that your own right hand can save you. ¹⁵ See now, Behemoth,

40:8 *Will you condemn Me, that you may be justified?* – God is as it were placed in the dock by our allegation that we have not sinned as He claims, and that our sufferings are unjustified. Paul plays on this idea throughout the legal language of Romans 1-8.

which I made as well as you. He eats grass like an ox. ¹⁶ Look now, his strength is in his thighs. His force is in the muscles of his belly. ¹⁷ He moves his tail like a cedar. The sinews of his thighs are knit together. ¹⁸ His bones are like tubes of brass. His limbs are like bars of iron. ¹⁹ He is the chief of the ways of God. He who made him gives him His sword. ²⁰ Surely the mountains produce food for him, where all the animals of the field play. ²¹ He lies under the lotus trees, in the cover of the reed, and

the marsh. ²² The lotuses cover him with their shade. The willows of the brook surround him. ²³ Behold, if a river overflows, he doesn't tremble. He is confident, though the Jordan swells even to his mouth. ²⁴ Shall any take him when he is on the watch, or pierce through his nose with a snare?

CHAPTER 41 Dec. 31

Leviathan

Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down his tongue with a cord? ² Can you put

41:1 God almost jokes with Job, that he had been trying to draw out Leviathan with a fish hook; this is a commentary upon so many human attempts to get a handle on the way God is the adversary / satan figure in our lives. Shrugging it off as chance and bad luck, believing in a personal Satan in the sea or in Heaven, thinking God is punishing us... all this is trying to capture Leviathan with a mere fishing rod. The book of Job isn't an explanation for specific human suffering – and many who turn to the book looking for that come away disappointed. Rather is it an account of God's sovereign power, putting meaning into the word "All-mighty" when applied to God. On a 'doctrinal' level it is indeed a deconstruction of the ideas of supernatural 'Satan' figures. But on a more personal level, it challenges us to follow in Job's faithful footsteps, as it challenged Judah in captivity. The monster figures of Leviathan and Behemoth appear at the end of the book of Job, forming a kind of *inclusio* with the opening reference to Satan; and they are clearly part of God's final answer to Job's "case". Behe-mot can be understood as a reference to Mot, the Canaanite god of death; and Leviathan appears to be the Canaanite version of the orthodox 'Satan' figure, perhaps a reference to the 'Lotan' of the Ugaritic myths. In great detail, these figures are deconstructed. They are shown to be *created* beings – created by the one almighty God of the Old Testament, to be completely under His control to the point that He can even tease them, so enormously greater is His power than theirs. These Canaanite 'Satan' figures are thereby shown to have no significant existence; and they certainly don't exist as opposed to God. They are totally under His control. 'Evil' in a form independent of Him, in radical opposition to Him, simply isn't there. It is He who not only created Behemoth, but can effortlessly control him in accord with His purpose (40:15). That's the comfort of the message. Indeed the descriptions of the natural world which lead up to the Leviathan / Behemoth passages are there to underline this point; and it's interesting that those passages zoom in upon the cruelties and even brutalities within nature. Yet these are all of God's ultimate design and creation, and under His providential control. Job had earlier perceived this; for he responds to the friends' allusions to an evil 'Satan' figure as the source of his suffering by observing: "Ask the animals... the birds of the air... [they show that] the hand of the Lord [and not any supernatural 'Satan'] has done

a rope into his nose, or pierce his jaw through with a hook? ³ Will he make many petitions to you, or will he speak soft words to you? ⁴ Will he make a covenant with you, that you should take him for a servant forever? ⁵ Will you play with him as with a bird? Or will you bind him for your girls? ⁶ Will traders barter for him? Will they part him among the

merchants? ⁷ Can you fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears? ⁸ Lay your hand on him. Remember the battle, and do so no more. ⁹ Behold, the hope of binding him is vain. Won't one be cast down even at the sight of him? ¹⁰ None is so fierce that he dare stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before Me? ¹¹ Who has first given to

this" (12:7-9). The same Hebrew words are used about God's binding and loosing of the stars [which were thought to control evil on earth] and His binding, loosing and opening of Leviathan's mouth (38:31 cp. 40:29). Whether or not Leviathan / a 'Satan' figure, or the bad stars, are for real... God is in utter control of them, and there is thus no conflict, no war in Heaven, no ultimate dualism at all in the cosmos. Which is just the message we would expect from a monotheistic Old Testament book. Israel's God is truly the Almighty. Just as Job is described as God's "servant" (1:8), so is Leviathan (40:28; 41:4). No evil power uncontrolled by God is at work in Job's life. We also need to give due weight to the fact that God speaks the Leviathan / Behemoth passages "out of the storm", which had been gathering since 37:2. This is significant because storms were seen as manifestations of evil powers. Yet here (and elsewhere in Scripture), the one true God speaks out of such storms, to demonstrate how far greater He is than any storm god; and showing by implication that such storm gods don't exist, and the 'evil' which supposedly came from them was in fact under His control. Much of the language used about Leviathan and Behemoth is also used about God's manifestation of Himself: Smoke from nostrils, flame from mouth (41:11,12) is said about God in Ps. 18:8; Strength before and dismay behind (Job 41:14) = Hab. 3:5; Strong ones and leaders cringe in fear (41:17 Heb.) = Ps. 18:7; Hab. 3:6; Deep sea stirred up (41:23,24 Heb.) = Ps. 18:5; terrible teeth = 16:9 about God; breath that carries men away = 15:30 about God; none his equal (41:33) = true about God. Leviathan is called the 'cruel one' (41:10) – and the very same word is used by Job about God in His afflicting of Job (30:21). Leviathan, the seemingly overbearing power of evil in the world, is in fact a manifestation of God to such an intense degree that effectively it 'is' God; God, ultimately, is the adversary / satan to Job. The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (2:8; 42:4). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (40:4). Job intercedes for his children (1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love.

41:3 *Will he speak soft words to you* – The emphasis is on *you*. The animals speak softly to God; He is in dialogue with them. All around us, God is in active communication.

Me, that I should repay him? Everything under the heavens is Mine. ¹² I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, nor his mighty strength, nor his goodly frame. ¹³ Who can strip off his outer garment? Who shall come within his jaws? ¹⁴ Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth is terror. ¹⁵ Strong scales are his pride, shut up together with a close seal. ¹⁶ One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. ¹⁷ They are joined one to another. They stick together, so that they can't be pulled apart. ¹⁸ His sneezing flashes out light. His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. ¹⁹ Out of his mouth go burning torches. Sparks of fire leap forth. ²⁰ Out of his nostrils a smoke goes, as of a boiling pot over a fire of reeds. ²¹ His breath kindles coals. A flame goes forth from his mouth. ²² There is strength in his neck. Terror dances before him. ²³ The flakes of his flesh are joined together. They are firm on him. They can't be moved. ²⁴ His heart is as firm as a stone, yes, firm as the lower millstone. ²⁵ When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid. They retreat before his thrashing. ²⁶ If one attacks him with the sword, it can't prevail; nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft. ²⁷ He

counts iron as straw; and brass as rotten wood. ²⁸ The arrow can't make him flee. Sling stones are like chaff to him. ²⁹ Clubs are counted as stubble. He laughs at the rushing of the javelin. ³⁰ His undersides are like sharp potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge. ³¹ He makes the deep to boil like a pot. He makes the sea like a pot of ointment. ³² He makes a path shine after him. One would think the deep had white hair. ³³ On earth there is not his equal, that is made without fear. ³⁴ He sees everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride.

CHAPTER 42

Job Repents

Then Job answered Yahweh, ² I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be restrained. ³ You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I didn't know. ⁴ You said, 'Listen, now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you will answer Me'. ⁵ I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. ⁶ Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

42:2 Job came to realize the massive practical extent of what he had previously known in theory, what he had heard "by the hearing of the ear". Now his eye saw / perceived that truly no plan of God can be thwarted, by any of the various 'Satan' monsters imagined by men. We too may say that we believe in the omnipotence of God; but such a belief requires us to throw out all beliefs in supernatural satan figures. And that's not a merely intellectual exercise; to see the tragedies and cruelties of our lives as being ultimately from God and under His control is something which shakes us to the core.

42:5 *My eye sees You* – All the theory we may know about God must be transformed into personal relationship with God – and that is the purpose of the sufferings of our lives.

Job Is Restored

⁷ It was so, that after Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has. ⁸ Now therefore, take to yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept him, that I not deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has. ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did what Yahweh commanded them, and Yahweh accepted Job. ¹⁰ Yahweh turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends. Yahweh gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then came there to him all his brothers, and all his sisters,

and all those who had been of his acquaintance before, and ate bread with him in his house. They comforted him, and consoled him concerning all the evil that Yahweh had brought on him. Each one also gave him a piece of money, and each one a ring of gold. ¹² So Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand female donkeys. ¹³ He had also seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ He called the name of the first, Jemimah; and the name of the second, Keziah; and the name of the third, Keren Happuch. ¹⁵ In all the land were no women found so beautiful as the daughters of Job. Their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. ¹⁶ After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, to four generations. ¹⁷ So Job died, being old and full of days.

42:7 Although Job did not speak wrongly about God (see too 2:10) and kept patiently speaking the word of God despite the mockery it brought from the friends (James 5:10,11), this does not mean that Job or all that he said was blameless. The friends are not reprimanded for speaking wrongly about Job, but about God. Thus there was probably a fair degree of truth in their accusations concerning Job's self righteousness. Elihu also severely rebukes him for this, and unlike the three friends he is not rebuked for anything in the final analysis by God in Job 42; not to mention the accusation of 'darkening counsel without knowledge' (38:2) by God Himself, backed up by four chapters of heavy reprimand of Job's reliance on human strength and wisdom. This led to Job retracting much of what he had said (40:4,5; 42:3-6). This clearly establishes that much of Job's reasoning was faulty, although what he spoke before God was correct. Therefore the final comment that God had spoken of God "the thing that is right" could refer to his final repentance. To repent is to admit that God is right; to refuse to repent is to effectively declare Him wrong. And all his wrong understanding and hard words about God were overlooked because of that.

42:15 *Gave them an inheritance among their brothers* – Job's understanding of the value and meaning of the human person meant that he valued his daughters as much as his sons, and gave them equal inheritances – unusual, surely, for those days.

THE PSALMS

BOOK I

Psalm 1 Jan. 1

¹ Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in Yahweh's law. On His law he meditates day and night. ³ He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither; whatever he does shall prosper. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.

Psalm 2 Jan. 1

¹ Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take a stand, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against His Anointed saying, ³ Let's break their bonds apart, and cast their cords from us. ⁴ He who sits in the heavens will laugh. The Lord will have them in derision. ⁵ Then He will speak to them in His anger, and terrify them in His wrath. ⁶ Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. ⁷ I will tell of the decree. Yahweh said to me, You are My son. Today I have become your father. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the uttermost ends of the earth for your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron,

1:5 *The wicked shall not stand in the judgment* – This may have a literal fulfilment at the day of judgment. We will all naturally fall before Jesus then (Rom. 14:11), but the righteous will be stood up (Lk. 21:36), perhaps by an Angel, in the same way as Daniel had a foretaste of the day of judgment and was stood on his feet and reassured of God's acceptance by an Angel (Dan. 10). Those who come to the judgment will be those who are responsible to God, who have known His ways; yet the wicked amongst them will be swept away like the chaff (:4), which is the judgment which will come upon the kingdoms of men, the Gentile world at large (Dan. 2:35,44). They will share the judgment of this world with which they chose to identify in this life of opportunity to serve God (1 Cor. 11:32).

2:2 *His Anointed* – The Greek word "Christ" means 'anointed'. This Psalm is quoted in the New Testament in various contexts – e.g. to the Roman and Jewish rulers trying to destroy Christ at His death (Acts 4:26); to the resurrection of Christ (2:7 = Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5); to the opposition to Christ's people as they preached the Gospel (Acts 4:25) and to the situation soon after His return, when the rebellious nations will seek to overthrow Christ's rule (2:9 = Rev. 2:27). What this shows is that Old Testament scripture can have multiple interpretations, in the same way as different people at different times can find the same Scripture speaking personally to them; and as we can find a single Bible passage amazingly relevant to us in different contexts and various times of our lives.

you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. ¹⁰ Now therefore be wise, you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. ¹¹ Serve Yahweh with respect and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Give sincere homage to the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him.

Psalm 3 Jan. 2

A Psalm by David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

¹ Yahweh, how my adversaries have increased! Many are those who rise up against me. ² Many there are who say of my soul, There is no help for him in God! Selah. ³ But You, Yahweh, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head. ⁴ I cry to Yahweh with my voice, and He answers me out of His holy hill. Selah. ⁵ I laid myself down and slept; I awoke, because Yahweh sustains me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of tens of thousands of people who have set themselves against me on every side. ⁷ Arise, Yahweh! Save me, my God! For You have struck all of my enemies on the cheek bone. You have broken the teeth of the wicked. ⁸ Salvation belongs to Yahweh. Your blessing be on Your people. Selah.

Psalm 4 Jan. 2

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm by David.

¹ Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness. Give me relief from my distress. Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. ² You sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour? Will you love vanity, and go seeking after falsehood? Selah. ³ But know that Yahweh has set apart for Himself him who is Godly: Yahweh will hear when I call to Him. ⁴ Be angry, and don't sin. Search your own heart on your bed, and be still. Selah. ⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, put your trust in Yahweh. ⁶ Many say, Who will show us any good? Yahweh, let the light of Your face shine on us. ⁷ You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and their new wine are increased. ⁸ In peace I will both lay myself down and sleep, for You, Yahweh alone, make me live in safety.

Psalm 5 Jan. 2

For the Chief Musician, with the flutes. A Psalm by David.

¹ Give ear to my words, Yahweh. Consider my meditation. ² Listen to the voice of my cry, my King and my God; for to You do I pray. ³ Yahweh,

3:2 *Selah* – The Psalms were originally sung, and this appears to be a musical instruction requiring a pause. For readers, it effectively means ‘Pause and meditate on this’.

4:4 *Be angry, and don't sin* – This verse [from the Septuagint] is applied to us by Paul in Eph. 4:26. He interprets it as meaning that anger is not in itself wrong, but because it can so easily lead us to sin, it is better to not go to sleep whilst angry. This kind of daily self-discipline is vital in the spiritual life; the Psalms often comment upon the importance of how we start and end each day.

in the morning You shall hear my voice; in the morning I will lay my requests before You, and will watch expectantly. ⁴ For You are not a God who has pleasure in wickedness, evil can't live with You. ⁵ The arrogant shall not stand in Your sight; you hate all workers of iniquity. ⁶ You will destroy those who speak lies; Yahweh abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. ⁷ But as for me, in the abundance of Your grace I will come into Your house. I will bow toward Your holy temple in reverence of You. ⁸ Lead me, Yahweh, in Your righteousness because of my enemies. Make Your way straight before my face. ⁹ For there is no faithfulness in their mouth. Their heart is destruction. Their throat is an open tomb. They flatter with their tongue. ¹⁰ Hold them guilty, God. Let them fall by their own advice; thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You. ¹¹ But let all those who take refuge in You rejoice, let them always shout for joy, because You defend them. Let them also who love Your name be joyful in You. ¹² For You will bless the righteous. Yah-

weh, You will surround him with favour as with a shield.

Psalm 6 Jan. 3

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments, upon the eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh, don't rebuke me in Your anger, neither discipline me in Your wrath. ² Have mercy on me, Yahweh, for I am faint. Yahweh, heal me, for my bones are troubled. ³ My soul is also in great anguish. But You, Yahweh—how long? ⁴ Return, Yahweh. Deliver my soul, and save me for Your grace' sake. ⁵ For in death there is no memory of You. In Sheol, who shall give You thanks? ⁶ I am weary with my groaning; each night I flood my bed, I drench my couch with my tears. ⁷ My eye wastes away because of grief, it grows old because of all my adversaries. ⁸ Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for Yahweh has heard the voice of my weeping. ⁹ Yahweh has heard my supplication, Yahweh accepts my prayer. ¹⁰ May all my enemies be ashamed and dismayed. They shall turn back, they shall be disgraced suddenly.

5:4 *Evil can't live with You* – There are therefore no sinful beings in Heaven, contrary to the popular belief of many.

6:5 Even a righteous man like David didn't look forward to conscious survival of death. He wanted to keep on living in this life because he wanted to praise God; and this should be our motivation for asking God for health and victory against illness. If the righteous immediately praise God in Heaven after death, then David's words and reasoning here make no sense. Instead he looked forward to the Biblical hope of resurrection at Christ's return and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Note too that *sheol*, the Hebrew word translated "hell" in some Bibles, is clearly understood as referring to death or the grave. As righteous David expected to go there after death, it isn't the place where sinners go after death.

Psalm 7 Jan. 3

A meditation by David, which he sang to Yahweh, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

1 Yahweh my God, I take refuge in You. Save me from all those who pursue me and deliver me, ² lest they tear apart my soul like a lion, ripping it in pieces while there is none to deliver. ³ Yahweh, my God, if I have done this, if there is iniquity in my hands, ⁴ if I have rewarded evil to him who was at peace with me (yes, if I have delivered him who without cause was my adversary), ⁵ let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it; yes, let him tread my life down to the earth, and lay my glory in the dust. Selah. ⁶ Arise, Yahweh, in Your anger; lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries. Awake for me; You have commanded judgment. ⁷ Let the congregation of the peoples surround You. Rule over them on high. ⁸ Yahweh administers judgment to the peoples. Judge me, Yahweh, according to my righteousness, and to my integrity that is in me. ⁹ Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; their minds and hearts are searched by the righteous God. ¹⁰ My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. ¹¹ God is a righteous judge,

yes, a God who has indignation every day. ¹² If a man doesn't relent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent and strung His bow. ¹³ He has also Himself prepared the instruments of death, He makes ready His burning arrows. ¹⁴ Behold, he travails with iniquity. Yes, he has conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. ¹⁵ He has dug a hole, and has fallen into the pit which he made. ¹⁶ The trouble he causes shall return upon his own head, his violence shall come down on the crown of his own head. ¹⁷ I will give thanks to Yahweh according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of Yahweh Most High.

Psalm 8 Jan. 3

For the Chief Musician; on an instrument of Gath. A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, You who has set Your glory above the heavens! ² From the lips of babes and infants You have established strength, because of Your adversaries, that You might silence the enemy and the avenger. ³ When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; ⁴ what is man,

7 Concerning the words of Cush – David's response to hurtful words and false accusation (:3) was to share his situation with God, rather than brood on the words.

7:4 Him who without cause was my adversary – A reference to Saul's senseless persecution of David.

7:8 Judge me, Yahweh – David didn't fear the day of judgment, but rather he eagerly looked forward to it, as we should. He was secure in his relationship with God, and so that day wasn't a day of terrible uncertainty ever before him – and neither need it be for us.

that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You care for him? ⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the Angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. ⁶ You make him ruler over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet: ⁷ all sheep and cattle, yes, and the animals of the field, ⁸ the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas. ⁹ Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!

Psalm 9 Jan. 4

For the Chief Musician. Set to The Death of the Son. A Psalm by David.

¹ I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart. I will tell others of all Your marvellous works. ² I will be glad and rejoice in You, I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. ³ When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish in Your presence. ⁴ For You have maintained my just cause. You sit on the throne judging righteously. ⁵ You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked, You have blotted out their

name forever and ever. ⁶ The enemy is overtaken by endless ruin. The very memory of the cities which You have overthrown has perished. ⁷ But Yahweh reigns forever, He has prepared His throne for judgment. ⁸ He will judge the world in righteousness, He will administer judgment to the peoples in uprightness. ⁹ Yahweh will also be a high tower for the oppressed; a high tower in times of trouble. ¹⁰ Those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, Yahweh, have not forsaken those who seek You. ¹¹ Sing praises to Yahweh who dwells in Zion, and declare among the people what He has done. ¹² For He who avenges blood remembers them. He doesn't forget the cry of the afflicted. ¹³ Have mercy on me, Yahweh. See my affliction by those who hate me, and lift me up from the gates of death; ¹⁴ that I may show forth all Your praise. In the gates of the daughter of Zion I will rejoice in Your salvation. ¹⁵ The nations have sunk down in the pit that they made. In the net which they hid, their own foot is taken. ¹⁶ Yahweh has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. The

8:4 This verse is applied to Jesus as the "son of man" in Heb. 2:6-9 in order to prove that He was of human nature and was not an Angel, as some thought and still think.

8:5 *The Angels* – This translates the Hebrew word *elohim*, which is usually translated "God". This word can therefore be applied to those who manifest God, although they aren't God Himself. This is why Angels, men and God's Son, Jesus, can be called "God" without them being God Himself in person.

9:4 God's judgment is ongoing; it's not that God is somehow passive and not paying attention now and will only open the books and consider everything when Christ returns. He is passionately involved in our issues and judges them as they happen.

9:8 *He will judge the world in righteousness* – Quoted in Acts 17:31 about how God will judge the world through Jesus when He returns to earth.

9:16 *Yahweh has made Himself known; He has executed judgment* – In observing how

wicked is snared by the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah. ¹⁷ The wicked shall be turned back to Sheol, even all the nations that forget God. ¹⁸ For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever. ¹⁹ Arise, Yahweh! Don't let man prevail. Let the nations be judged in Your sight. ²⁰ Put them in fear, Yahweh, and let the nations know that they are only men. Selah.

Psalm 10 Jan. 4

¹ Why do You stand far off, Yahweh? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? ² In arrogance the wicked hunt down the weak. They are caught up in the schemes that they devise. ³ For the wicked boasts of his heart's cravings; he blesses the greedy, and condemns Yahweh. ⁴ The wicked, in the pride of his face, has no room in his thoughts for God. ⁵ His ways are prosperous at all times. He is proud, and Your laws are far from his sight. As for all his adversaries, he sneers

at them. ⁶ He says in his heart, I shall not be shaken. For generations I shall have no trouble. ⁷ His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and oppression; beneath his tongue is mischief and iniquity. ⁸ He lies in wait near the villages. From ambushes, he murders the innocent, his eyes are secretly set against the helpless. ⁹ He lurks in secret as a lion in his ambush. He lies in wait to catch the helpless. He catches the helpless, when he draws him in his net. ¹⁰ The helpless are crushed. They collapse. They fall under his strength. ¹¹ He says in his heart, God has forgotten. He hides His face. He will never see it. ¹² Arise, Yahweh! God, lift up Your hand! Don't forget the helpless. ¹³ Why does the wicked person condemn God and say in his heart, God won't call me into account? ¹⁴ But You do see trouble and grief. You consider it to take it into Your hand to deal with. You help the victim and the fatherless. ¹⁵ Break the arm of the wicked, as for the evil man, seek out

God has judged people and nations, we come to know Him better (see too :20). This is why the final judgment of individuals will be in a sense public; the whole purpose of the judgment seat will be for our collective as well as individual benefit, to teach us of the essence of God and prepare us to enter eternity. If we simply entered eternity at Christ's return without this educational process of participating in and observing the judgment process, we would simply not appreciate His grace as we should.

10:3 *Condemns Yahweh* – Not consciously, in so many words. But when we face God's principles and decide whether or not we will live by them or believe them, we effectively place God in the dock, and by doing so the wicked condemn Him. But when He is condemned by human judgment, God overcomes at the last (Rom. 3:4).

10:4 Pride is a sin because it pushes God out of our consciousness, replacing Him with self.

10:7,8 These verses are clearly about the “wicked” who rebel against God; and yet before we shake our heads too disapprovingly, remember that they are quoted about us all in Rom. 3:14. For at some times and in some ways, we are all this wicked – if we examine ourselves properly.

his wickedness until You find none.
¹⁶ Yahweh is King forever and ever!
 The nations will perish out of His land.
¹⁷ Yahweh, You have heard the desire of the humble. You will prepare their heart. You will cause Your ear to hear,
¹⁸ to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that man who is of the dust may terrify no more.

Psalm 11 Jan. 5

For the Chief Musician. By David.

¹ In Yahweh I take refuge. How can you say to my soul, Flee as a bird to Your mountain!
² For, behold, the wicked bend their bows and set their arrows on the strings, that they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.
³ If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?
⁴ Yahweh is in His holy temple. Yahweh is on His throne in heaven. His eyes observe, His eyes examine the children of men.
⁵ Yahweh examines the righteous, but the wicked and him who loves violence His soul hates.
⁶ On the wicked He will rain blazing coals; fire, sulphur, and

scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
⁷ For Yahweh is righteous, He loves righteousness. The upright shall see His face.

Psalm 12 Jan. 5

For the Chief Musician; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David.

¹ Help, Yahweh; for the Godly man is fading away, the faithful fail from among the children of men.
² Everyone lies to his neighbour, they speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart.
³ May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks great things,
⁴ who have said, With our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?
⁵ Because of the oppression of the weak and because of the groaning of the needy, I will now arise, says Yahweh; I will set him in safety from those who malign him.
⁶ The words of Yahweh are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.
⁷ You will keep them, Yahweh. You will preserve

10:18 *Man who is of the dust* – One basic outcome of believing in man's mortality and origin from "dust" is that we won't fear people.

11:4 We are invited to see God enthroned in a Heavenly court which is sitting 24/7, judging multiple cases at once as they occur worldwide.

11:7 *Shall see His face* – This in a literal sense was the ultimate hope of David (17:5), Job (Job 19:27) and all the faithful (Rev. 22:4); for God exists in a personal, corporeal form, in whose image we are made.

12:3 This verse is alluded to us in James 3:5, which speaks of the tongue being such a small part of the body and yet boasting great things, having spiritual effect far out of proportion to its size; James 1:8 and 4:8 also use the idea of double mindedness being reflected in our words. Note how the tongue is here put for the person – for God will cut off wicked speaking persons, rather than excise tongues from mouths. Our words really are to be identified with us; we needn't think that we can get away with being one person within and yet projecting a quite different image through carefully calculated words.

them from this generation forever.
⁸ The wicked walk on every side,
 when what is vile is exalted among
 the sons of men.

Psalm 13 Jan. 5

*For the Chief Musician. A Psalm
 by David.*

¹ How long, Yahweh? Will You forget
 me forever? How long will You hide
 Your face from me? ² How long shall
 I take counsel in my soul, having
 sorrow in my heart every day? How
 long shall my enemy triumph over
 me? ³ Look, and answer me, Yahweh
 my God. Give light to my eyes, lest
 I sleep in death; ⁴ lest my enemy say,
 I have prevailed against him; lest my
 adversaries rejoice when I fall. ⁵ But
 I trust in Your grace. My heart rejoices
 in Your salvation. ⁶ I will sing to
 Yahweh, because He has been good
 to me.

Psalm 14 Jan. 6

For the Chief Musician. By David.

¹ The fool has said in his heart, There
 is no God. They are corrupt. They
 have done abominable works. There
 is none who does good. ² Yahweh
 looked down from heaven on the

children of men, to see if there were
 any who understood, who sought af-
 ter God. ³ They have all gone aside.
 They have together become corrupt.
 There is none who does good, no,
 not one. ⁴ Have all the workers of in-
 iquity no knowledge, who eat up my
 people as they eat bread, and don't
 call on Yahweh? ⁵ There they were in
 great fear because God is in the gen-
 eration of the righteous. ⁶ You frus-
 trate the plan of the poor, because
 Yahweh is his refuge. ⁷ Oh that the
 salvation of Israel would come out of
 Zion! When Yahweh restores the for-
 tunes of His people, then Jacob shall
 rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Psalm 15 Jan. 6

A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh, who shall dwell in Your
 sanctuary? Who shall live on Your
 holy hill? ² He who walks blame-
 lessly, does what is right, and speaks
 truth in his heart; ³ he who doesn't
 slander with his tongue, nor does
 evil to his friend, nor casts slurs
 against his fellow man; ⁴ in whose
 eyes a vile man is despised, but who
 respects those who fear Yahweh;
 he who keeps an oath even when it

13:2, 6 David could have sorrow in his heart and yet rejoice in his heart because he knew that God was listening to his prayers and would one day answer. This is the almost schizophrenic experience of all believers.

14:1 Atheism was almost unheard of in early Israel. Yet the fool who quietly within his heart thinks as if there is no God is effectively as atheistic as the most hardened scientific atheist of our times.

There is none who does good – This is the result of atheism. And yet, frighteningly for those of us who would insist we are not atheists, this is quoted about each of us in Rom. 3:12. We are all atheists at times, in practice, and must throw ourselves upon God's grace to save us.

15:4 *He who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and doesn't change* – This is very much the language the Bible often uses about how God keeps His covenant promises

hurts, and doesn't change; ⁵ he who doesn't lend out his money for usury, nor take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be shaken.

Psalm 16 Jan. 6

A Poem by David.

¹ Preserve me, God, for in You do I take refuge. ² My soul, you have said to Yahweh, You are my Lord. Apart from You I have no good thing. ³ As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight. ⁴ Their sorrows shall be multiplied who give gifts to another god. Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take their names on my lips. ⁵ Yahweh assigned my portion and my cup, you made my inheritance secure. ⁶ The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; truly I have a good inheritance. ⁷ I will bless Yahweh, who has given me counsel. Yes, my heart instructs

me in the night seasons. ⁸ I have set Yahweh always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices. My body shall also lay to rest in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, neither will You allow Your holy one to see corruption. ¹¹ You will show me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy, in Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 17 Jan. 7

A Prayer by David.

¹ Hear, Yahweh, my righteous plea; give ear to my prayer, that doesn't go out of deceitful lips. ² Let my sentence come forth from Your presence, let Your eyes look on integrity. ³ You have proved my heart. You have visited me in the night. You have tried me, and found nothing. I have resolved that my mouth shall not disobey. ⁴ As for the works of men,

of grace to us. When we are tempted to go back on our word, we must remember how God doesn't do that to us.

16:3 *They are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight* – David often speaks of how he loves others who also love God, and he speaks of them in terms of great respect (15:4). We likewise should find ourselves naturally attracted to other believers, and should always be respectful towards them because of the fact they are loved by God. We cannot believe and keep ourselves in isolation from them, physically or mentally.

16:8-11 These verses are quoted about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, of whom David was a type (Acts 2:27). Jesus is now at God's right hand offering our prayers to God (Rom. 8:34); and yet this is described here as His eternal pleasure (:11). Jesus takes great joy in offering our prayers to God, and this alone should inspire our prayer life.

17:2 We are invited to see our coming before God's throne in prayer as a foretaste of the judgment day, when we shall in reality come before His throne. The positive answer to our prayers now – the sentence going forth from the court of Heaven in response to God having as it were judged them – is therefore an encouragement of our final acceptance in that day.

by the word of Your lips I have kept myself from the ways of the violent. ⁵ My steps have held fast to Your paths, my feet have not slipped. ⁶ I have called on You, for You will answer me, God. Turn Your ear to me, hear my words. ⁷ Show Your marvelous grace, You who save those who take refuge under Your right hand from their enemies. ⁸ Keep me as the apple of Your eye, hide me under the shadow of Your wings, ⁹ from the wicked who oppress me, my deadly enemies, who surround me. ¹⁰ They close up their callous hearts. With their mouth they speak proudly. ¹¹ They have now surrounded us in our steps, they set their eyes to cast us down to the earth. ¹² He is like a lion that is greedy of his prey, as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. ¹³ Arise, Yahweh, confront him. Cast him down. Deliver my soul from the wicked by Your sword; ¹⁴ from men by Your hand, Yahweh, from men of the world, whose portion is in this life. You fill the belly of Your cherished ones. Your sons have plenty, and they store up wealth for their children. ¹⁵ As for me, I

shall see Your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with seeing Your form.

Psalm 18 Jan. 8

For the Chief Musician. By David the servant of Yahweh, who spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said,

¹ I love You, Yahweh, my strength. ² Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower. ³ I call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised; and I am saved from my enemies. ⁴ The cords of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. ⁵ The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death came on me. ⁶ In my distress I called on Yahweh, and cried to my God. He heard my voice out of His temple; my cry before Him came into His ears. ⁷ Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the mountains quaked and were shaken, because

17:4 *The word of Your lips I have kept myself* – Constant reflection upon God’s word is the way to victory against temptation, as Jesus showed by continually quoting from Scripture during His wilderness temptations (Ps. 119:11).

17:8 *The apple of Your eye* – God is simply so sensitive to us.

Hide me under the shadow of Your wings – Alluding to the wings of the cherubim covering the ark, where the blood of atonement (representing Christ’s blood) was sprinkled. David saw himself as living in the most holy presence of God wherever he was.

17:15 *Seeing Your form* – Another indication God exists in a literal tangible form, and we shall see Him.

18:5 ‘Sheol’ is the Hebrew word translated “hell” in some Bibles; it is paralleled here with “death” (:4, “the cords of death” are “the cords of Sheol”) and is elsewhere translated “the grave”. It’s not a place where the wicked go for eternal torment; David was a righteous man, and he too went to the grave, or *sheol*.

He was angry. ⁸ Smoke went out of His nostrils, consuming fire came out of His mouth; coals were kindled by it. ⁹ He bowed the heavens also, and came down, thick darkness was under His feet. ¹⁰ He rode on a cherub, and flew. Yes, He soared on the wings of the wind. ¹¹ He made darkness His hiding place, His pavilion around Him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies. ¹² At the brightness before Him His thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire. ¹³ Yahweh also thundered in the sky, the Most High uttered His voice: hailstones and coals of fire. ¹⁴ He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; yes, great lightning bolts, and defeated them. ¹⁵ Then the channels of waters appeared, the foundations of the world were laid bare at Your rebuke, Yahweh, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. ¹⁶ He sent from on high. He took me, He drew me out of many waters. ¹⁷ He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me. ¹⁸ They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support.

¹⁹ He brought me forth also into a large place. He delivered me, because He delighted in me. ²⁰ Yahweh has judged me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. ²¹ For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God. ²² For all His ordinances were before me, I didn't put away His statutes from me. ²³ I was also blameless with Him, I kept myself from my iniquity. ²⁴ Therefore Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight. ²⁵ With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful. With the perfect man, You will show Yourself perfect. ²⁶ With the pure, You will show Yourself pure; with the crooked You will show Yourself shrewd. ²⁷ For You will save the afflicted people, but the proud eyes You will bring down. ²⁸ For You will light my lamp, Yahweh. My God will light up my darkness. ²⁹ For by You I advance through a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall. ³⁰ As for God, His way is perfect. The word

18:16 *He drew me out of many waters* – This is an allusion to the name ‘Moses’ which means just this (Ex. 2:10); :19 alludes to how Israel were brought out of Egypt to the large place of Canaan, and there are many other Moses / Exodus allusions in this Psalm. We like David are to see similarities between our lives and those of Bible characters, taking them as our warnings, inspiration and friends, as David evidently understood Moses. And of course we will one day eternally be united with our heroes and encouragers in faith.

18:22-24 David speaks like this of his own righteousness, although this Psalm was written in later life, after his sin with Bathsheba (:1 = 2 Sam. 22:1). He can only speak like this because he had learnt the lesson that God's righteousness really is imputed to us who are sinners; and he rejoices in this reality, believing it to the point that he really felt it and his self-perception reflected it.

18:30 *The word of Yahweh is tried in the furnace* – The experiences of our lives are

of Yahweh is tried in the furnace. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him. ³¹ For who is God, except Yahweh? Who is a rock besides our God, ³² the God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect? ³³ He makes my feet like deer's feet, and sets me on my high places. ³⁴ He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms bend a bow of bronze. ³⁵ You have also given me the shield of Your salvation. Your right hand sustains me. Your gentleness has made me great. ³⁶ You have enlarged my steps under me, My feet have not slipped. ³⁷ I will pursue my enemies, and overtake them. Neither will I turn again until they are consumed. ³⁸ I will strike them through, so that they will not be able to rise. They shall fall under my feet. ³⁹ For You have armed me with strength to the battle, You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. ⁴⁰ You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, that I might cut off those who hate me. ⁴¹ They cried, but there was none to save;

even to Yahweh, but He didn't answer them. ⁴² Then I beat them small as the dust before the wind. I cast them out as the mire of the streets. ⁴³ You have delivered me from the strivings of the people, You have made me the head of the nations. A people whom I have not known shall serve me. ⁴⁴ As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me; the foreigners shall submit themselves to me. ⁴⁵ The foreigners shall fade away, and shall come trembling out of their close places. ⁴⁶ Yahweh lives; and blessed be my rock. Exalted be the God of my salvation, ⁴⁷ even the God who executes vengeance for me, and subdues peoples under me. ⁴⁸ He rescues me from my enemies. Yes, You lift me up above those who rise up against me. You deliver me from the violent man. ⁴⁹ Therefore I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations, and will sing praises to Your name. ⁵⁰ He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, forevermore.

like the intense fire of a furnace, and God's word like gold comes through those tests; it is proved not only true but wonderful and beautiful, time and again.

18:43 *You have made me the head of the nations* – But David speaks in :44 as if this had not yet happened. He imagined the things he prayed for as having already happened, just as Jesus taught we should too (Mt. 21:22 Gk.). God speaks of those things which don't exist as if they do, so certain are they of coming to pass (Rom. 4:17), and we are asked to have this same perspective when it comes to prayer.

18:49 *I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations* – God's intention was that Israel should be a missionary nation, the light of the Gentile world. But generally they failed to perceive this; David was one of the few who did, because his Psalms often speak of telling the Gentile nations how great God is. He came to this simply from the colossal desire he had to praise God as widely and far as possible because of what God had done for him personally by grace. We should be likewise motivated to take the Gospel to the world around us, on the basis of simply *having* to tell others the wonderful things which we personally have experienced from God.

Psalms 19 Jan. 9***For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.***

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, the expanse above shows His handiwork. ² Day after day they pour forth speech, and night after night they display knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice has gone out through all the earth, their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tent for the sun, ⁵ which is as a bridegroom coming out of his room, like a strong man rejoicing to run his course. ⁶ His going forth is from the end of the heavens, his circuit to its ends; there is nothing hidden from its heat. ⁷ Yahweh's law is perfect, restoring the soul. Yahweh's testimony is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ Yahweh's precepts are right, rejoicing the heart. Yahweh's commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever. Yahweh's ordinances are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the extract of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them is Your

servant warned; in keeping them there is a great reward. ¹² Who can discern his own errors? Forgive me from sins of ignorance. ¹³ Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me. Then I will be upright, I will be blameless and innocent of the great transgression. ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalms 20 Jan. 9***For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.***

¹ May Yahweh answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob set you up on high, ² send you help from the sanctuary, grant you support from Zion, ³ remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah. ⁴ May He grant you your heart's desire, and fulfil all your word. ⁵ We will triumph in Your salvation, in the name of our God, we will set up our banners. May Yahweh grant all your requests. ⁶ Now I know that Yahweh saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand.

19:4 This is quoted in Rom. 10:18 about the preaching of the Gospel into all the world. Thus in the same way as the sun and stars witness to God's existence worldwide, so the Gospel is to be taken world-wide. The Psalm therefore moves on to talk about the power of God's word (:7,8) which is being preached.

19:12 If we hope for forgiveness for sins of ignorance, we are accepting that we will be forgiven without specific repentance. As we forgive, according to the principles we apply to forgiving others, so we will be forgiven. If we hope ourselves for forgiveness for sins we've not specifically repented of, because we are unaware of them, we likewise must forgive others the sins they do against us without repentance. To insist that we will only forgive others if they repent would mean that we would be unable to pray this prayer.

⁷ Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust the name of Yahweh our God. ⁸ They are bowed down and fallen, but we rise up, and stand upright. ⁹ Save, Yahweh! Let the King answer us when we call!

Psalm 21 Jan. 9

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ The king rejoices in Your strength, Yahweh! How greatly he rejoices in Your salvation! ² You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah. ³ For You meet him with the blessings of goodness, You set a crown of fine gold on his head. ⁴ He asked life of You, You gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever. ⁵ His glory is great in Your salvation; You lay honour and majesty on him, ⁶ for You make him most blessed forever. You make him glad with joy in Your presence; ⁷ for the king trusts in Yahweh. Through the grace of the Most

High, he shall not be moved. ⁸ Your hand will find out all of Your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate You. ⁹ You will make them as a fiery furnace in the time of Your anger. Yahweh will swallow them up in His wrath, the fire shall devour them. ¹⁰ You will destroy their descendants from the land, their posterity from among the children of men. ¹¹ For they intended evil against You, they plotted evil against You which cannot succeed. ¹² For You will make them turn their back when You aim drawn bows at their face. ¹³ Be exalted, Yahweh, in Your strength; so we will sing and praise Your power.

Psalm 22 Jan. 10

For the Chief Musician; set to The Doe of the Morning. A Psalm by David.

¹ My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the

20:7 Solomon speaks of "my father David" so often that it appears he was dominated by the need he felt to live out David's parental expectations of him. But Solomon's obsession with chariots and horses shows that he didn't follow David in real spiritual terms, just externally. Those whose parents were believers and were raised to believe must ask themselves whether they too are merely living out parental expectation externally.

21:4 David felt that he had been given eternal life in the sense that the covenant blessings had an eternal quality to them (:6). And yet he often speaks about death as the end of conscious existence. We have here an Old Testament equivalent to Christ's teaching that we can now have eternal life (Jn. 6:54); we will die, in hope of resurrection to eternal life, but we can live now the kind of life which we will eternally live. Hence the parables of the Kingdom of God teach about how life can be lived right now.

22:1 Quoted by Christ on the cross (Mt. 27:46). The way Christ calls God "my God" (see :10 also) and prays to Him is not only disproof of the Trinitarian view of Christ; it enables us to find in Christ true inspiration and comfort knowing that He was our representative, of our nature. We are also comforted that to have doubts, even a crisis of faith and understanding as to why God isn't acting, isn't a sin; for Christ had these

words of my groaning? ² My God, I cry in the daytime, but You don't answer; in the night season, and am not silent. ³ But You are holy, You who inhabit the praises of Israel. ⁴ Our fathers trusted in You- they trusted, and You delivered them, ⁵ they cried to You, and were delivered. They trusted in You, and were not disappointed. ⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. ⁷ All those who see me mock me, they insult me with their lips, they shake their heads and say, ⁸ He trusts in Yahweh; let Him deliver him. Let Him rescue him, since He delights in him. ⁹ But You brought me out of the womb, You made me trust at my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ I was thrown on You from my mother's womb; You are my God since my mother bore me. ¹¹ Don't be far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none else to help. ¹² Many bulls have surrounded me,

strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. ¹³ They open their mouths wide against me, lions tearing prey and roaring. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is melted within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a shard of pottery; my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have brought me into the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded me, a company of evildoers have enclosed me; they have pierced my hands and feet. ¹⁷ I can count all of my bones, they look and stare at me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them, they cast lots for my clothing. ¹⁹ But don't be far off, Yahweh. You are my help: hurry to help me. ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! ²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth! Yes, from the horns of the wild oxen, You have answered me. ²² I will declare Your name to my

feelings and yet never sinned. Christ said these words "about the ninth hour" (Mt. 27:46), and yet He died at the ninth hour (Mk. 15:34). That He had some sense of crisis at the very end adds the ultimate in drama to the crucifixion account, and makes His final victory yet more glorious.

22:8 Quoted against Christ on the cross (Mt. 27:43). We are encouraged by the New Testament application of this Psalm to Christ to see the whole Psalm as giving a unique window into the thoughts of God's Son in His time of dying.

22:14 *My bones are out of joint* – The Messianic Psalms often stress the pain Christ felt in His bones; crucifixion was designed to make the bones of the crucified suffer. We who are baptized into the body of Christ are described as His bones (Eph. 5:30); and yet not one of Christ's bones was broken (Jn. 19:36). In all this we have profound encouragement. We are to suffer with Christ, sharing His cross; and yet ultimately we will not be broken, but rise again to eternity, just as His body and bones did. From the awkward and unnatural position of the crucified, Christ could look down upon His literal bones and feel they were as persons looking at Him (:17); thus it seems He had an awareness of us as He hung there.

22:18 Fulfilled in Mt. 27:35; Jn. 19:24.

22:22 This is quoted in Heb. 2:12 to demonstrate Christ's identity with us, having had

brothers, in the midst of the congregation I will praise You. ²³ You who fear Yahweh, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him! Stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel! ²⁴ For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither has He hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him, He heard. ²⁵ Of You comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. ²⁶ The humble shall eat and be satisfied, they who seek after Him shall praise Yahweh. May your hearts live forever. ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to Yahweh, all the families of nations shall worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom is Yahweh's, He is the ruler over the nations. ²⁹ All the rich ones of the earth shall eat and worship, all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who can't keep his own soul alive. ³⁰ Posterity shall serve Him, future generations shall be told about the Lord. ³¹ They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people that shall be born, for He has finished it.

Psalm 23 Jan. 11

A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh is my shepherd: I shall be in need of nothing. ² He makes me lie down in green meadows, He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul, He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil, My cup runs over. ⁶ Surely goodness and grace shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in Yahweh's house forever.

Psalm 24 Jan. 11

A Psalm by David.

¹ The earth is Yahweh's, with all its fullness; the world, and they who dwell in it. ² For He has founded it on the seas, and established it on the floods. ³ Who may ascend to Yahweh's hill? Who may stand in His holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and

human nature. He was especially close to us in His death, and we likewise can look to Him there and feel close to Him and His closeness to us. The tone of the Psalm now becomes more positive, as Christ comes to think of us, the "congregation" [LXX *ekklesia*, the church] who would be brought into being on account of His suffering. It could be that He quoted the entire Psalm out loud; "He has finished it" (:31) in the LXX is "It is finished", which were the very last words of Christ (Jn. 19:30).

23:5 *A table before me in the presence of my enemies* – Sometimes in the depths of despair God will provide an amazing grace to us; and He did this when David fled from his own son through the wilderness, and Barzillai unexpectedly laid out a feast table for David in the semi-desert (2 Sam. 17:27-29). This act of kindness transformed the dry terrain into "green meadows" for David (:2). Our thoughtful grace to others can do the same for them.

has not sworn deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive a blessing from Yahweh, namely righteousness from the God of his salvation. ⁶ This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face—even that of the God of Jacob. Selah. ⁷ Lift up your heads, you gatekeepers! Be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in. ⁸ Who is the King of glory? Yahweh strong and mighty, Yahweh mighty in battle. ⁹ Lift up your heads, you gatekeepers; yes, lift them up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in. ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? Yahweh of Armies is the King of glory! Selah.

Psalm 25 Jan. 11

By David.

¹ To You, Yahweh, do I lift up my soul. ² My God, I have trusted in You; don't let me be shamed. Don't let my enemies triumph over me. ³ Truly, no one who waits for You shall be shamed. They shall be shamed who deal treacherously without cause. ⁴ Show me Your ways, Yahweh, teach me Your paths. ⁵ Guide me in Your truth, and teach me, for You are the

God of my salvation; I wait for You all day long. ⁶ Yahweh, remember Your tender mercies and Your grace, for they are from old times. ⁷ Don't remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. Remember me according to Your grace, for Your goodness' sake, Yahweh. ⁸ Good and upright is Yahweh, therefore He will instruct sinners in the way. ⁹ He will guide the humble in justice; He will teach the humble His way. ¹⁰ All the ways of Yahweh are grace and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. ¹¹ For Your name's sake, Yahweh, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. ¹² What man is he who fears Yahweh? He shall instruct him in the way that he shall choose. ¹³ His soul shall dwell at ease, His descendants shall inherit the land. ¹⁴ The friendship of Yahweh is with those who fear Him; He will show them His covenant. ¹⁵ My eyes are ever on Yahweh, for He will pluck my feet out of the net. ¹⁶ Turn to me, and have mercy on me, for I am desolate and afflicted. ¹⁷ The troubles of my heart are enlarged. Oh bring me out of my distresses! ¹⁸ Consider my affliction and my travail, forgive all

24:5 God's blessing is defined here as His righteousness; the blessing of God promised to Abraham and his seed involves the blessing of forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:25,26). This is achieved by God counting His righteousness to us, looking at us another way – and this becomes possible for us who are baptized into Christ, whereby His righteous character is counted to us.

25:8, 9 *He will instruct sinners in the way... He will teach the humble His way* – The humble here therefore refer to repentant sinners. This is the frame of mind which makes us most teachable by God, and in this way God works through sin, in that repentance for it makes people more open to His teaching.

25:10 The more we live daily life in harmony with God's will, the more we will perceive that all His ways, His workings, both over history and in our lives, reflect His grace. We will not see Him as hard and unreasonable.

my sins. ¹⁹ Consider my enemies, for they are many; they hate me with total hatred. ²⁰ Oh keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be disappointed, for I take refuge in You. ²¹ Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You. ²² Redeem Israel, God, out all of His troubles.

Psalm 26 Jan. 12

By David.

¹ Judge me, Yahweh, for I have walked in my integrity. I have trusted also in Yahweh without wavering. ² Examine me, Yahweh, and prove me; test my heart and my mind. ³ For Your grace is before my eyes, I have walked in Your truth. ⁴ I have not sat with deceitful men, neither will I go in with hypocrites. ⁵ I hate the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked. ⁶ I will wash my hands in innocence, so I will go around Your altar, Yahweh; ⁷ that I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, and tell of all Your wondrous works. ⁸ Yahweh, I love the habitation of Your dwelling place, the place where Your glory dwells. ⁹ Don't gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men; ¹⁰ in whose hands is wickedness, their right hand is full

of bribes. ¹¹ But as for me, I will walk in my integrity. Redeem me, and be merciful to me. ¹² My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations I will bless Yahweh.

Psalm 27 Jan. 12

By David.

¹ Yahweh is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the strength of my life- of whom shall I be afraid? ² When evildoers came at me to eat up my flesh, even my adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell. ³ Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, even then I will be confident. ⁴ One thing I have asked of Yahweh, that I will seek after: That I may dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life, to see Yahweh's beauty, and to inquire in His temple. ⁵ For in the day of trouble He will keep me secretly in His pavilion, under the shadow of His tabernacle He will hide me. He will lift me up on a rock. ⁶ Now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tent. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to Yahweh. ⁷ Hear, Yahweh, when I

25:22 *Redeem Israel, God* – Many of the Psalms are David's personal pleas for mercy, but they merge towards the end of them into a request for God to show mercy to all His people. He looked out of his own sufferings to those of others, and took comfort in the fact that God's ultimate plan is to have a redeemed people living eternally on earth.

26:1 *Without wavering* – This Psalm appears very self-righteous, with David considering himself separate from sinners (:9); it contrasts with the Psalms written after the sin with Bathsheba, which often talk of David's desire to reach out to sinners rather than about separating from them.

26:3 God's truth refers to a way of life and being, rather than to a set of pure theological propositions. "Truth" is paralleled here with "grace", which is the ultimate truth.

cry with my voice. Have mercy also on me, and answer me. ⁸ When You said, Seek my face, my heart said to You, I will seek Your face, Yahweh. ⁹ Don't hide Your face from me; don't put Your servant away in anger. You have been my help, don't abandon me, neither forsake me, God of my salvation. ¹⁰ When my father and my mother forsake me, then Yahweh will take me up. ¹¹ Teach me Your way, Yahweh. Lead me in a straight path, because of my enemies. ¹² Don't deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen up against me, such as breathe out cruelty. ¹³ I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living. ¹⁴ Wait for Yahweh, be strong, and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for Yahweh.

Psalm 28 Jan. 12

By David.

¹ To You, Yahweh, I call. My rock,

don't be deaf to me; lest, if You are silent to me, I would become like those who go down into the pit. ² Hear the voice of my petitions when I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward Your Most Holy Place. ³ Don't draw me away with the wicked, with the workers of iniquity who speak peace with their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. ⁴ Give them according to their work, and according to the wickedness of their doings. Give them according to the working of their own hands; bring back on them what they deserve. ⁵ Because they don't respect the works of Yahweh, nor the working of His hands, He will break them down and not build them up. ⁶ Blessed be Yahweh, because He has heard the voice of my petitions. ⁷ Yahweh is my strength and my shield. My heart has trusted in Him, and I have been helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices. With my song I will thank Him. ⁸ Yahweh is their strength, He is a stronghold

27:9 *Don't abandon me* – Contrast this with the utter confidence expressed elsewhere in this Psalm. We can have the emotions of fear, even of panic, and yet at the same time feel deep faith in God. In this time of need, David reflected how God had earlier delivered him (:2), and this should feature in our response to crises.

27:10 The classic middle aged crisis of loneliness as parents die, the links with the past being cut, is here resolved in the feeling of God's personal parenthood toward us.

27:14 *Wait* – So often the Psalms speak of the need to "wait" for God. We assume His response must be immediate, but the 'gap' between our prayer and His response is necessary, for the sake of the development of our faith. It maintains that appropriate distance which has to be between God and man at this stage.

28:2 *Hear the voice of my petitions* – Yet within the same prayer, David can rejoice that God "has heard the voice of my petitions" (:6). We are to pray for things believing and feeling that we have received them (Mk. 11:24); we are to have the perspective of God Himself, who speaks of things which currently aren't as if they are (Rom. 4:17). Therefore David can conclude this prayer with praise that God has actually answered it already (:7).

28:8, 9 Again David looks out of himself in his immediate need to others, rejoicing as

of salvation to His anointed. ⁹ Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance. Be their shepherd also, and bear them up forever.

Psalm 29 Jan. 13

A Psalm by David.

¹ Ascribe to Yahweh, you sons of the mighty, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength. ² Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name. Worship Yahweh in holy array. ³ Yahweh's voice is on the waters. The God of glory thunders, even Yahweh on many waters. ⁴ Yahweh's voice is powerful. Yahweh's voice is full of majesty. ⁵ The voice of Yahweh breaks the cedars. Yes, Yahweh breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. ⁶ He also makes them to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. ⁷ Yahweh's voice strikes with flashes of lightning. ⁸ Yahweh's voice shakes the wilderness, Yahweh shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. ⁹ Yahweh's voice makes the deer

calve, and strips the forests bare. In His temple everything says, Glory! ¹⁰ Yahweh sat enthroned at the flood; truly, Yahweh sits as King forever. ¹¹ Yahweh will give strength to His people, Yahweh will bless His people with peace.

Psalm 30 Jan. 13

A Psalm. A Song for the Dedication of the Temple. By David.

¹ I will extol You, Yahweh, for You have raised me up, and have not made my enemies to rejoice over me. ² Yahweh my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me. ³ Yahweh, You have brought up my soul from Sheol. You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. ⁴ Sing praise to Yahweh, You saints of His, give thanks to His holy name. ⁵ For His anger is but for a moment; His grace is for all our lifetime. Weeping may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning. ⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never

he often does at the end of his Psalms that *his* positive experience of God will be that of all God's people. We can at least take the lesson that we are to look out of ourselves to others rather than be swamped by the immediacy of our own issues.

29:5 Here and in :8 we have "the voice of Yahweh" paralleled with Yahweh in person. God is His word – hence we read that "the word was God" (Jn. 1:1). Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to God; it's therefore not possible to claim to be in relationship with God if we ignore His word as we now have it in the Bible. There's much talk about "God" but unless this is based upon His word, we are believing in a 'God' of our own creation rather than the true God who is revealed in the Bible.

30:6 David seems to be reflecting upon some life threatening illness he suffered after his sin with Bathsheba (:2,3); the title of the Psalm shows he wrote this as he was preparing for his son Solomon to build the temple, towards the end of his life. He is reflecting how he had fallen into sin as a result of assuming that he could never fall from the spiritual place he felt he was at. Whilst we should be confident that if Christ returns today we shall be saved by grace, we cannot assume that we shall always be where we are now spiritually, and we should always maintain a keen sense of the eternity we may miss if we turn away.

be moved. ⁷ You, Yahweh, when You favoured me, made my mountain stand strong; but when You hid Your face, I was troubled. ⁸ I cried to You, Yahweh; to Yahweh I made supplication: ⁹ What profit is there in my destruction, if I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise You? Shall it declare Your truth? ¹⁰ Hear, Yahweh, and have mercy on me. Yahweh, be my helper. ¹¹ You have turned my mourning into dancing for me. You have removed my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness, ¹² To the end that my heart may sing praise to You, and not be silent. Yahweh my God, I will give thanks to You forever!

Psalm 31 Jan. 14

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ In You, Yahweh, I take refuge. Let me never be disappointed. Deliver me in Your righteousness. ² Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me quickly. Be to me a strong rock, a house of defence to save me. ³ For You are my rock and my fortress, therefore for

Your name's sake lead me and guide me. ⁴ Pluck me out of the net that they have laid secretly for me, for You are my stronghold. ⁵ Into Your hand I commend my spirit. You have redeemed me, Yahweh, God of truth. ⁶ I hate those who regard lying vanities, but I trust in Yahweh. ⁷ I will be glad and rejoice in Your grace, for You have seen my affliction. You have known my soul in adversities. ⁸ You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, You have set my feet in a large place. ⁹ Have mercy on me, Yahweh, for I am in distress. My eye, my soul, and my body waste away with grief. ¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow, my years with sighing. My strength fails because of my sin, my bones are wasted away. ¹¹ Because of all my adversaries I have become utterly contemptible to my neighbours, a fear to my acquaintances. Those who saw me on the street fled from me. ¹² I am forgotten from their hearts like a dead man; I am like broken pottery. ¹³ For I have heard the slander of many, terror on every side, while they con-

30:7 *Mountain* – Used in Scripture to refer to a Kingdom or family; David's 'mountain' in this sense was "troubled" as a result of his sin with Bathsheba.

30:9 This request indicates that David didn't go to Heaven on death (Acts 2:34), but understood death as total unconsciousness until Christ's return.

31:2, 3 *Be to me a strong rock... for You are my rock* – David is asking God to be to him in practice what he accepted God to be theoretically. Time and again we seek to make this same conversion from theory to practical reality as we face life's situations.

31:5 *Into Your hand I commend my spirit* – Chosen by Jesus as His last words from the cross as He died (Lk. 23:46). Perhaps the next half of the sentence were His first thoughts on awaking in resurrection: "You have redeemed me, Yahweh, God of truth".

31:7 *You have known my soul in adversities* – God as it were gets to know us when He sees us in crises. Although He knows all things, we reveal ourselves to Him by how we feel and respond in those times.

spire together against me, they plot to take away my life. ¹⁴ But I trust in You, Yahweh. I said, You are my God. ¹⁵ My times are in Your hand. Redeem me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me. ¹⁶ Make Your face to shine on Your servant; save me in Your grace. ¹⁷ Let me not be disappointed, Yahweh, for I have called on You. Let the wicked be disappointed, may they be silent in Sheol. ¹⁸ Let the lying lips be mute, which speak against the righteous insolently, with pride and contempt. ¹⁹ Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have worked for those who take refuge in You, before the sons of men! ²⁰ In the shelter of Your presence You will hide them from the plotting of man. You will keep them secretly in a dwelling away from the strife of tongues. ²¹ Praise be to Yahweh, for He has shown me His marvellous grace in a fortified city. ²² As for me, I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes. Nevertheless You

heard the voice of my petitions when I cried to You. ²³ Oh love Yahweh, all you His saints! Yahweh preserves the faithful, and fully recompenses him who behaves arrogantly. ²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in Yahweh.

Psalm 32 Jan. 15

By David. A contemplative psalm.

¹ Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man to whom Yahweh doesn't impute iniquity, in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³ When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy on me, my strength was dried as in the heat of summer. Selah. ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to You, I didn't hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. ⁶ For this, let each one who is Godly pray to You in a time when You may be found. Surely when the great waters overflow, they

31:15 *Redeem me* – But David has stated that God had already redeemed him (:5). So often in the Psalms we encounter this struggle to believe and feel as if our prayer has been heard before it actually is; and it is the same struggle we daily have in our prayer life.

31:21 *He has shown me His marvellous loving kindness in a fortified city* – David saw the similarities between himself and the spies who entered the fortified city of Jericho and found themselves trapped within it, with no human way of escape.

32:1, 2 This is a soliloquy, David talking to himself as he meditated upon God's forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba. But it is quoted in Rom. 4:7 with a subtle change of pronoun; "blessed is he" (:1) is changed to "blessed are they". Thus David's sin with Bathsheba and in murdering Uriah her husband becomes representative of all our sins, and we have received the same amazing grace which David did, seeing that there was no legal way out of what he had done – he deserved only death. See on 38:4.

32:4 This refers to the period of time between the sin and the visit of Nathan which convicted David of his sin (2 Sam. 12).

shall not reach to him. ⁷ You are my hiding place, You will preserve me from trouble, You will surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah. ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go, I will counsel you with my eye on you. ⁹ Don't be like the horse or like the mule which have no understanding, who are controlled by bit and bridle, or else they will not come near to you. ¹⁰ Many sorrows come to the wicked, but grace shall surround him who trusts in Yahweh. ¹¹ Be glad in Yahweh, and rejoice, you righteous! Shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart!

Psalm 33 Jan. 16

¹ Rejoice in Yahweh, you righteous! Praise is fitting for the upright. ² Give thanks to Yahweh with the lyre, sing praises to Him with the harp of ten strings. ³ Sing to Him a new song, play skilfully with a shout of joy! ⁴ For the word of Yahweh is right, all His work is done in faithfulness. ⁵ He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the grace of Yah-

weh. ⁶ By Yahweh's word the heavens were made; all their army by the breath of His mouth. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. ⁸ Let all the earth fear Yahweh, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. ⁹ For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood firm. ¹⁰ Yahweh brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the thoughts of the peoples to be of no power. ¹¹ The counsel of Yahweh stands fast forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations. ¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance. ¹³ Yahweh views from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. ¹⁴ From the place of His habitation He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, ¹⁵ He who fashions all of their hearts; and He considers all of their works. ¹⁶ There is no king saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. ¹⁷ A horse is a vain thing for safety, neither does he deliver any by his great

32:6 *Let each one who is Godly pray to You* – David's experience of sin and utter forgiveness should inspire each sinner to repent; but the repentant sinner is here described as "Godly". Godliness doesn't mean we are sinless, but rather that we believe in God's forgiveness and are willing to repent.

32:8 David's experience of forgiveness became the motive for his preaching of it to others. Isaiah, Peter, the disciples and many others were given preaching commissions immediately after having been convicted of their own sinfulness. For this is the attitude of mind which makes preaching powerful and usable by God.

33:6 *By Yahweh's word the heavens were made* – This alludes to how the Genesis record of creation states that "God said" and things came into existence (:9). It explains how "all things" were made by God's word (Jn. 1:3). That same word which created all around us is likewise powerful to create a new creation within the formless darkness of our own lives and minds (2 Cor. 5:17). By reading and responding to God's word we expose ourselves to colossal and awesome creative power.

power. ¹⁸ Behold, Yahweh's eye is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His grace; ¹⁹ to deliver their soul from death, to keep them alive in famine. ²⁰ Our soul has waited for Yahweh; He is our help and our shield. ²¹ For our heart rejoices in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. ²² Let Your grace be on us, Yahweh, according as we have hope in You.

Psalms 34 Jan. 17

By David; when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.

¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times; His praise will always be in my mouth. ² My soul shall boast in Yahweh. The humble shall hear of it, and be glad. ³ Oh magnify Yahweh with me, let us exalt His name together! ⁴ I sought Yahweh and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵ They looked to Him, and were radiant; their faces shall never be covered with shame. ⁶ This poor

man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷ The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them. ⁸ Oh taste and see that Yahweh is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. ⁹ Oh fear Yahweh, you His saints, for there is no lack to those who fear Him. ¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but those who seek Yahweh shall not lack any good thing. ¹¹ Come, you children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of Yahweh. ¹² Who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies. ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. ¹⁵ Yahweh's eyes are toward the righteous, His ears listen to their cry. ¹⁶ Yahweh's face is against those who do evil, to cut off their memory from the earth. ¹⁷ The righteous cry, and Yahweh hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸ Yahweh is near to those who

33:22 God's grace is realized and effective in our lives according to our belief in its extent. It is we and not God who are limiting what is possible. If Abraham had prayed for Sodom to be saved for the sake of just the one righteous man there (Lot), perhaps he would've been heard; the man who thought the Lord's ability to heal was limited by His power was taught that the opposite is true, in that all things are possible but are limited by human faith (Mk. 9:22,23).

34:7 This suggests that we have a guardian Angel permanently settled down (Heb.) around us; the early church believed this (Acts 12:15). The Angels minister to us in order to bring us towards salvation (Heb. 1:14). The reference to Yahweh's "eyes" (:15) may also refer to our guardian Angels.

34:17 *The righteous cry, and Yahweh hears* – This parallels David's statement that *he* had cried and Yahweh had heard him (:6). Again he looks out of his own issues and sees them in the wider context of God's people; He has delivered them historically, so He will deliver us; if He delivers us, He will deliver His people in the future, and so we can reason from our personal testimony to persuade them to trust Him as we have. The Psalms are songs, and David was using them to share his faith with others.

have a broken heart, and saves those who have a crushed spirit. ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh delivers him out of them all. ²⁰ He protects all of his bones; not one of them is broken. ²¹ Evil shall kill the wicked; those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. ²² Yahweh redeems the soul of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him shall be condemned.

Psalm 35 Jan. 18

By David.

¹ Contend, Yahweh, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. ² Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. ³ Brandish the spear and block those who pursue me. Tell my soul, I am Your salvation. ⁴ Let those who seek after my soul be disappointed and brought to dishonour. Let those who plot my ruin be turned back and confounded. ⁵ Let them be as chaff before the wind, Yahweh's

angel driving them on. ⁶ Let their way be dark and slippery, Yahweh's angel pursuing them. ⁷ For without cause they have hidden their net in a pit for me, without cause they have dug a pit for my soul. ⁸ Let destruction come on him unawares. Let his net that he has hidden catch himself; let him fall into that destruction. ⁹ My soul shall be joyful in Yahweh, I shall rejoice in His salvation. ¹⁰ All my bones shall say, Yahweh, who is like You, who delivers the poor from him who is too strong for him; yes, the poor and the needy from him who robs him? ¹¹ Unrighteous witnesses rise up; they accuse me of things that I know nothing about. ¹² They reward me evil for good, to the bereaving of my soul. ¹³ But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I afflicted my soul with fasting. My prayer returned into my own bosom. ¹⁴ I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother. I bowed down mourn-

34:20 This was supremely fulfilled in the fact that no bone of Jesus was broken by the crucifixion process (Jn. 19:36). See on 22:14.

35:3 *Tell my soul, "I am Your salvation"* – David so often tells himself and us that God is indeed his salvation. But here he is asking God to speak directly to his heart and persuade him deeper of this truth. We too can ask God to directly increase our faith.

35:5, 6 Threshing and winnowing the wheat from the chaff is a common Biblical metaphor for the final day of judgment. The rejected will be chased away from Christ by the Angels into darkness (:6). The Bible teaches that Jesus will return from Heaven to judge us with the Angels with Him; they will play a part in the judgment process, which will be appropriate as they have been our guardians and stood with us through every moment of our lives (see on 34:7). There are frequent Biblical descriptions of the punishment of the wicked, wallowing at least for some period in darkness, rejected from the Lord they so wish to now be with [hence they are chased away from Him, as Adam was out of Eden, again by Angels]. These aren't to scare us into obedience, but to bring constantly before us the sober importance of the eternal issues which we face (see 2 Cor. 5:11).

ing, as one who mourns his mother.
¹⁵ But in my adversity, they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together. The attackers gathered themselves together against me, and I didn't know it. They tore at me, and didn't cease.
¹⁶ Like the profane mockers in feasts, they gnashed their teeth at me.
¹⁷ Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue my soul from their destruction, my precious life from the lions.
¹⁸ I will give You thanks in the great assembly, I will praise You among many people.
¹⁹ Don't let those who are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; neither let those who hate me without a cause wink their eyes.
²⁰ For they don't speak peace, but they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.
²¹ Yes, they opened their mouth wide against me. They said, Aha! Aha! Our eye has seen it!
²² You have seen it, Yahweh. Don't keep silent. Lord, don't be far from me.
²³ Wake up! Rise up to defend me, my God! My Lord, contend for me!
²⁴ Vindicate me, Yahweh my God, according to Your righteousness. Don't let them gloat over me.
²⁵ Don't let them say in their heart, Aha! That's just the way we want it! Don't let them say, We have swallowed him up!
²⁶ Let

them be disappointed and confounded together who rejoice at my calamity. Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour who magnify themselves against me.
²⁷ Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favour my righteous cause. Yes, let them say continually, Yahweh be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant!
²⁸ My tongue shall talk about Your righteousness and about Your praise all day long.

Psalms 36 Jan. 19

For the Chief Musician. By David, the servant of Yahweh.

¹ An oracle is within my heart about the disobedience of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.
² For he flatters himself in his own eyes, too much to detect and hate his sin.
³ The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good.
⁴ He plots iniquity on his bed, he sets himself up in a way that is not good. He doesn't hate evil.
⁵ Your grace, Yahweh, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
⁶ Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are like a great deep. Yahweh, You preserve man and animal.
⁷ How precious is

35:14 *I bowed down mourning, as one who mourns his mother* – David speaks in the context of his love for Saul despite the endless persecution he received from him, and here alludes to his famous lament over Saul at his death (2 Sam. 1). A man mourning for his mother, rather than a woman for her mother or a father for his son, is a carefully chosen similitude. For a man's mourning for his mother features the bitter regret that 'I didn't appreciate her as I should've done'. And this was how David felt for Saul at his end. In this we see a most unusual level of love and sensitivity. And yet even that is but a dim reflection of the colossal love of God and Jesus for us, and their sensitivity to us and appreciation of our feeble spirituality.

Your grace, O God! The children of men take refuge under the shadow of Your wings. ⁸ They shall be abundantly satisfied with the abundance of Your house; You will make them drink of the river of Your pleasures. ⁹ For with You is the spring of life; in Your light shall we see light. ¹⁰ Oh continue Your grace to those who know You, Your righteousness to the upright in heart. ¹¹ Don't let the foot of pride come against me; don't let the hand of the wicked drive me away. ¹² There the workers of iniquity are fallen, they are thrust down, and shall not be able to rise.

Psalm 37 Jan. 20

By David.

¹ Don't fret because of evildoers, neither be envious against those who work unrighteousness. ² For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green plant. ³ Trust in Yahweh, and do good. Dwell in the land, and enjoy

safe pasture. ⁴ Also delight yourself in Yahweh, and He will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to Yahweh. Trust also in Him, and He will do this: ⁶ He will make your righteousness go forth as the light, and your justice as the noon day sun. ⁷ Rest in Yahweh, and wait patiently for Him. Don't fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who makes wicked plots happen. ⁸ Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Don't fret, it leads only to evildoing. ⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for Yahweh shall inherit the land. ¹⁰ For yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more. Yes, though you look for his place, he isn't there. ¹¹ But the humble shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. ¹² The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. ¹³ The Lord will laugh at him, for He sees that his day is coming. ¹⁴ The wicked have

36:9 *In Your light shall we see light* – Our worldview is to be that of God; His perspective is to be ours.

36:12 *There the workers of iniquity are fallen* – The obvious question of the Bible student to the statement “there” is “Where?”. And the context seems to provide no answer. But David was imagining in his own mind the final destruction of the wicked at judgment day, as he often does in the Psalms. “There”, in his mind's eye, he sees them fallen and without resurrection to eternal life. And this gives him perspective on his sufferings at their hands. We too can usefully play ‘Bible television’ and try to imagine the scene at judgment day. Whether we get all the details correct or not isn't so important; the exercise provides huge perspective for us in our present life experiences.

37:4 *He will give you the desires of your heart* – This isn't a blank cheque promise that we will get whatever we ask from God. If we delight in Him, then our greatest desires will be forgiveness from Him, to see His glory extended, and to have a place in His eternal Kingdom. And it is this latter desire which this Psalm speaks of frequently, comforting us in the hope of eternity in God's Kingdom on earth; a hope which means that we will not be jealous of the wicked who are briefly prospering in this very short life (:1). See on 38:9.

drawn out the sword and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, to kill those who are upright in the way. ¹⁵ Their sword shall enter into their own heart. Their bows shall be broken. ¹⁶ Better is a little that the righteous has, than the abundance of many wicked. ¹⁷ For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but Yahweh upholds the righteous. ¹⁸ Yahweh knows the days of the perfect. Their inheritance shall be forever. ¹⁹ They shall not be disappointed in the time of evil; in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. ²⁰ But the wicked shall perish, the enemies of Yahweh shall be like the passing beauty of the fields. They will vanish— vanish like smoke. ²¹ The wicked borrow, and don't pay back, but the righteous give generously. ²² For such as are blessed by Him shall inherit the land. Those who are cursed by Him shall be cut off. ²³ A man's goings are established by Yahweh; He delights

in his way. ²⁴ Though he stumble, he shall not fall, for Yahweh holds him up with His hand. ²⁵ I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging for bread. ²⁶ All day long he deals graciously, and lends. His seed is blessed. ²⁷ Depart from evil, and do good. Live securely forever. ²⁸ For Yahweh loves justice, and doesn't forsake His saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. ²⁹ The righteous shall inherit the land, and live in it forever. ³⁰ The mouth of the righteous talks of wisdom, his tongue speaks justice. ³¹ The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. ³² The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to kill him. ³³ Yahweh will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. ³⁴ Wait for Yahweh, and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land.

37:21 *The righteous give generously* – The inspiration for generosity in this life is that we shall eternally inherit the Kingdom on earth (:22). If we really believe that we shall and do even now partake in this ultimate Divine generosity, we will naturally be generous in the few things God has entrusted to us in this life.

37:23 *He delights in his way* – God delights in our life path, even though that path includes stumbling (:24).

37:25, 26 Just as Israel were provided with basic bread, water and clothing for their wilderness journey towards the promised land, so God has promised to provide us with such basic necessities. We can take colossal comfort from this, although it so easily becomes obscured by our materialistic society, bent as it is on acquisition. The fact that most of us are no longer agriculturally self-sufficient likewise tempts us to doubt this promise. Having this assurance, we can 'afford' to be generous (:26), not just rising to it occasionally, but as a characteristic of our lives, the very spirit by which we live ("all day long").

37:29 This is a clear proof text that the hope of the righteous is eternal life on earth, not in Heaven. The allusion is clearly to the promises to Abraham of eternal inheritance of the land, and these promises are the basis of the Christian Gospel to which we stand related by baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:8, 27-29).

When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. ³⁵ I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil. ³⁶ But he passed away, and behold, he was not. Yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. ³⁷ Note the perfect man, and see the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. ³⁸ As for transgressors, they shall be destroyed together. The future of the wicked shall be cut off. ³⁹ But the salvation of the righteous is from Yahweh; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble. ⁴⁰ Yahweh helps them, and rescues them. He rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in Him.

Psalm 38 Jan. 21

A Psalm by David, for a memorial.

¹ Yahweh, don't rebuke me in Your wrath, neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure. ² For Your arrows have pierced me, Your hand presses hard on me. ³ There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation, neither is there any health in my bones because of my sin. ⁴ For my sins have gone over my head; as

a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. ⁵ My wounds are loathsome and corrupt because of my foolishness. ⁶ I am pained and bowed down greatly. I go mourning all day long. ⁷ For my waist is filled with burning, there is no soundness in my body. ⁸ I am faint and severely bruised; I have groaned by reason of the anguish of my heart. ⁹ Lord, all my desire is before You; my groaning is not hidden from You. ¹⁰ My heart throbs, my strength fails me. As for the light of my eyes, it has also left me. ¹¹ My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague, my kinsmen stand far away. ¹² They also who seek after my life lay snares, those who seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and meditate deceits all day long. ¹³ But I, as a deaf man, don't hear. I am as a mute man who doesn't open his mouth. ¹⁴ Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs. ¹⁵ For in You, Yahweh, do I hope. You will answer, Lord my God. ¹⁶ For I said, Don't let them gloat over me, or exalt themselves over me when my foot slips. ¹⁷ For I am ready to fall; my pain is continually before me. ¹⁸ For I will declare

38:4 *As a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me* – This is applied to all of us by Jesus when He invites we the heavy burdened to come to Him and find relief for that heavy load (Mt. 11:28). David is talking of his sins related to Bathsheba and Uriah; and again we find them being understood as typical of all our sins (see on 32:1,2).

38:9 *All my desire is before You* – All David's desire was for forgiveness; see on 37:4.

38:11 The consequence of sin is that it separates and isolates the sinner, as David found after his sin with Bathsheba, which resulted in the breakup of his family and his son conspiring to kill him and take over the kingdom. Some may sin and apparently not experience this isolation; but they feel it internally. That sin isolates the sinner, literally or psychologically, is designed by God; for it is in that isolation and self-analysis that the sinner has the opportunity to reconnect with God on a deeply personal level.

my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin. ¹⁹ But my enemies are vigorous and many. Those who hate me without reason are numerous. ²⁰ They who also render evil for good are adversaries to me, because I follow what is good. ²¹ Don't forsake me, Yahweh. My God, don't be far from me. ²² Hurry to help me, Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 39 Jan. 22

For the Chief Musician. For Jeduthun. A Psalm by David.

¹ I said, I will watch my ways, so that I don't sin with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. ² I was mute with silence; I held my peace, even from good. My sorrow was stirred. ³ My heart was hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned: I spoke with my tongue; ⁴ Yahweh, show me my end, what is the measure of my days. Let me know how frail I am. ⁵ Behold, you have made my days mere handbreadths. My lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely every man stands as a breath. Selah. ⁶ Surely every man walks like a shadow.

ow. Surely they busy themselves in vain. He heaps up, and doesn't know who shall gather. ⁷ Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. ⁸ Deliver me from all my transgressions. Don't make me the reproach of the foolish. ⁹ I was mute. I didn't open my mouth, because You did it. ¹⁰ Remove Your scourge away from me; I am overcome by the blow of Your hand. ¹¹ When You rebuke and correct man for iniquity, You consume his days like a moth. Surely every man is but a breath. Selah. ¹² Hear my prayer, Yahweh, and give ear to my cry. Don't be silent at my tears. For I am a stranger with You, a foreigner, as all my fathers were. ¹³ Oh spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go away, and exist no more.

Psalm 40 Jan. 22

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ I waited patiently for Yahweh. He turned to me, and heard my cry. ² He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet on a rock, and gave me a firm

39:1 *Keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me* – We need to think ahead as to our likely weaknesses, recognizing that being in the presence of some people is going to provoke us to speak badly. In all our spiritual battles we should talk to ourselves like David did, and be aware of how upcoming situations are likely to lead us into temptation.

39:4-6 David reminded himself of man's mortality in order to steel himself against the temptation to talk wrongly; he realized that sinning with the tongue can lead to losing our hope of eternity, and so he reminded himself of this in the face of the upcoming meeting he was going to have with people who would tempt him to misuse his tongue. We can do the same.

39:13 David didn't go to Heaven at death (Acts 2:34); he understood death as total unconsciousness.

place to stand. ³ He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Yahweh. ⁴ Blessed is the man who makes Yahweh his trust and doesn't respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. ⁵ Many, Yahweh my God, are the wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us. They can't be declared back to You. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. ⁶ Sacrifice and offering You didn't desire. You have digged my ears. You have not required burnt offering and sin offering. ⁷ Then I said, Behold, I have come. It is written about me throughout the book in the scroll. ⁸ I delight to do Your will, my God. Yes, Your law is within my heart. ⁹ I have proclaimed glad news of righteousness in the great assembly. Behold, I will not seal my lips, Yahweh, You know. ¹⁰ I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart. I have declared Your

faithfulness and Your salvation. I have not concealed Your grace and Your truth from the great assembly. ¹¹ Don't withhold Your tender mercies from me, Yahweh; let Your grace and Your truth continually preserve me. ¹² For innumerable evils have surrounded me. My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head. My heart has failed me. ¹³ Be pleased, Yahweh, to deliver me. Hurry to help me, Yahweh. ¹⁴ Let them be disappointed and confounded together who seek after my soul to destroy it. Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour who delight in my hurt. ¹⁵ Let them be desolate by reason of their shame that tell me, Aha! Aha! ¹⁶ Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You. Let such as love Your salvation say continually, Let Yahweh be exalted! ¹⁷ But I am poor and needy. May the Lord think about me. You are my help and my deliverer. Don't delay, my God.

40:3 *Many shall see it* – David perceived the influence his spiritual victory or failure would have upon others. Without encouraging posturing and posing, we should also be aware of this dimension to life and be motivated by it in our spiritual battles.

40:6 *You have digged my ears* – An allusion to the Law's provision for a servant to decide to permanently remain in his master's household and be adopted into the family – see Ex. 21:5,6.

40:6-8 Quoted in Heb. 10:5-8 about the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Notice how Jesus addressed God as "my God" – another difficulty for Trinitarian theology. Yet the initial context was David reflecting that his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah couldn't be atoned for by any sacrifice; for there was none prescribed for what he had done. He simply vowed to give himself completely to God and declare God's grace to all men (:9,10). Yet this was fulfilled by Jesus in the death of the cross, which ended the need for animal sacrifices. Indeed many of the Bathsheba Psalms are applied to Jesus in His time of dying on the cross. He there knew fully the feelings of David and every desperate sinner; not that He sinned, but so identified was He with us there that He entered into the feelings of every sinner.

Psalm 41 Jan. 23***For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.***

¹ Blessed is he who considers the poor. Yahweh will deliver him in the day of evil. ² Yahweh will preserve him, and keep him alive. He shall be blessed on the earth, and he will not surrender him to the will of his enemies. ³ Yahweh will sustain him on his sickbed, and restore him from his bed of illness. ⁴ I said, Yahweh, have mercy on me! Heal me, for I have sinned against You. ⁵ My enemies speak evil against me: When will he die, and his name perish? ⁶ If he comes to see me, he speaks falsehood. His heart gathers iniquity to itself. When he goes outside, he tells it. ⁷ All who hate me whisper together against me. They imagine the worst for me. ⁸ An evil disease, they say, has afflicted him. Now that he lies he

shall rise up no more. ⁹ Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate bread with me, has lifted up his heel against me. ¹⁰ But You, Yahweh, have mercy on me, and raise me up, that I may repay them. ¹¹ By this I know that You delight in me, because my enemy doesn't triumph over me. ¹² As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me in Your presence forever. ¹³ Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting! Amen and amen.

BOOK II**Psalm 42** Jan. 23***For the Chief Musician. A contemplation by the sons of Korah.***

¹ As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after You,

41:1 “The day of evil” ultimately refers to the day of judgment. In that day we will be as the poor who beg us for grace in this life; we should therefore be generous to them, even if their poverty, like our spiritual poverty, is ultimately the result of their own poor decision making and sin.

41:9 *My own familiar friend* – Quoted as Christ's feelings about Judas in Jn. 13:18. Jesus called Judas his “friend” at the moment of betrayal (Mt. 26:50). The question is how could Jesus ‘trust’ Judas and feel hurt at the betrayal when He knew from the beginning who should betray Him (Jn. 6:70,71). One window on this is to remember that Jesus shared our human nature, and we have the possibility within that nature to know something very well about a person, and yet our love for them means that we still trust them. Samson's love and trust in Delilah, when it was obvious she was going to betray him, is a parade example. The love of Christ was and is surpassing in its depth. Love isn't cynical, but hopes all things; and He hoped for Judas, that somehow the humanly inevitable wouldn't happen; just as God told prophets like Ezekiel from the start that Israel wouldn't hear them, and yet He appeals for Israel to hear the words of those prophets. That same hopeful love is focused on us who are in Christ; that is the practical encouragement and comfort we can take from this insight into the Lord's thinking about Judas.

42 Korah died in the wilderness and is often highlighted as the ringleader of the rebellion against Moses. But his sons were faithful, and they or their descendants wrote

God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually ask me, Where is your God? ⁴ These things I remember and pour out my soul within me, how I used to go with the crowd, and led them to God's house, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day. ⁵ Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him for the saving help of His presence. ⁶ My God, my soul is in despair within me. Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar. ⁷ Deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls. All Your waves and Your billows have swept over me. ⁸ Yahweh will command His grace in the daytime. In the night His song shall be with me: a prayer to the God of my life. ⁹ I will ask God, my rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? ¹⁰ As with a sword in my bones, my adversaries reproach me, while they continually ask me, Where is your God? ¹¹ Why

are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him, the saving help of my countenance, and my God.

Psalm 43 Jan. 23

¹ Vindicate me, God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation. Oh, deliver me from deceitful and wicked men. ² For You are the God of my strength. Why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? ³ Oh, send out Your light and Your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to Your holy hill, to Your great tent. ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy. I will praise You on the harp, God, my God. ⁵ Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him: my saviour, my helper, and my God.

Psalm 44 Jan. 24

For the Chief Musician. By the sons of Korah. A contemplative psalm.

¹ We have heard with our ears, God; our fathers have told us, what work

Psalms which are preserved within the book of Psalms. The lesson is that we can rise above our backgrounds and the influence of unbelieving parents, even when it seems that humanly speaking we are victims of our backgrounds. But in Christ we can be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

42:9 Even in times of doubt and misunderstanding at God's apparent silence, we are to still feel that God is our rock.

43:5 *Why are you in despair, my soul?* – We all talk to ourselves. It's important that our self talk is positive, urging ourselves spiritually onwards, rather than reflecting on the empty things of life which lead nowhere. Note how these prayers recorded in the Psalms merge between addressing God and addressing ourselves; prayer is a time of reflection and openness before God, not simply a list of requests baldly presented to Him.

You did in their days, in the days of old. ² You drove out the nations with Your hand, but You planted them. You afflicted the peoples, but You spread them abroad. ³ For they didn't get the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your face, because You were favourable to them. ⁴ You are my King, God. Command victories for Jacob! ⁵ Through You will we push down our adversaries. Through Your name will we tread them under who rise up against us. ⁶ For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. ⁷ But You have saved us from our adversaries, and have shamed those who hate us. ⁸ In God we have made our boast all day long, we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah. ⁹ But now You rejected us, and brought us to dishonour, and don't go out with our armies. ¹⁰ You make us turn back from the adversary. Those who hate us take spoil for themselves. ¹¹ You have made us like

sheep for food, and have scattered us among the nations. ¹² You sell Your people for nothing, and have gained nothing from their sale. ¹³ You make us a reproach to our neighbours, a scoffing and a derision to those who are around us. ¹⁴ You make us a byword among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples. ¹⁵ All day long my dishonour is before me, and shame covers my face ¹⁶ at the taunt of one who reproaches and verbally abuses, because of the enemy and the avenger. ¹⁷ All this has come on us, yet have we not forgotten You, neither have we been false to Your covenant. ¹⁸ Our heart has not turned back, neither have our steps strayed from Your path, ¹⁹ though You have crushed us in the haunt of jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death. ²⁰ If we have forgotten the name of our God, or spread forth our hands to a strange god; ²¹ won't God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart. ²² Yes, for Your sake we are killed all day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaugh-

44:3 *They didn't get the land in possession by their own sword* – This alludes to how Jacob's final words were a claim that he had taken possession in the land by his own sword and bow (Gen. 48:22). Note how :4 says that it was God who gave Jacob his victories. Jacob was a faithful man who will be in the Kingdom, and yet he didn't achieve perfection, and died with weakness and misunderstanding on his lips. Without encouraging complacency, we can take comfort that we will not of ourselves attain moral perfection and will die with some weaknesses and spiritual blind points; and yet still be saved by God's grace if we abide faithful to Him in our hearts. But in this case it is for us to learn the lesson of Jacob's failure – the Psalm goes on to teach us that our inheritance of the Kingdom will be by grace and not by our own sword and strength (:6).

44:22 *For Your sake we are killed all day long* – Quoted in Rom. 8:36 in the context of teaching that even though we are killed all day long, this cannot separate us from the saving love of Christ. The context of Ps. 44:22 is speaking of how Israel suffered for their sins in being slaughtered by their enemies. So Paul in Romans is comforting

ter. ²³ Wake up! Why do You sleep, Lord? Arise! Don't reject us forever. ²⁴ Why do You hide Your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression? ²⁵ For our soul is bowed down to the dust. Our body clings to the earth. ²⁶ Rise up to help us. Redeem us for Your grace' sake.

Psalm 45 Jan. 25

For the Chief Musician. Set to The Lilies. A contemplation by the sons of Korah. A wedding song.

¹ My heart overflows with a noble theme. I recite my verses for the king. My tongue is like the pen of a skilful writer. ² You are the most excellent of the sons of men. Grace has anointed your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever. ³ Strap your sword on your thigh, mighty one, in your splendour and your majesty. ⁴ In your majesty ride victoriously on behalf of truth, humility, and righteousness. Let your right hand display awesome deeds. ⁵ Your arrows are sharp. The nations fall under you, with arrows in the heart of the king's enemies. ⁶ Your throne, God, is for-

ever and ever. A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of your kingdom. ⁷ You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. ⁸ All your garments smell like myrrh, aloes, and cassia. Out of the ivory palaces the stringed instruments have made you glad. ⁹ Kings' daughters are among your honourable women. At your right hand the queen stands in gold of Ophir. ¹⁰ Listen, daughter, consider, and turn your ear. Forget your own people, and also your father's house. ¹¹ So the king will desire your beauty; honour him, for he is your lord. ¹² The daughter of Tyre comes with a gift, the rich among the people entreat your favour. ¹³ The princess inside is all glorious. Her clothing is interwoven with gold. ¹⁴ She shall be led to the king in embroidered work. The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to you. ¹⁵ With gladness and rejoicing they shall be led; they shall enter into the king's palace. ¹⁶ Your sons will take the place of your fa-

us that although we may suffer for our sins, even those sufferings do not separate us from the saving love of Christ who quite simply so earnestly wants to save us in the end.

45:6, 7 Quoted in Heb. 1:8,9 to demonstrate the greatness and humanity of Christ. He is clearly not God Himself because God the Father is referred to as Christ's God ("your God"). Yet the term "God" is applied to Him in :6, in the sense that the Hebrew word here translated "God" means simply a "mighty one", a term which has just been used about Christ in :3. We are the "fellows" of Jesus (:7), and He was only exalted above us by God, not because He Himself was in nature above us. This exaltation was not at His birth but at the end of His mortal life, in which He had demonstrated His love for righteousness. He was "anointed" in that He was "made... Christ", which means 'anointed', by God, after His resurrection (Acts 2:36).

45:11 A spiritual man will perceive beauty in a woman in relation to how far she has separated from the things of the world (:10) and is separated unto God's things.

thers; you shall make them princes in all the land. ¹⁷ I will make your name to be remembered in all generations. Therefore the peoples shall give you praise forever and ever.

Psalm 46 Jan. 26

For the Chief Musician. By the sons of Korah. According to Alamoth.

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we won't be afraid though the earth shakes, though the mountains are shaken into the heart of the seas; ³ though its waters roar and are troubled, though the mountains tremble with their swelling. Selah. ⁴ There is a river, the streams of which make the city of God glad, the holy place of the tents of the Most High. ⁵ God is in her midst, she shall not be moved. God will help her at dawn. ⁶ The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved. He lifted His voice, and the earth melted. ⁷ Yahweh of Armies is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. ⁸ Come, see Yahweh's works, what desola-

tions He has made in the earth. ⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots in the fire. ¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. ¹¹ Yahweh of Armies is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Psalm 47 Jan. 26

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

¹ Oh clap your hands, all you nations. Shout to God with the voice of triumph! ² For Yahweh Most High is awesome. He is a great King over all the earth. ³ He subdues nations under us, and peoples under our feet. ⁴ He chooses our inheritance for us, the glory of Jacob whom He loved. Selah. ⁵ God has gone up with a shout, Yahweh with the sound of a trumpet. ⁶ Sing praise to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises. ⁷ For God is the King of all the earth. Sing praises with understanding. ⁸ God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne. ⁹ The

46:5 *God will help her at dawn* – The return of Christ to earth is likened to the rising of the sun at daybreak (Mal. 4:2). The final visible intervention of God in response to our prayers will be at this time. The earthquakes and tidal waves spoken of in :2,3 may refer to the time of trouble which will come on earth just prior to Christ's return.

47:4 *Jacob whom He loved. Selah* – We are to meditate ("Selah") upon the fact that God so loved Jacob, and was and is the God who was Jacob's God. There are so many references to Jacob in the Psalms. Jacob was spiritually weak for much of his life, and was led by God to a final spiritual maturity, although Jacob responded very slowly and weakly to this leading over the decades of his life. The Psalms encourage us that our God is the God who stuck with and dearly loved Jacob. Abraham showed more faith and spirituality than Jacob, but God is more frequently referred to as Jacob's God rather than Abraham's.

48:8 *God will establish it forever. Selah* – The point of meditation here ("Selah") is that Jerusalem will last forever – because God promised David that his great son, the

princes of the peoples are gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted!

Psalm 48 Jan. 26

A Song. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

¹ Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. ² Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the north sides, the city of the great King. ³ God has shown Himself in her citadels as a refuge. ⁴ For, behold, the kings assembled themselves, they passed by together. ⁵ They saw it, then they were amazed. They were dismayed. They hurried away. ⁶ Trembling took hold of them there, pain, as of a woman in travail. ⁷ With the east wind, You break the ships of Tarshish. ⁸ As we have heard, so we have seen, in the city of Yahweh of Armies, in the city of our God. God will establish it forever. Selah. ⁹ We have thought about Your grace, God, in the midst of Your temple. ¹⁰ As is Your name, God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is full of righteousness. ¹¹ Let

Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of Your judgments. ¹² Walk about Zion, and go around her. Number its towers. ¹³ Mark well her bulwarks. Consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation. ¹⁴ For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even to death.

Psalm 49 Jan. 27

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

¹ Hear this, all you peoples. Listen, all you inhabitants of the world, ² both low and high, rich and poor together. ³ My mouth will speak words of wisdom, my heart shall utter understanding. ⁴ I will bend my ear to a proverb, I will open my riddle on the harp. ⁵ Why should I fear in the days of evil, when iniquity barks at my heels, surrounding me? ⁶ Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches— ⁷ none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for him. ⁸ For the redemption of their life is costly, no payment is ever enough, ⁹ that he should live on forever, that he should not see corruption. ¹⁰ For He sees that wise men

Lord Jesus, would reign on his throne, i.e. in Jerusalem, forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). For all the metaphor and symbology of the Bible, there are some basic literal realities we are to ever keep in mind; and one of these is that Christ shall literally reign for ever from Jerusalem over God's Kingdom on earth.

48:10 The content of our praise is to be the Name of God, which is His characteristics (Ex. 34:4-6).

49:8 It may seem obvious that money can't buy a place in God's Kingdom, but whilst everybody would agree to that statement, effectively those who trust in wealth to the exclusion of faith in God are saying just this. The price of redemption is far more than money – it was ultimately in the blood of God's dear Son.

die; likewise the fool and the senseless perish, and leave their wealth to others. ¹¹ Their inward thought is that their houses will endure forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They name their lands after themselves. ¹² But man, despite his riches, doesn't endure. He is like the animals that perish. ¹³ This is the destiny of those who are foolish, and of those who approve their sayings. Selah. ¹⁴ They are appointed as a flock for Sheol. Death shall be their shepherd. The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. Their beauty shall decay in Sheol, far from their mansions. ¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me. Selah. ¹⁶ Don't be afraid when a man is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. ¹⁷ For when he

dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. ¹⁸ Though while he lived he blessed his soul— and men praise you when you do well for yourself— ¹⁹ he shall go to the generation of his fathers. They shall never see the light. ²⁰ A man who has riches without understanding is like the animals that perish.

Psalm 50 Jan. 28

A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ The Mighty One, God, Yahweh, speaks, and calls the earth from sunrise to sunset. ² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. ³ Our God comes, and does not keep silent. A fire devours before Him, it is very stormy around Him. ⁴ He calls to the heavens above, to the earth, that He may judge His people:

49:11 We live under the illusion that we are somehow rational, logical and sensible in our decision making and attitudes. But in fact we are not. Human beings can be incredibly stupid and live in denial of the obvious. We shall die and in that sense lose whatever wealth or property we have acquired on the earth. But the inward thought of people is that somehow, that wealth remains personally attached to them after their death. This is a penetrating psychological insight. It mocks at any desire to attain personal wealth which will endure after our death; now is the time to use whatever we have in the Lord's service.

49:12 *He is like the animals that perish* – A proof of man's mortal nature, disproving the myths of reincarnation and life in Heaven after death.

49:19,20 Those who don't understand God's ways and aren't therefore responsible to His judgment will remain dead for ever like the animals.

50:1 *Speaks, and calls the earth* – God created the world through the medium of His word, He spoke and it was done. But He hasn't as it were turned away from His creation; the cycles within the natural creation may appear to be clockwork, but in a sense God consciously brings them forth again by the medium of His word. That word as manifest to us through the Bible is equally active and powerful in an ongoing and always creative way. The idea of our living in an active universe, in which all things are consciously within God's awareness and a result of the ongoing activity of His word, means that truly God is never far from us; we simply need to look out at the natural creation to feel again His active involvement in our world. See on 65:6.

⁵ Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. ⁶ The heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge. Selah. ⁷ Hear, My people, and I will speak; Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, your God. ⁸ I don't rebuke you for your sacrifices. Your burnt offerings are continually before Me. ⁹ I have no need for a bull from your stall, nor male goats from your pens. ¹⁰ For every animal of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the mountains. The wild animals of the field are Mine. ¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all that is in it. ¹³ Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? ¹⁴ Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, pay your vows to the Most High. ¹⁵ Call on Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour Me. ¹⁶ But to the wicked God says, What right do you have to declare My statutes and to have taken My covenant on your lips, ¹⁷ since you hate instruction, and throw My words behind you? ¹⁸ When you saw a thief,

you consented with him, and have participated with adulterers. ¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil, your tongue frames deceit. ²⁰ You sit and speak against your brother, you slander your own mother's son. ²¹ You have done these things, and I kept silent. You thought that I was just like you. I will rebuke you, and accuse you in front of your eyes. ²² Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you into pieces, and there be none to deliver. ²³ Whoever offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies Me, and prepares his way so that I will show God's salvation to him.

Psalm 51 Jan. 29

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

¹ Have mercy on me, God, according to Your grace. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I acknowledge my transgressions; my sin is constantly before me. ⁴ Against You, and You only, have I sinned, and done

50:5 When Christ returns, the faithful will be gathered to judgment (Mt. 24:31); and it is the gathering of the faithful which this Psalm has in view. But this is only part of the wider Biblical picture, which speaks of all those responsible to God being also gathered to judgment.

50:15 *Call on Me in the day of trouble* – This is the sacrifice which God wants. Rather than us giving things to God, He wants us to *trust* in Him, to turn to Him before turning to anything else.

50:21 The apparent silence of God can deceive the wicked into thinking they will not give account to Him. But there will be in some sense a going through with the wicked of all their deeds (Mt. 25:43). This will be such an awful experience for them that it will of itself be their punishment; for ultimately, they will return to the dust never to exist again, seeing that the wages for sin is ultimately death (Rom. 6:23).

that which is evil in Your sight; that You may be proved right when You speak, and justified when You judge.

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me.

⁶ Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts; You teach me wisdom in the innermost place. ⁷ Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness, so that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. ⁹ Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all of my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Don't throw me out from Your presence, and don't take Your spirit of holiness from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, uphold me with a willing spirit. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, sinners shall be converted to You.

¹⁴ Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation. My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. ¹⁵ Lord, open my lips; my mouth shall declare Your praise.

¹⁶ For You don't delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it; You have no pleasure in burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. ¹⁸ Do well in Your good pleasure to Zion, build the walls of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Then You will delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt offerings and in whole burnt offerings. Then they will offer bullocks on Your altar.

Psalm 52 Jan. 29

For the Chief Musician. A contemplation by David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, David has come to Abimelech's house.

¹ Why do you boast of mischief, mighty man? God's grace endures continually. ² Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. ³ You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking the truth. Selah. ⁴ You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue.

⁵ God will likewise destroy you for-

51:6 *Truth in the inward parts* – The innermost truth we can come to know is that we really have sinned and been forgiven; this is the ultimate “wisdom” rather than any intellectual knowledge or theological purity.

51:10 God can act directly on our hearts and create mindsets and attitudes, in response to our desire for them.

51:13 David vowed to respond to God's gracious forgiveness of him by preaching to others. Our motivation for witness should be our own very personal awareness of having received forgiveness and grace which we never possibly deserved.

51:16 There was no sacrifice under the Mosaic law which could cleanse David from the sins he had committed.

52:4 *You deceitful tongue* – David is addressing Doeg (see the Psalm title), but he speaks of Doeg as if Doeg is his tongue. We are identified with our words, they are us, just as God's word is Him (Jn. 1:3). We can't therefore excuse ourselves from bad speaking by reasoning that in our hearts we are not like that. Our words reflect us, and therefore by them we will be condemned or justified in the last judgment (Mt. 12:37).

ever. He will take you up, and pluck you out of your tent, and root you out of the land of the living. Selah. ⁶ The righteous also will see it, and fear, and laugh at him, saying, ⁷ Behold, this is the man who didn't make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. ⁸ But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in God's house. I trust in God's grace forever and ever. ⁹ I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it. I will hope in Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your saints.

Psalm 53 Jan. 30

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Mahalath. A contemplation by David.

¹ The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity. There is no one who does good. ² God looks down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there are any who un-

derstood, who seek after God. ³ Every one of them has gone back. They have become filthy together. There is no one who does good, no, not one. ⁴ Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and don't call on God? ⁵ There they were in great fear, where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you. You have put them to shame, because God has rejected them. ⁶ Oh that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back His people from captivity, then Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Psalm 54 Jan. 30

For the Chief Musician.

On stringed instruments. A contemplation by David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Isn't David hiding himself among us?

¹ Save me, God, by Your name. Vindicate me in Your might. ² Hear my prayer, God. Listen to the words of

52:8 *I am like a green olive tree in God's house* – But David at this time was on the run from Saul in the wilderness, and was not calmly sitting in the tabernacle; nor was he physically “in the presence of Your saints” (:9). And yet within his own heart, David felt identified with God's people and in His presence. This is a comfort for those who may be isolated from church life and from other believers; we can really be there in spirit, as David was in his wilderness years.

53:2 *Who understood, who seek after God* – To seek for God, thereby recognizing that we don't understand Him to perfection, is considered by Him to be understanding Him.

53:3 These verses speak of a category of people who in their heart are at times pure atheists (:1), and who are described as “filthy” and do no good. We are therefore shocked to find Paul quoting these words about every one of us (Rom. 3:12). There in Romans Paul is seeking to challenge the attitude that ‘I may be a sinner, but I'm not like *them*’. He does so in order to convict us of our sin, and the just sentence of death which is upon us; in order to help us gasp with more wonder and gratitude at God's amazing grace in having counted us as righteous because we are baptized into Christ.

my mouth. ³ For strangers have risen up against me, violent men have sought after my soul. They haven't set God before them. Selah. ⁴ Behold, God is my helper, the Lord is the one who sustains my soul. ⁵ He will repay the evil to my enemies; destroy them in Your truth. ⁶ With a free will offering, I will sacrifice to You. I will give thanks to Your name, Yahweh, for it is good. ⁷ For He has delivered me out of all trouble. My eye has seen triumph over my enemies.

Psalm 55 Jan. 30

For the Chief Musician.

On stringed instruments. A contemplation by David.

¹ Listen to my prayer, God. Don't hide Yourself from my supplication. ² Attend to me, and answer me. I am restless in my complaint and moan, ³ because of the words of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they bring suffering on me, in anger they hold a grudge against me. ⁴ My heart is severely pained within

me, the terrors of death have come upon me. ⁵ Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, horror has overwhelmed me. ⁶ I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then I would fly away, and be at rest. ⁷ Behold, then I would wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. ⁸ I would hurry to a shelter from the stormy wind and storm. ⁹ Confuse them, Lord, and confound their language, for I have seen violence and strife in the city. ¹⁰ Day and night they prowl around on its walls, malice and abuse are also within her. ¹¹ Destructive forces are within her, threats and lies don't depart from her streets. ¹² For it was not an enemy who insulted me, then I could have endured it; neither was it he who hated me who raised himself up against me, then I would have hidden myself from him. ¹³ But it was you, a man like me, my companion, and my familiar friend. ¹⁴ We took sweet fellowship together, we walked to God's house in company. ¹⁵ Let death come suddenly on them,

55:3 *Because of the words* – The mental suffering David describes in these verses was largely because of the words of his enemies; words really can make people feel like dying and lead them to suicidal thoughts. Words can never be treated as 'only words'; they have a real power, and therefore we have a deep responsibility for our words. We must remember this, living as we do in a society which judges behaviour far harder than it does 'mere' words. No threat in this sense is ever an 'empty threat', because words are of themselves so destructive.

55:9 *Confound their language* – Exactly what God did to those who built the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:7). We like David need to see our abusers in Biblical terms, seeing how in essence our abusers are so similar to those in Biblical incidents.

55:13, 14 This refers to David's betrayal by Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather, and his own one time confidante (2 Sam. 15:31; 1 Chron. 27:33). It is clearly typical of Christ's betrayal by Judas, whom he also calls his "friend" (Mt. 26:50); as to why Christ in this sense trusted Judas so as to be so hurt by his betrayal, see on 41:9. The historical record simply states Ahithophel's betrayal of David, but here we see how David didn't just take it stoically, but was deeply hurt by it and poured out his soul

let them go down alive into Sheol. For wickedness is in their dwelling, in their midst. ¹⁶ As for me, I will call on God. Yahweh will save me. ¹⁷ Evening, morning, and at noon, I will cry out in distress; He will hear my voice. ¹⁸ He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, although there are many who oppose me. ¹⁹ God, who is enthroned forever, will hear, and answer them. Selah. They never change, those who don't fear God. ²⁰ He raises his hands against his friends, he has violated his covenant. ²¹ His mouth was smooth as butter, but his heart was war. His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. ²² Cast your burden on Yahweh, and He will sustain you. He will never allow the righteous to be moved. ²³ But You, God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction. Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in You.

Psalm 56 Jan. 31

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Silent Dove in Distant Lands. A poem by David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

¹ Be merciful to me, God, for man wants to swallow me up. All day long he attacks and oppresses me.

² My enemies want to swallow me up all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. ³ When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. ⁴ In God, I praise His word. In God do I put my trust. I will not be afraid—what can flesh do to me? ⁵ All day long they twist my words, all their thoughts are against me for evil. ⁶ They conspire and lurk, watching my steps, they are eager to take my life. ⁷ Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, God. ⁸ You number my wanderings, You put my tears into Your bottle. Aren't they in Your book? ⁹ Then my enemies shall turn back in the day that I call. I know this, that God is for me. ¹⁰ In God, I will praise His word. In Yahweh, I will praise His word. ¹¹ I have put my trust in God; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? ¹² Your vows are on me, God. I will give thank offerings to You. ¹³ For You have delivered my soul from death, and prevented my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

Psalm 57 Jan. 31

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A poem by David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

¹ Be merciful to me, God, be merci-

to God in hurt and pain. We need to imagine the feelings of the Biblical characters as they went through the events which are historically recorded.

56:8 Tear bottles were kept by mourners at funerals; they put their tears in a bottle which they then kept in memory of the deceased. But David says that *his* tears are in *God's* bottle. The idea was that *your* tears went into *your* bottle. But David was so intimate with God that he perceived that *his* tears were in fact *God's*. The intimacy David achieved with God is absolutely possible for us too.

ful to me, for my soul takes refuge in You. Yes, in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge, until disaster has passed. ² I cry out to God Most High, to God who accomplishes my requests for me. ³ He will send from heaven and save me, He rebukes the one who is pursuing me. Selah. God will send out His grace and His truth. ⁴ My soul is among lions. I lie among those who are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. ⁵ Be exalted, God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be above all the earth! ⁶ They have prepared a net for my steps. My soul is bowed down, they dig a snare before me. They fall into its midst themselves. Selah. ⁷ My heart is steadfast, God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises. ⁸ Wake up, my glory! Wake up, psaltery and harp! I will wake up the dawn. ⁹ I will give thanks to You, Lord, among the peoples, I will sing praises to You among the nations. ¹⁰ For Your great grace reaches to the heavens, and Your truth to the skies. ¹¹ Be exalted, God, above the

heavens. Let Your glory be over all the earth.

Psalm 58 Feb. 1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A poem by David.

¹ Do you indeed speak righteousness, silent ones? Do you judge blamelessly, you sons of men? ² No, in your heart you plot injustice. You measure out the violence of your hands in the earth. ³ The wicked go astray from the womb. They are wayward as soon as they are born, speaking lies. ⁴ Their poison is like the poison of a snake; like a deaf cobra that stops its ear, ⁵ which doesn't listen to the voice of charmers, no matter how skilful the charmer may be. ⁶ Break their teeth, God, in their mouth. Break out the great teeth of the young lions, Yahweh. ⁷ Let them vanish as water that flows away. When they draw the bow, let their arrows be made blunt. ⁸ Let them be like the path of a snail which melts and passes away, like the stillborn child, who has not seen the sun. ⁹ Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns,

57:1 David didn't see the physical cave he was hiding in (see Psalm title) as his refuge, but rather perceived God as his refuge. We may use medicines, doctors and all kinds of human things in our times of need, but we must perceive God as our true helper and final saviour rather than any of those things.

57:4 The vagabonds who supported David during his wilderness years were unspiritual men, and David so desperately longed for spiritual company. But David in his heart was ecstatic at God's presence, and must've composed these words whilst laying with those men in the cave. This is a parade example to us of spiritual mindedness in unspiritual company.

58:1 *Silent ones* – There is a time to keep silence, but if we don't speak out for the abused at times we are paralleled with those who are proactively abusive. So much evil happens because 'good' people do nothing.

he will sweep away the green and the burning alike. ¹⁰ The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked; ¹¹ so that men shall say, Most certainly there is a reward for the righteous. Most certainly there is a God who judges the earth.

Psalm 59 Feb. 1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A poem by David, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

¹ Deliver me from my enemies, my God; lift me on high from those who rise up against me. ² Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, save me from the bloodthirsty men. ³ For, behold, they lie in wait for my soul. The mighty gather themselves together against me, not for my disobedience, nor for my sin, Yahweh. ⁴ I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Rise up, behold, and help me! ⁵ You, Yahweh God of Armies, the God of Israel, rouse

yourself to punish the nations. Show no mercy to the wicked traitors. Selah. ⁶ They return at evening, howling like dogs, and prowl around the city. ⁷ Behold, they spew with their mouth; swords are in their lips, For, they say, who hears us? ⁸ But You, Yahweh, laugh at them. You scoff at all the nations. ⁹ Oh my Strength, I watch for You, for God is my high tower. ¹⁰ My God will go before me with His grace. God will let me look at my enemies in triumph. ¹¹ Don't kill them immediately, or my people may forget. Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, Lord our shield. ¹² For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride, for the curses and lies which they utter. ¹³ Consume them in wrath, consume them, and they will be no more. Let them know that God rules in Jacob, to the ends of the earth. Selah. ¹⁴ At evening let them return. Let them howl like a dog, and go around the city. ¹⁵ They shall wander up and

58:10 Our natural unease at reading these kinds of things is a reflection of our underestimate of the seriousness of sin, and the desperate need which there is for justice to be done. If we have such a perspective, then we will rejoice to see it done at the last day.

59:14, 15 This seems to speak of the rejected at the last day. Just as the rejected virgins knock at the door earnestly wanting Jesus to open to them (Mt. 25:11), as Cain dwelt at the east of Eden in the hope of being readmitted to Paradise (Gen. 4:16), so the wicked of David's time [who were Israelites, members of God's covenant people] will walk around the holy city wishing to be let in, howling like desperate dogs. Rev. 22:15 using the same figure for the rejected – dogs outside God's city. In that final day of eternal truth, nobody will be indifferent; all present there will desperately wish to be in God's Kingdom. If our final destiny is to stand before God desperately desiring to be in His Kingdom, we must live our lives today with the same passion; for we make the answer now. All too late the rejected will come to really believe in God's eternal Kingdom on earth (:13); but it will be too late to change anything, for the judgment is ongoing now.

down for food, and howl all night because they aren't satisfied. ¹⁶ But I will sing of Your strength. Yes, I will sing aloud of Your grace in the morning. For You have been my high tower, a refuge in the day of my distress. ¹⁷ To You, my strength, I will sing praises. For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.

Psalm 60 Feb. 2

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of The Lily of the Covenant. A teaching poem by David, when he fought with Aram Naharaim and with Aram Zobah, and Joab returned, and killed twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.

¹ God, You have rejected us. You have broken us down, You have been angry. Restore us again. ² You have made the land tremble, You have torn it. Mend its fractures, for it quakes. ³ You have shown Your people hard things, You have made us drink the wine that makes us stagger. ⁴ You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. ⁵ So that Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and answer us.

60:3 *You have made us drink the wine* – Being given a cup of wine to drink is a double symbol; it speaks of either our eternal blessing (1 Cor. 10:16) or condemnation. The communion service is therefore designed to bring us up against the two possible futures which there are for us; blessing or condemnation. We therefore drink either to our blessing or to our condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29). It is therefore a powerful aid towards self-examination.

60:9 *Who has led me to Edom?* – The Psalm title shows that this was a song written in response to Israel's victory over Edom, but in it David continually emphasizes how their earlier attempt had failed because of their sin. Even when God does great things for us, we must be ever aware of our sins and unworthiness of any victory He gives us.

⁶ God has spoken from His sanctuary: I will triumph. I will divide Shechem, and measure out the valley of Succoth. ⁷ Gilead is Mine and Manasseh is Mine. Ephraim also is the helmet of My head. Judah is My sceptre. ⁸ Moab is My wash basin. I will throw My shoe on Edom, I shout in triumph over Philistia. ⁹ Who will bring me into the strong city? Who has led me to Edom? ¹⁰ Haven't You, God, rejected us? You don't go out with our armies, God. ¹¹ Give us help against the adversary, for the help of man is vain. ¹² Through God we shall do valiantly, for it is He who will tread down our adversaries.

Psalm 61 Feb. 2

For the Chief Musician. For a stringed instrument. By David.

¹ Hear my cry, God. Listen to my prayer. ² From the end of the land I will call to You when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. ³ For You have been a refuge for me, a strong tower from the enemy. ⁴ I will dwell in Your tent forever, I will take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah. ⁵ For You, God, have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those

who fear Your name. ⁶ You will prolong the king's life; his years shall be for generations. ⁷ He shall be enthroned in God's presence forever. Appoint Your grace and truth that they may preserve him. ⁸ So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may fulfil my vows daily.

Psalm 62 Feb. 3

For the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm by David.

¹ My soul rests in God alone. My salvation is from Him. ² He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress— I will never be greatly shaken. ³ How long will you assault a man, would all of you throw him down, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? ⁴ They fully intend to throw him down from his high place. They delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they

curse inwardly. Selah. ⁵ My soul, wait in silence for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. ⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress. I will not be shaken. ⁷ With God is my salvation and my honour. The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. ⁸ Trust in Him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah. ⁹ Surely men of low degree are just a breath, and men of high degree are a lie. In the balances they will go up; they are together lighter than a breath. ¹⁰ Don't trust in oppression, don't become vain in robbery. If riches increase, don't set your heart on them. ¹¹ God has spoken once; twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God. ¹² Also to You, Lord, belongs grace, for You reward every man according to his work.

61:6, 7 Although David clearly expected to die, as other Psalms indicate, he understood that he had been promised eternal life in that the promises to him were that he would see his great descendant, the Lord Jesus, reigning eternally in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:16). This necessitated a resurrection to eternal life. The idea of eternal life is found in the Old Testament because it is required by the promises to Abraham and David which were the basis of God's covenant; it didn't just arise in the New Testament. The future life, death and resurrection of Christ was the basis upon which those earlier promises of eternity had been made, but the basic promise of eternal salvation had begun to be offered in Genesis.

62:1 *God alone* – The Hebrew word translated “alone” also means “one”. The fact that God is one isn't merely a numerical statement. Because there is only one God, we are to trust Him alone. In life's crises we are to turn to God alone, quite simply because there is only one God. Our belief in the unity of God isn't merely a theological position, it has huge practical meaning – especially in a world where there are so many attempts to replace trust in God, be it through insurance policies, clever lawyers, smart doctors or roadside rescue services.

62:12 *You reward every man according to his work* – Quoted in Rev. 22:12 about what will happen at the judgment seat of Christ at His return. Because God has this principle, of judging according to behaviour, we thereby see His grace – for despite this, He will still save us. And that, therefore, must be by His grace alone.

Psalm 63 Feb. 3

A Psalm by David, when he was in the desert of Judah.

¹ God, You are my God; I will earnestly seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and weary land, where there is no water. ² So I have seen You in the sanctuary, watching Your power and Your glory. ³ Because Your grace is better than life, my lips shall praise You. ⁴ So I will bless You while I live, I will lift up my hands in Your name. ⁵ My soul shall be satisfied as with the richest food. My mouth shall praise You with joyful lips ⁶ when I remember You on my bed, and think about You in the night watches. ⁷ For You have been my help; I will rejoice in the shadow of Your wings. ⁸ My soul stays close to You, Your right hand upholds me. ⁹ But those who seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth. ¹⁰ They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be jackal food. ¹¹ But the king shall rejoice in God. Everyone who swears by Him will praise Him, for

the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.

Psalm 64 Feb. 4

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ Hear my voice, God, in my complaint. Preserve my life from fear of the enemy. ² Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from the noisy crowd of the ones doing evil; ³ who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and aim their arrows, deadly words, ⁴ to shoot innocent men from ambushes. They shoot at him suddenly and fearlessly. ⁵ They encourage themselves in evil plans. They talk about laying snares secretly. They say, Who will see them? ⁶ They plot injustice, saying, We have made a perfect plan! Surely man's mind and heart are cunning. ⁷ But God will shoot at them, they will be suddenly struck down with an arrow. ⁸ Their own tongues shall ruin them; all who see them will shake their heads. ⁹ All mankind shall be in awe. They shall declare the work of God, and shall wisely ponder what He has

63:11 *The mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped* – This is quoted about all of us in Rom. 3:19, where Paul reasons that because we're all sinners, we're all liars – for untruth is the essence of sin. By doing so we're not being true to ourselves, to God, to His word, to our brethren... we profess covenant relationship with God, to be His people, and yet we fail to keep the terms of that covenant. In the context, Paul is teaching that the Law of Moses convicted all God's people of this, and in this way led them to the need for Christ. Yet Is. 52:15 prophesied that the crucified Jesus would result in men shutting their mouths. The righteousness and perfection displayed there in one Man, the very human Lord Jesus, has the same effect upon us as the Law of Moses – we shut our mouths, convicted of sin.

64:9 *All mankind shall be in awe* – We wonder how “all mankind” will be in awe at the judgment of some Israelites in David's time who abused him. The fact is that they will be resurrected and judged, and the judgment will in some sense be public, before all (Rev. 16:15). It will be an amazing teaching mechanism, seeing the lives of billions

done. ¹⁰ The righteous shall be glad in Yahweh, and shall take refuge in Him. All the upright in heart shall praise Him!

Psalm 65 Feb. 4

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David. A song.

¹ Praise waits for You, God, in Zion. To You shall vows be performed. ² You who hear prayer, to You all men will come. ³ Sins overwhelmed me, but You atoned for our transgressions. ⁴ Blessed is the person whom You choose and cause to come near, that he may live in Your courts. We will be filled with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple. ⁵ By awesome deeds of righteousness You answer us, God of our salvation. You who are the hope of all the ends of the earth, of those who are far away on the sea; ⁶ who by His power forms the mountains, having armed Yourself with strength; ⁷ who stills the roaring of the seas, the crashing

of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations. ⁸ They also who dwell in distant places are afraid at Your wonders. You call the morning's dawn and the evening with songs of joy. ⁹ You visit the earth, and water it; You greatly enrich it. The river of God is full of water. You provide them grain, for so You have ordained it. ¹⁰ You drench its furrows, You level its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless it with a crop. ¹¹ You crown the year with Your bounty, Your carts overflow with abundance. ¹² The wilderness grasslands overflow, the hills are clothed with gladness. ¹³ The pastures are covered with flocks, the valleys also are clothed with grain. They shout for joy! They also sing.

Psalm 66 Feb. 5

For the Chief Musician. A song. A Psalm.

¹ Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! ² Sing to the glory of His

of people played back and analyzed, and observing the condemnation of the wicked. It will prepare us for entry to God's eternal Kingdom, understanding His principles and grace in a way which we have perhaps not risen to in this life – even though His judgments are in His word and are even now made manifest.

65:3 *You atoned for our transgressions* – The atonement for sin was achieved through the death of Christ, who hadn't died at David's time. But God forgave sin in Old Testament times on the basis that He foresaw the death of Christ, who as it were was slain from the beginning (Rev. 13:8). God speaks of things which don't exist as though they do (Rom. 4:17), because He views from outside the limitations of human time. This is why He can speak of things and persons (not least His Son) as existing before they did. This doesn't mean they pre-existed in any literal sense, but they existed in His plan and purpose.

65:6 *By His power forms the mountains* – God didn't just form the mountains at the time of Genesis 1 and leave them, He is actively forming mountains to this day. A theme of this Psalm is that God is actively at work in the natural creation; the water cycle doesn't as it were run on clockwork but rather as a result of God's active, conscious and passionate involvement (:9-11) – see on 50:1.

name! Offer glory and praise! ³ Tell God, How awesome are Your deeds! Through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies submit themselves to You. ⁴ All the earth will worship You, and will sing to You; they will sing to Your name. Selah. ⁵ Come and see God's deeds— awesome work on behalf of the children of men. ⁶ He turned the sea into dry land, they went through the river on foot. There we rejoiced in Him. ⁷ He rules by His might forever, His eyes watch the nations. Don't let the rebellious rise up against Him. Selah. ⁸ Praise our God, you peoples! Make the sound of His praise heard, ⁹ who preserves our life among the living, and doesn't allow our feet to be moved. ¹⁰ For You, God, have tested us. You have refined us, as silver is refined. ¹¹ You brought us into prison, You laid a burden on our backs. ¹² You allowed men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but You brought us to the place of abundance. ¹³ I

will come into Your temple with burnt offerings. I will pay my vows to You, ¹⁴ which my lips promised and my mouth spoke, when I was in distress. ¹⁵ I will offer to You burnt offerings of fat animals, with the offering of rams, I will offer bulls with goats. Selah. ¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God; I will declare what He has done for my soul. ¹⁷ I cried to Him with my mouth. He was extolled with my tongue. ¹⁸ If I cherished sin in my heart, the Lord wouldn't have listened. ¹⁹ But most certainly, God has listened. He has heard the voice of my prayer. ²⁰ Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His grace from me.

Psalm 67 Feb. 5

For the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Psalm. A song.

¹ May God be merciful to us, bless us, and cause His face to shine on us. Selah. ² That Your way may be known on earth, and Your salvation

66:1, 2 Often the Psalms invite the Gentile world to join with Israel in their praise of God as their saviour (also :5). Israel were intended to be a light to the Gentiles around them, and to bring them to faith and covenant relationship with God. They failed in this, for the most part, despite these faithful Psalmists who sought to do so through the medium of producing songs which they hoped would penetrate into the surrounding nations. The great commission bids each of us to take the same message into the Gentile darkness around us.

66:6 *We rejoiced in Him* – Often in the Psalms we are invited to consider ourselves as Israel in Egypt, subsequently rejoicing at the Red Sea deliverance; hence the Psalmist speaks of “us” as having gone through Israel's experience of suffering and salvation (:11,12). The New Testament likewise invites us to see our baptism as a passing through the Red Sea, and our lives today as like their wilderness journey towards the Kingdom (1 Cor. 10:1-4). We are to as it were play ‘Bible television’, imagining the events as if we were there historically; for spiritually, it is all equally true for us in our salvation from this world of sin.

67:2 *Your salvation among all nations* – See on 66:1,2.

among all nations, ³ let the peoples praise You, God. Let all the peoples praise You. ⁴ Oh let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You will judge the peoples with equity, and govern the nations on earth. Selah. ⁵ Let the peoples praise You, God. Let all the peoples praise You. ⁶ The earth has yielded its increase. God, even our own God, will bless us. ⁷ God will bless us. All the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Psalm 68 Feb. 6

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David. A song.

¹ Let God arise! Let His enemies be scattered! Let them who hate Him also flee before Him. ² As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. ³ But let the righteous be glad, may they rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice with gladness. ⁴ Sing to God! Sing praises to His name! Extol Him

who rides on the clouds: to Yah, His name! Rejoice before Him! ⁵ A father of the fatherless, and a defender of the widows, is God in His holy habitation. ⁶ God sets the lonely in families. He brings out the prisoners with singing, but the rebellious dwell in a sun-scorched land. ⁷ God, when You went forth before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness... Selah. ⁸ The earth trembled. The sky also poured down rain at the presence of the God of Sinai— at the presence of God, the God of Israel. ⁹ You, God, sent a plentiful rain. You confirmed Your inheritance when it was weary. ¹⁰ Your congregation lived therein. You, God, prepared Your goodness for the poor. ¹¹ The Lord announced the word; the women who proclaimed it are a great company. ¹² Kings of armies flee! They flee! The women who wait at home divide the spoil- ¹³ while you men sleep among the campfires- the wings of a dove sheathed with silver, her

67:4 Applied in Acts 17:31 to the judgment of the world at Christ's return.

68:6 *God sets the lonely in families* – He did this when He brought His prisoner people out from Egyptian bondage. The numbering of the tribes after they had crossed the Red Sea implies that every Israelite had a family group. Those who were alone were therefore placed within families. The community of God's people today, who have likewise passed through the water of baptism as Israel crossed the Red Sea, should likewise be characterized by inclusiveness and a binding of individuals together in a new spiritual family in Christ. Cliques based around existing families or friendship groups mustn't be allowed to stop this unique unity occurring – for it is this mysterious Christian unity which is powerful enough to convert the world if it is lived out as it should be (Jn. 17:21).

68:11 There is here and in :12,25 a strong emphasis on the participation of women in the spreading of the good news of God's redemption of His people. The idea was quite radical in that conservative, male dominated world. The broad picture we are to take away is that absolutely all of us, men and women, whether or not others consider us appropriate witnesses, are to share the good news of God's salvation with the entire world.

feathers with shining gold. ¹⁴ When the Almighty scattered kings in her, it snowed on Zalmon. ¹⁵ The mountains of Bashan are majestic mountains, the mountains of Bashan are rugged. ¹⁶ Why do you look in envy, you rugged mountains, at the mountain where God chooses to reign? Yes, Yahweh will dwell there forever. ¹⁷ The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary. ¹⁸ You have ascended on high, You have led away captives in your victory train, You have received gifts to distribute among men, yes, among the rebellious also, that Yah God might dwell there. ¹⁹ Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens, even the God who is our salvation. Selah. ²⁰ God is to us a God of deliverance; to Yahweh the Lord belongs escape from death. ²¹ But God will strike through the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of such a one as still continues in his guiltiness. ²² The Lord said, I will bring you again from Bashan, I will bring you again from the depths of the sea; ²³ that you may crush them, dipping your foot in blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies. ²⁴ They have seen Your processions, God, even the pro-

cessions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary. ²⁵ The singers went before, the minstrels followed after in the midst of the ladies playing with tambourines, singing. ²⁶ Bless God in the congregations, even the Lord in the assembly of Israel! ²⁷ There is little Benjamin, their ruler, the princes of Judah, their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. ²⁸ Your God has commanded your strength. Strengthen, God, that which You have done for us. ²⁹ Because of Your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bring presents to You. ³⁰ Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may they bring tribute of bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war. ³¹ Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall hurry to stretch out her hands to God. ³² Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth! Sing praises to the Lord! Selah. ³³ To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which are of old; behold, He utters His voice, a mighty voice. ³⁴ Ascribe strength to God! His excellency is over Israel, His strength is in the skies. ³⁵ You are awesome, God, in Your sanctuaries. The God of Israel gives strength and power to His people. Praise be to God!

68:18 This is applied in Eph. 4:8 to the ascension of Christ in order to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit which He then gave to the first century church, in order to prepare it to be a place where God might dwell. Whilst the miraculous gifts were withdrawn once the church was established, Christ's parables teach that we have each been given some gift by Him which we are to use to prepare for God's Kingdom and to enable His dwelling amongst men on earth (Mt. 25:15). We have each been given something as a result of Christ's sacrifice and victorious ascension to Heaven, and we are therefore to ensure that we use it.

Psalm 69 Feb. 7

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Lilies. By David.

¹ Save me, God, for the waters have come up to my neck! ² I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold. I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. ³ I am weary with my crying. My throat is dry. My eyes fail, looking for my God. ⁴ Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head. Those who want to cut me off, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty. I have to restore what I didn't take away. ⁵ God, You know my foolishness. My sins aren't hidden from You. ⁶ Don't let those who wait for You be shamed on my account, Lord Yahweh of Armies. Don't let those who seek You be brought to dishonour through me, God of Israel. ⁷ Because for Your sake I have borne reproach. Shame has covered my face. ⁸ I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's children. ⁹ For the zeal of Your house consumes me. The reproaches of those who

reproach You have fallen on me. ¹⁰ When I wept and I fasted, that was to my reproach. ¹¹ When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. ¹² Those who sit in the gate talk against me; I am the song of the drunkards. ¹³ But as for me, my prayer is to You, Yahweh, in an acceptable time. God, in the abundance of Your grace, answer me in the truth of Your salvation. ¹⁴ Deliver me out of the mire, and don't let me sink. Let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. ¹⁵ Don't let the flood waters overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up. Don't let the pit shut its mouth on me. ¹⁶ Answer me, Yahweh, for Your grace is good. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, turn to me. ¹⁷ Don't hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress. Answer me speedily! ¹⁸ Draw near to my soul, and redeem it. Ransom me because of my enemies. ¹⁹ You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour; my adversaries are all before You. ²⁰ Reproach has bro-

69:9 *For the zeal of Your house consumes me* – Applied to Jesus in Jn. 2:17; so many verses in this Psalm are relevant to Him. Verse 8 refers to His estrangement from His half brothers and natural family (Jn. 7:5). “The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me” is referred to Christ in Rom. 15:3, and is therefore applied to us who are in Him – in that we are to be so concerned with others' salvation and welfare that we can rise above the experience of personal reproach and insult rather than being obsessed by it and paralyzed from being of service.

69:14-16 The urgent desire for immediate deliverance is here in the context of a Psalm definitely speaking of Christ's sufferings on the cross. There was certainly a sense of urgency, crisis and desire for immediate deliverance which wasn't answered immediately (see too 22:1). He knew there the crisis of unanswered prayer; He there shared the quintessence of all our crises.

69:20 This looking for comforters and finding none must mean that these verses describe Christ at the very end of the hours of crucifixion, when John and Mary had

ken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; for comforters, but I found none. ²¹ They also gave me gall for my food; in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink. ²² Let their table before them become a snare, may it become a retribution and a trap. ²³ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they can't see; may their backs be continually bent. ²⁴ Pour out Your indignation on them; let the fierceness of Your anger overtake them. ²⁵ Let their habitation be desolate, may no one dwell in their tents. ²⁶ For they persecute him whom You have wounded. They tell of the sorrow of those whom You have hurt. ²⁷ Add iniquity to their iniquity; don't let them come into Your righteousness. ²⁸ Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous. ²⁹ But I am in pain and distress. Let Your salvation, God, protect me. ³⁰ I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. ³¹ It will please Yahweh better than an ox, or a bull that has horns and hoofs. ³² The humble

have seen it, and are glad. You who seek after God, let your heart live. ³³ For Yahweh hears the needy, and doesn't despise His captive people. ³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise Him; the seas, and everything that moves therein! ³⁵ For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah. They shall settle there, and own it. ³⁶ The children also of His servants shall inherit it. Those who love His name shall dwell therein.

Psalm 70 Feb. 8

For the Chief Musician. By David. A reminder.

¹ Hurry, God, to deliver me. Come quickly to help me, Yahweh. ² Let them be disappointed and confounded who seek my soul. Let those who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. ³ Let them be turned back because of their shame who say, Aha! Aha! ⁴ Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You. Let those who love Your salvation continually say, Let God be exalted! ⁵ But I am poor and needy. Come to me quickly, God. You are my help and my deliverer. Yahweh, don't delay.

walked away. The reproaches shouted by mindless, small minded people in the crowd broke His heart, such was His amazing sensitivity to words, so eager was He to be accepted by Israel as their Messiah.

69:21 Clearly relevant to the offer of vinegar to Christ in response to His plea "I thirst" (Jn. 19:28,29).

69:22 Applied to the Jews who crucified Christ in Rom. 11:9.

69:25 The LXX of this verse is quoted in Acts 1:20 and applied to Judas for his betrayal of Christ.

69:27 God counts those who believe in Him as righteous because He imputes righteousness to them; but He also counts sinners as increasingly sinful. Thus there is both an upward and downward spiral in life; we are always moving one way or the other, and never static.

Psalm 71 Feb. 8

¹ In You, Yahweh, I take refuge. Never let me be disappointed. ² Deliver me in Your righteousness and rescue me. Turn Your ear to me and save me. ³ Be to me a rock of refuge to which I may always go. Give the command to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress. ⁴ Rescue me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. ⁵ For You are my hope, Lord Yahweh; my confidence from my youth. ⁶ I have relied on You from the womb. You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. I will always praise You. ⁷ I am a marvel to many, but You are my strong refuge. ⁸ My mouth shall be filled with Your praise, with Your honour all the day. ⁹ Don't reject me in my old age. Don't forsake me when my strength fails. ¹⁰ For my enemies talk about me, they who watch for my soul conspire together ¹¹ saying, God has forsaken him. Pursue and take him, for no one will rescue him. ¹² God,

don't be far from me. My God, hurry to help me. ¹³ Let my accusers be disappointed and consumed. Let them be covered with disgrace and scorn who want to harm me. ¹⁴ But I will always hope, and will add to all of Your praise. ¹⁵ My mouth will tell others about Your righteousness and Your salvation all day, though I don't know its full measure. ¹⁶ I will declare the mighty acts of the Lord Yahweh. I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours alone. ¹⁷ God, You have taught me from my youth. Up until now I have declared Your wondrous works. ¹⁸ Yes, even when I am old and gray-haired, God, don't forsake me, until I have declared Your strength to the next generation, Your might to everyone who is to come. ¹⁹ Your righteousness also, God, reaches to the heavens; You have done great things. God, who is like You? ²⁰ You, who have shown us many and bitter troubles, You will let me live. You will bring us up again from the depths of

71:11 *God has forsaken him*—David did indeed feel that God had forsaken him (22:1). David, like all of us, was very sensitive to what others said about him – for his many complaints at his being slandered reflect how significant it was for him. We must be secure in our relationship with God, so that others' discounting of our relationship with Him doesn't influence us.

71:15 *I don't know its full measure* – Like us, David preached of things which he believed and yet openly admitted he didn't fully understand. This humility and recognition of our own limited understanding will make our witness the more compelling, rather than if we arrogantly give the impression of total knowledge.

71:18 David wanted to remain alive so that he could continue his work of teaching and preaching God's grace and salvation to others. This too should be our purpose of living.

71:20 *Bring us up again from the depths of the earth* – David's hope was clearly in the resurrection of the body, which he may have deduced as necessary on reflection that he would see with his own eyes his Messiah son reigning for ever on his throne (2 Sam. 7:16).

the earth, ²¹ increase my honour, and comfort me again. ²² I will praise You with the harp for Your faithfulness, my God. I sing praise to You with the lyre, Holy One of Israel. ²³ My lips shall shout for joy! My soul, which You have redeemed, sings praises to You! ²⁴ My tongue will also talk about Your righteousness all day long, for they are disappointed and they are confounded who want to harm me.

Psalm 72 Feb. 9

A Psalm for Solomon.

¹ God, give the king Your justice; Your righteousness to the royal son. ² He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice. ³ The mountains shall bring prosperity to the people, the hills will bring the fruit of righteousness. ⁴ He will judge the poor of the peo-

ple, he will save the children of the needy and will break the oppressor in pieces. ⁵ They shall fear You while the sun endures; and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. ⁶ He will come down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. ⁷ In his days, the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more. ⁸ He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the land. ⁹ Those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; his enemies shall lick the dust. ¹⁰ The kings of Tarshish and of the islands will bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. ¹¹ Yes, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. ¹² For he will deliver the needy when he cries; the poor, who has no helper. ¹³ He will have pity on the poor and needy,

71:22 *I will praise you... I sing praise to You* – David imagines how after the resurrection at his future glorification, he *will*, at that future time, praise God; and yet he says he praises God *now*. We have here an example of living the Kingdom life now. In New Testament terms, this is how we can “have eternal life” now, even though we shall die; for we can live now the kind of life which we will eternally live, the Kingdom life.

72 *A Psalm for Solomon* – These are David’s prophetic desires for his son, and yet clearly they have reference to the Kingdom of Christ rather than Solomon, even though the Psalm has a limited fulfilment in Solomon. The promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 stated that the son of David would also be son of God, and David would eternally live in the presence of his great descendant, who would reign eternally from David’s throne. It seems that David came to see these promises as having hope of fulfilment in his son Solomon, although the New Testament is clear that their main fulfilment is in Christ (Lk. 1:31-35). Thus David lost his focus upon the future Messiah because of his obsession with his son Solomon; and Solomon was damaged by this in that his spirituality and works for God were a living out of parental expectation, but at the end of his life he turned away to other gods and according to Ecclesiastes, lost all hope of a future Kingdom of God on earth. This Psalm however remains a wonderful prophecy of Christ’s future Kingdom, based around the land of Israel and His rulership in Jerusalem.

72:8 In Solomon’s time, the territory of Israel was larger than at any other time.

72:10 Fulfilled by the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kings 10).

he will save the needy persons. ¹⁴ He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence, their blood will be precious in his sight. ¹⁵ They shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba. Men shall pray for him continually, they shall bless him all day long. ¹⁶ Abundance of grain shall be throughout the land, its fruit sways like Lebanon. Let it flourish, thriving like the grass of the field! ¹⁷ His name endures forever, his name continues as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in him, all nations will call him blessed. ¹⁸ Praise be to Yahweh God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvellous deeds. ¹⁹ Blessed be His glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen and amen. ²⁰ This ends the prayers by David, the son of Jesse.

BOOK III

Psalm 73 Feb. 10

A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. ² But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had nearly slipped. ³ For I

was envious of the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For there are no struggles in their death, but their strength is firm. ⁵ They are free from the burdens of men, neither are they plagued like other men. ⁶ Therefore pride is like a chain around their neck, violence covers them like a garment. ⁷ Their eyes bulge with fat, their minds pass the limits of conceit. ⁸ They scoff and speak with malice; in arrogance, they threaten oppression. ⁹ They have set their mouth in the heavens, their tongue walks through the earth. ¹⁰ Therefore their people return to them, and they drink up waters of abundance. ¹¹ They say, How does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High? ¹² Behold, these are the wicked. Being always at ease, they increase in riches. ¹³ Surely in vain I have cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence, ¹⁴ for all day long have I been plagued, and punished every morning. ¹⁵ If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. ¹⁶ When I tried to understand this, it was too painful for me; ¹⁷ until I entered God's

72:13, 14 Solomon perhaps consciously tried to fulfil this in his gracious judgment between the two prostitutes (1 Kings 3:16-28); but later in his reign, his bitterness and selfishness led him to abuse his people (1 Kings 12:4). Thus Solomon by his own behaviour disallowed himself from fulfilling this Kingdom prophecy.

72:17 *Men shall be blessed in him* – Fulfilled in how those baptized “in Christ” become Abraham’s seed and receive the blessing of God’s grace and forgiveness (Acts 3:25,26; Gal. 3:27-29).

73:17 Asaph as a temple servant would have had access to the altar, which was plated with the censers of those sinners who had rebelled against God in the desert (Num. 16:38). There the earth suddenly opened and swallowed them up – alluded to in :18,19. Looking at those plates, he saw that finally judgment does come to the wicked,

sanctuary, and considered their latter end. ¹⁸ Surely You set them in slippery places, You threw them down to destruction. ¹⁹ How they were suddenly destroyed! They were completely swept away with terrors. ²⁰ As a dream when one wakes up, so, Lord, when You awake, You will despise their fantasies. ²¹ For my soul was grieved, I was embittered in my heart. ²² I was so senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You. ²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with You. You have held my right hand, ²⁴ You will guide me with Your word, and afterwards receive me in glory. ²⁵ Whom do I have in heaven? There is no one on earth whom I desire besides You. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ²⁷ For, behold, those who are far from You shall perish. You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. ²⁸ But it is good for me to come close to God. I have made the Lord Yahweh my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

Psalm 74 Feb. 11

A contemplation by Asaph.

¹ God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoulder against the sheep of Your pasture? ² Remember Your congregation which You purchased of old, which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance; Mount Zion, in which You have lived. ³ Lift up Your feet on the perpetual ruins, see all the evil that the enemy has done in the sanctuary. ⁴ Your adversaries have roared in the midst of Your assembly. They have set up their standards as signs. ⁵ They behaved like men wielding axes, cutting through a thicket of trees. ⁶ Now they break all its carved work down with hatchet and hammers. ⁷ They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground, they have profaned the dwelling place of Your Name. ⁸ They said in their heart, We will crush them completely. They have burned up all the places in the land where God was worshiped. ⁹ We see no miraculous signs. There is no longer any prophet, neither is

and even those who appear to die in peace will ultimately be judged. The apparent prosperity of the wicked and the way that they don't always receive judgment in this life simply deepens our faith in the reality of a judgment to come, at which the wicked will be resurrected and judged for their actions in this life. Seeing that God judges sin, and yet sinners don't always get judged in this life, forces us to this understanding – which is in any case presented specifically in the Bible. Asaph admits throughout the Psalm that his jealousy of the wealthy and prosperous sinners had eaten him up to the point of obsession and spiritual destruction; but he came to his senses by realizing the reality of future judgment. That basic doctrine should mean the same for us too.

74:9 This statement is strange seeing that there were prophets at the time when the temple was burnt by the Babylonians (:7) – not least Jeremiah, who had prophesied that Judah would be in captivity for 70 years (Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10). Daniel too appears not to have been immediately aware of Jeremiah's prophecies (Dan. 9:2). There are times when God's people seem not to have been in much contact with each other even though they lived near each other – Melchizedek and Abraham are an example. The

there among us anyone who knows how long. ¹⁰ How long, God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? ¹¹ Why do You draw back Your hand, even Your right hand? Take it out of Your pocket and consume them! ¹² Yet God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. ¹³ You divided the sea by Your strength. You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. ¹⁴ You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces. You gave him as food to people and desert creatures. ¹⁵ You opened up spring and stream. You dried up mighty rivers. ¹⁶ The day is Yours, the night is also Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. ¹⁷ You have set all the boundaries of the earth. You have made summer and winter. ¹⁸ Remember this, that the enemy has mocked You, Yahweh. Foolish people have blasphemed Your name. ¹⁹ Don't deliver the soul of Your dove to wild beasts, don't forget the life of Your poor forever. ²⁰ Honour Your covenant, for haunts of violence fill the dark places of the

land. ²¹ Don't let the oppressed return ashamed; let the poor and needy praise Your name. ²² Arise, God! Plead Your own cause. Remember how the foolish man mocks You all day. ²³ Don't forget the voice of Your adversaries; the tumult of those who rise up against You ascends continually.

Psalm 75 Feb. 12

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A Psalm by Asaph. A song.

¹ We give thanks to You, God. We give thanks, for Your Name is near. Men tell about Your wondrous works. ² When I choose the appointed time, I will judge blamelessly. ³ The earth and all its inhabitants quake. I firmly uphold its pillars. Selah. ⁴ I said to the arrogant, Don't boast!; I said to the wicked, Don't lift up the horn. ⁵ Don't lift up your horn on high, don't speak with a stiff neck. ⁶ For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south, comes exaltation. ⁷ But God is the judge. He puts down one, and lifts up an-

dysfunction and division we see within the church is lamentable and wrong, but these things happen, and the divided parties still remain God's people – just as Asaph and Jeremiah were.

74:12 This Psalm is a record of how Asaph reasoned with himself. The destruction of the temple by the Babylonians meant that he felt God had totally and permanently rejected His people; and yet he takes comfort in the wonders God has done for His people in the past (:13-15). As a member of God's people he felt that those historical wonders had in a sense been done to him too – hence he reflects that “Yet God is my King of old”. In times when the apparent distance and silence of God is so unbearable, we have to remember what He has done for us and for His people in the past. We can also reflect that the ongoing wonders of creation, the sun's rising and setting, is a sign that God is in fact constantly active (:16,17), even if He's not active for us in the ways we desperately want.

75:7 *God is the judge. He puts down one, and lifts up another* – We shouldn't think

other. ⁸ For in the hand of Yahweh there is a cup, full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours it out; indeed the wicked of the earth drink and drink it to its very dregs. ⁹ But I will declare this forever: I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. ¹⁰ I will cut off all the horns of the wicked, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.

Psalm 76 Feb. 12

For the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm by Asaph. A song.

¹ In Judah God is known, His name is great in Israel. ² His tabernacle is also in Salem; His dwelling place in Zion. ³ There He broke the flaming arrows of the bow, the shield and the sword and the weapons of war. Selah. ⁴ Glorious are You and excellent, more than mountains of game. ⁵ Valiant men lie plundered, they have slept their last sleep. None of the men of war can lift their hands. ⁶ At Your rebuke, God of Jacob, both chariot and horse are cast into a deep

sleep. ⁷ You, even You, are to be feared. Who can stand in Your sight when You are angry? ⁸ You pronounced judgment from heaven: the earth feared and was silent ⁹ when God arose to judgment, to save all the afflicted ones of the earth. Selah. ¹⁰ Surely the wrath of man praises You. The survivors of Your wrath are restrained. ¹¹ Make vows to Yahweh your God, and fulfil them! Let all of His neighbours bring presents to Him who is to be feared. ¹² He will cut off the spirit of princes, He is feared by the kings of the land.

Psalm 77 Feb. 13

For the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ My cry goes to God! Indeed, I cry to God for help, and for Him to listen to me. ² In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. My hand was stretched out in the night, and didn't retract. My soul refused to be comforted. ³ I remember God, and I groan. I complain, and my spirit is overwhelmed. Selah. ⁴ You hold

that God isn't watching this world, and will only open the books and consider everything when Christ returns. The judgment is ongoing, right now we are standing before Him and He is judging; the future judgment day will be the revelation of the judgments He has already reached as He watched our faith and behaviour in this life.

75:8 *A cup* – See on 60:3.

76:1 Judah and Israel are often paralleled. Judah refers to the two tribe kingdom based around the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and the half tribe of Manasseh; while Israel refers to the ten tribe kingdom. This division of God's people was a tragedy; and yet from God's perspective they were one, hence His frequent parallel of them. All divisions within the body of Christ are likewise only real from an earthly perspective; God sees His people as one, as we should.

76:3 This reference to a dramatic military victory by God in the Jerusalem area and the subsequent plundering of the invaders, resulting in the neighbouring kings bringing presents to Jerusalem (:11) is all relevant to the situation when the Assyrians were destroyed by God at the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 32:23).

my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I can't speak. ⁵ I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. ⁶ I remember my song in the night. I consider in my own heart; my spirit diligently inquires: ⁷ Will the Lord reject us forever? Will He no more be gracious? ⁸ Has His grace vanished forever? Does His promise fail for generations? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He, in anger, withheld His compassion? Selah. ¹⁰ Then I thought, I will appeal to this: the years of the right hand of the Most High. ¹¹ I will remember Yah's deeds; for I will remember Your wonders of old. ¹² I will also meditate on all Your work, and consider Your doings. ¹³ Your way, God, is in the sanctuary. What god is great like God? ¹⁴ You are the God who does wonders, You have made Your strength known among the peoples. ¹⁵ You have redeemed Your people with Your arm, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. ¹⁶ The waters saw You, God, the waters saw You, and they writhed, the depths also convulsed. ¹⁷ The clouds poured out water. The skies resounded with thunder, Your arrows also flashed around. ¹⁸ The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind, the lightnings

lit up the world, the earth trembled and shook. ¹⁹ Your way was through the sea, Your paths through the great waters; Your footsteps were not known. ²⁰ You led Your people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 78 Feb. 14

A contemplation by Asaph.

¹ Hear my teaching, my people; turn your ears to the words of my mouth. ² I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old, ³ which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of Yahweh, His strength, and His wondrous works that He has done. ⁵ For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a teaching in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; ⁶ that the generation to come might know, even the children who should be born; who should arise and tell their children, ⁷ that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, ⁸ and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation,

77:10 *I will appeal to this* – The faithful have always known God as a God open to dialogue. Asaph feels that God has as it were forgotten His graciousness (:9), and so He appeals to God to remember how in the past He saved His people at the Red Sea, even though they were spiritually weak at the time. He thus appeals to God's consistent love for His people as a basis for requesting God to act again in gracious salvation. If God has acted with His right hand over history, why not now? There was no unquestioning submission to the Almighty God as required by Islam and some legalistic forms of Christianity; rather do God's people respectfully engage Him in dialogue and struggle with Him in prayer.

a generation that didn't make their hearts loyal, whose spirit was not steadfast with God. ⁹ The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. ¹⁰ They didn't keep God's covenant, and refused to walk in His law. ¹¹ They forgot His doings, His wondrous works that He had shown them. ¹² He did marvellous things in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. ¹³ He split the sea, and caused them to pass through. He made the waters stand as a heap. ¹⁴ In the daytime He also led them with a cloud, and all night with a light of fire. ¹⁵ He split rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths. ¹⁶ He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. ¹⁷ Yet they still went on sinning against Him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert. ¹⁸ They put God to the test in their heart by asking food according to their lust. ¹⁹ Yes, they spoke

against God. They said, Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? ²⁰ Behold, He struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Will He provide flesh for His people? ²¹ Therefore Yahweh heard, and was angry. A fire was kindled against Jacob, anger also went up against Israel, ²² because they didn't believe in God, and didn't trust in His salvation. ²³ Yet He commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven. ²⁴ He rained down manna on them to eat, and gave them food from the sky. ²⁵ Man ate the bread of angels; He sent them food to the full. ²⁶ He caused the east wind to blow in the sky, by His power He guided the south wind. ²⁷ He rained also flesh on them as the dust; winged birds as the sand of the seas. ²⁸ He let them fall in the midst of their camp, around their dwelling places. ²⁹ So they ate, and were well filled; He gave them their own desire. ³⁰ They didn't turn from their cravings. Their

78:9, 10 Israel turned back in the day of battle, they lost their confidence and nerve, because "they didn't keep God's covenant". Keeping the covenant had an effect upon the crises of life. And keeping it was not a matter of mere outward obedience, it was rather a state of the heart. Thus "their heart was not right with him, neither were they faithful in His covenant" (:37). The covenants / promises made to Abraham and David above all take a grip upon the heart – and we have to keep remembering that those same covenants are made with all who are in Christ as they are the basis of the Gospel (Gal. 3:8).

78:18, 19 Their attitudes to God in their hearts became verbalized in words. How we think about God is so important; we could say that spiritual mindedness is the essence of what Christianity is about.

78:22 *They didn't believe in God* – Israel weren't atheists; but by not trusting that He will ultimately save us, we are effectively atheistic.

78:28 *Around their dwelling places* – We see here the sensitivity of God, not only giving them food but bringing it right to their door. That they and so many others should have become bitter with a God of such gentle grace and kindness is indeed tragic.

food was yet in their mouths ³¹ when the anger of God went up against them, killed some of their fattest, and struck down the young men of Israel. ³² For all this they still sinned, and didn't believe in His wondrous works. ³³ Therefore He consumed their days in vanity, and their years in terror. ³⁴ When He slew them, then they inquired after Him; they relented and sought God earnestly. ³⁵ They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer. ³⁶ But they flattered Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue. ³⁷ For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they faithful in His covenant. ³⁸ But He, being merciful, forgave iniquity, and didn't destroy them. Yes, many times He turned His anger away, and didn't stir up all His wrath. ³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and doesn't come

again. ⁴⁰ How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! ⁴¹ They turned around and put God to the test, and provoked the Holy One of Israel. ⁴² They didn't remember His hand, nor the day when He redeemed them from the adversary; ⁴³ how He set His signs in Egypt, His wonders in the field of Zoan; ⁴⁴ He turned their rivers and streams into blood so that they could not drink. ⁴⁵ He sent among them swarms of beetles, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. ⁴⁶ He gave also their increase to the caterpillar, and their labour to the locust. ⁴⁷ He destroyed their vines with hail, their sycamore fig trees with frost. ⁴⁸ He gave over their livestock also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. ⁴⁹ He threw on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, trouble, and a band of angels of evil.

78:30 Like a parent giving in to the unwise requests of a child just because they love the child, so God gave Israel the food they craved. Yet giving in to lust or wrong desire doesn't make it go away; Israel were given their desire (:29) but their craving remained. In our battles with temptation, let us never reason that if we give in, the lust will go away. It's simply not true. The very experience of sin makes the next sin even easier and the voice of conscience yet weaker.

78:31 *Killed some of their fattest* – It was the fat ones who were complaining they were perishing from hunger and that God was somehow unreasonable to His children. God had obviously provided very well for them with the manna; but this wasn't enough to satisfy their endless craving to tickle their taste buds and ever be titillating their fancy with something new.

78:49 *Angels of evil* – God's Angels don't sin (Lk. 20:35,36 cp. Rom. 6:23). They are *all* doing His work (103:19-21; Heb. 1:14); there is no sin before God's presence in Heaven (Hab. 1:13). The text here doesn't speak of 'sinful Angels', but rather Angels responsible for bringing "evil" in the sense of calamity or disaster. We are often reminded that God brings the good and also creates "evil" in this sense (Is. 45:5-7). And He does it through His Angels. The reference in the context here is to the plagues God brought on Egypt; the work of the "Angels of evil" refers to the killing of the firstborn sons of Egypt by the Lord's Angel.

⁵⁰ He made a path for His anger, He didn't spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence, ⁵¹ and struck all the firstborn in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tents of Ham. ⁵² But He led forth His own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. ⁵³ He led them safely so that they weren't afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. ⁵⁴ He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. ⁵⁵ He also drove out the nations before them, allotted them for an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. ⁵⁶ Yet they put to the test and rebelled against the Most High God, and didn't keep His testimonies, ⁵⁷ but turned back, and dealt treacherously like their fathers. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow. ⁵⁸ For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their engraved images. ⁵⁹ When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel; ⁶⁰ so that He forsook the tent of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; ⁶¹ and delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the adversary's hand. ⁶² He also gave His people over to the sword,

and was angry with His inheritance. ⁶³ Fire devoured their young men, their young women had no wedding song. ⁶⁴ Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows couldn't weep. ⁶⁵ Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, like a mighty man who shouts by reason of wine. ⁶⁶ He struck His adversaries backward, He put them to a perpetual reproach. ⁶⁷ Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph and didn't choose the tribe of Ephraim, ⁶⁸ but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. ⁶⁹ He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has established forever. ⁷⁰ He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹ from following the ewes that have their young, He brought him to be the shepherd of Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. ⁷² So he was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

Psalm 79 Feb. 15

A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ God, the nations have come into Your inheritance, they have defiled Your holy temple, they have laid Jerusalem in heaps. ² They have given the dead bodies of Your serv-

78:54 *Had purchased* – It had as it were cost God something to give Israel the Kingdom or “mountain”. The same Hebrew word occurs in 74:2 and Gen. 14:22. The cost of our redemption, our place in the Kingdom, was the precious blood of Christ with which we were “bought” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:18,19). God who knows the future is outside our kind of time, and so in a sense, Christ was as it were the lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). God's pain and sacrifice started right from the beginning, and when He offered Israel the forgiveness and Kingdom which He did, this offer was not without pain and immense cost to Him. Their rejection of it was therefore even more tragic and painful for Him.

ants to be food for the birds of the sky, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the land. ³ Their blood they have shed like water around Jerusalem, there was no one to bury them. ⁴ We have become a reproach to our neighbours, a scoffing and derision to those who are around us. ⁵ How long, Yahweh? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? ⁶ Pour out Your wrath on the nations that don't know You, on the kingdoms that don't call on Your name; ⁷ for they have devoured Jacob, and destroyed his homeland. ⁸ Don't hold the iniquities of our forefathers against us; let Your tender mercies speedily meet us, for we are in desperate need. ⁹ Help us, God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name. Deliver us and forgive our sins, for Your name's sake. ¹⁰ Why should the nations say, Where is their God? Let it be known among the nations, before our eyes, that vengeance for Your servants'

blood is being poured out. ¹¹ Let the sighing of the prisoner come before You. According to the greatness of Your power, preserve those who are sentenced to death. ¹² Pay back to our neighbours seven times into their lap their reproach with which they have reproached You, Lord. ¹³ So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever. We will praise You forever, to all generations.

Psalm 80 Feb. 15

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of The Lilies of the Covenant.
A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock, You who sit above the cherubim, shine forth. ² Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your might! Come to save us! ³ Turn us again, God. Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved. ⁴ Yahweh God of Armies, How long will

79:8 *Don't hold the iniquities of our forefathers against us* – Ez. 18 criticizes the Jews at the time of the destruction of the temple (:1) for complaining that their sufferings were because of their fathers' sins, and God rejoins that this wasn't the case, He was punishing that generation for their actual personal sins. But Asaph was under the impression that his generation were relatively innocent; likewise his complaint that he doesn't know "how long" the sufferings would last appears to reveal an ignorance of Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10. See on 74:9. We can get some things wrong, be wilfully ignorant of others in our self-justification; and yet still be counted by God as faithful, just as Asaph was. And we must remember this in managing our irritations with others' spiritual immaturity.

79:9 *Because* of how God is, as revealed in His Name of Yahweh, because mercy and forgiveness are paramount within the texture of His very personality which His Name reveals (Ex. 34:4-6)... therefore, we should repent. Reflection on the Name inspired Asaph's faith in forgiveness and thus helped his repentance. It did the same for David (25:11) and for Jeremiah (Jer. 14:7,21), and it can do so for us too. Because God's Name proclaims God as above all merciful and forgiving, therefore we should repent and ask for forgiveness.

You be angry against the prayer of Your people? ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in large measure. ⁶ You make us a source of derision to our neighbours, our enemies laugh among themselves. ⁷ Turn us again, God of Armies. Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved. ⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt, You drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹ You cleared the land for it. It took deep root, and filled the land; ¹⁰ the mountains were covered with its shadow. Its boughs were like God's cedars. ¹¹ It sent out its branches to the sea, its shoots to the River. ¹² Why have You broken down its walls, so that all those who pass by the way pluck it? ¹³ The boar out of the wood ravages it, the wild beasts of the field feed on it. ¹⁴ Turn again, we beg You, God of Armies. Look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine, ¹⁵ the stock which Your right hand planted, the branch that You made strong for Yourself. ¹⁶ It's

burned with fire. It's cut down. They perish at Your rebuke. ¹⁷ Let Your hand be on the man of Your right hand, on the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself. ¹⁸ So we will not turn away from You; accept us, and we will call on Your name. ¹⁹ Turn us again, Yahweh God of Armies. Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved.

Psalm 81 Feb. 16

For the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. By Asaph.

¹ Sing aloud to God, our strength! Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob! ² Raise a song, and bring here the tambourine, the pleasant lyre with the harp. ³ Blow the trumpet at the New Moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. ⁴ For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. ⁵ He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out over the land of Egypt, I heard a language that I didn't know. ⁶ I removed his shoulder from the burden, his hands

80:9 *You cleared the land for it* – Potentially, God drove out all the nations in the land of Canaan so that the vine of Israel could grow there without contamination and be spiritually fruitful. But in fact Israel failed to drive out many of the tribes and they remained to be a spiritual thorn to Israel's spirituality. In potential, so much was made possible, just as it is for God's people today; but it requires us to go and realize that potential in faith.

80:12 *Why have You broken down its walls* – Surely Asaph knew that the nations around the borders of Israel had been allowed by God to invade because of Judah's sinfulness. Asaph in several Psalms appears to underestimate the seriousness of Judah's sin and the rightness and necessity of God's judgment, despite the prophets of his time making these things crystal clear. Yet for all his misunderstanding and wilful ignorance, he still displays faith and God worked with him and inspired the recording of his Psalms. For all *our* ignorance and misunderstandings [and those of others amongst God's people], God still hears our prayers.

81:5 *I heard a language that I didn't know* – God of course understands every language and thought of man, including Egyptian. Yet He so identifies with His people

were freed from the basket. ⁷ You called in trouble, and I delivered you. I answered you in the secret place of thunder, I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah. ⁸ Hear My people and I will testify to you, Israel, if you would have listened to Me! ⁹ There shall be no strange god with you, neither shall you worship any foreign god. ¹⁰ I am Yahweh your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. ¹¹ But My people didn't listen to My voice, Israel desired none of Me. ¹² So I let them go after the stubbornness of their hearts, that they might walk in their own counsels. ¹³ Oh that My people would have listened to me, that Israel would have walked in my ways! ¹⁴ I would quickly have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. ¹⁵ The haters of

Yahweh would have cringed before Him, and their punishment would have lasted forever. ¹⁶ But He would have also fed them with the finest of the wheat, I would have satisfied you with honey out of the rock.

Psalm 82 Feb. 16

A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ God presides in the great assembly. He judges among the gods. ² How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. ³ Defend the weak, the poor, and the fatherless, maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. ⁴ Rescue the weak and needy, deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. ⁵ They don't know, neither do they understand; they wander back and forth in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶ I said, You are gods, all of you are sons of the Most High.

that He speaks from their limited perspective. He has the ability to see and feel life from our viewpoint here on earth. He isn't therefore distant from us.

81:11 God ("me") is paralleled with His voice; if we disregard His word, this is our attitude to Him. We can't divorce our relationship with Him from our relationship with His word. True believers can therefore be nothing but Bible lovers and searchers.

81:14 *I would quickly have* – We have in these verses the amazing fact that God knows all possible futures; He knew all the things that would have happened if they had been obedient – and He often mentions this in the prophets. In this we have another window into the pain and tragedy of God. We mourn more for those who die young than for those who die in fulfilled old age, because we think of all that might have been. And so it is for God, to an infinitely greater extent. He planned even to give Israel fine wheat as well as manna, and honey as well as water out of the smitten rock (:16); but Israel would not. And yet God continues to plan all kinds of intricate and wonderful possible futures for each of us; and individually and collectively we as His beloved people so often don't enable them to happen because of our short term, faithless attitudes.

82:6 *You are gods* – The Hebrew word *elohim* means 'mighty ones'; sometimes it is translated "God", other times it refers to men, in this case the sinful judges of Israel (:1,7). When the Jews falsely accused Jesus of making Himself God, He denied it by quoting this verse. His point was, 'In the Old Testament, men are called God; I'm only saying I'm the *Son* of God, so what's your problem?' (Jn. 10:34,35). He not only de-

⁷ Nevertheless you shall die like men, and fall like one of the rulers. ⁸ Arise, God, judge the earth, for You shall inherit all of the nations.

Psalm 83 Feb. 17

A song. A Psalm by Asaph.

¹ God, don't keep silent. Don't keep silent and don't be still, God. ² For, behold, Your enemies are stirred up, those who hate You have lifted up their heads. ³ They conspire with cunning against Your people, they plot against Your cherished ones. ⁴ Come, they say, and let's destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. ⁵ For they have conspired together with one mind, they form an alliance against You. ⁶ The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagrites; ⁷ Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; ⁸ Assyria also is joined with them. They have helped the children of Lot. Selah. ⁹ Do to them as You did to Midian, as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at

the river Kishon; ¹⁰ who perished at Endor, who became as dung for the earth. ¹¹ Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb; yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna; ¹² who said, Let us take possession of God's pasturelands. ¹³ My God, make them like tumbleweed; like chaff before the wind. ¹⁴ As the fire that burns the forest, as the flame that sets the mountains on fire, ¹⁵ so pursue them with Your tempest, and terrify them with Your storm. ¹⁶ Fill their faces with confusion, that they may seek Your name, Yahweh. ¹⁷ Let them be disappointed and dismayed forever. Yes, let them be confounded and perish; ¹⁸ that they may know that You alone, whose name is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth.

Psalm 84 Feb. 17

For the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

¹ How lovely are Your dwellings, Yahweh of Armies! ² My soul longs

nied being God Himself in any Trinitarian sense; He thus demonstrated that the term "God" can be applied to men, and even if it is used about Him, it doesn't make Him God Himself in person.

83:13 *Like chaff before the wind* – The language of Dan. 2:35,44 about the destruction of the ten toes of the image, representing Israel's latter day enemies, at Christ's return. Psalm 83 likewise features ten nations who will be bound together against Israel and then be dramatically destroyed by direct Divine intervention. It is tempting to equate these ten nations with the ten toes of the image of Dan. 2, and the ten horns of the latter day beast which we meet in Daniel and Revelation. These ten nations are geographically located in the peoples which currently surround the state of Israel, and the rhetoric they are prophesied as using is exactly the same as that used by the Palestinians and Israel's Arab enemies. The situation around Israel is therefore a sure sign that Christ will soon return.

83:16 *That they may seek Your name* – The latter day judgments against Israel's enemies, like all God's judgments, are so that those nations may repent and come to relationship with God; they aren't a mere outbreak of anger from an exasperated God.

and even faints for the courts of Yahweh. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ³ Yes, the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may have her young, near Your altars, Yahweh of Armies, my King, and my God. ⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they are always praising You. Selah. ⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in You; who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage. ⁶ Passing through the valley of Weeping, they make it a place of springs. Yes, the autumn rain covers it with blessings. ⁷ They go from strength to strength, each one of them appears before God in Zion. ⁸ Yahweh, God of Armies, hear my prayer; listen, God of Jacob. Selah. ⁹ Behold, God our shield, look at the face of Your anointed. ¹⁰ For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the tent of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. ¹¹ For Yahweh God is a sun and a shield, Yahweh will give grace and glory. He withholds no good thing from those who

walk blamelessly. ¹² Yahweh of Armies, blessed is the man who trusts in You.

Psalm 85 Feb. 18

For the Chief Musician.

A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

¹ Yahweh, You have been favourable to Your land. You have restored the fortunes of Jacob, ² You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah. ³ You have taken away all Your wrath, You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. ⁴ Turn us, God of our salvation, and cause Your indignation toward us to cease. ⁵ Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations? ⁶ Won't You revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? ⁷ Show us Your grace, Yahweh. Grant us Your salvation. ⁸ I will hear what God, Yahweh, will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, His saints; but let them not turn again to folly. ⁹ Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land. ¹⁰ Mer-

84:10 Just one day in God's presence would be better than thousands of days lived in this present world; and yet the wonder of it all is that we shall live eternally with God in His Kingdom. 2 Pet. 3:8 alludes here.

85:4 Although God had potentially turned from His anger (:3), Israel still had to turn to God to make this come true in their personal experience.

85:10 *Mercy and truth* – Somehow it seems that both individually and collectively we cannot achieve this fusion. We are either too soft and compromise and lose the Faith, or we are too hard and lose the spirit of Christ, without which we are “none of His” (Rom. 8:9). The result of this is that whenever God's Truth is revived, that community is in a sense born to roll downhill; after two or three generations the Truth is lost. Either they destroy themselves through bitter subdivision, or they compromise with error and lose the Faith. Perhaps it is God's plan that no one community should hold the Faith through many generations. But the challenge is of showing “grace and truth”

cy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. ¹¹ Truth springs out of the earth, righteousness has looked down from heaven. ¹² Yes, Yahweh will give that which is good. Our land will yield its increase. ¹³ Righteousness goes before Him, and prepares the way for His steps.

Psalm 86 Feb. 18

A Prayer by David.

¹ Hear, Yahweh, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. ² Preserve my soul, for I am Godly. You, my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. ³ Be merciful to me Lord, for I call to You all day long. ⁴ Bring joy to the soul of Your servant, for to You, Lord, do I lift up my soul. ⁵ For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive; abundant in grace to all those who call on You. ⁶ Hear, Yahweh, my prayer; listen to the voice of my petitions. ⁷ In the day of my trouble I will call on You, for You will answer me. ⁸ There is no one like You among the gods, Lord, nor any deeds like

Your deeds. ⁹ All nations You have made will come and worship before You, Lord. They shall glorify Your name. ¹⁰ For You are great, and do wondrous things, You alone are God. ¹¹ Teach me Your way, Yahweh; I will walk in Your truth. Make my heart undivided to fear Your name. ¹² I will praise You, Lord my God, with my whole heart; I will glorify Your name forever. ¹³ For Your grace is great toward me, You have delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol. ¹⁴ God, the proud have risen up against me; a company of violent men have sought after my soul, and they don't hold regard for You before them. ¹⁵ But You, Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in grace and truth. ¹⁶ Turn to me, and have mercy on me! Give Your strength to Your servant, save the son of Your handmaid. ¹⁷ Show me a sign of Your goodness, that those who hate me may see it and be shamed, because You, Yahweh, have helped me and comforted me.

in our thinking and judging, even though we cannot fully achieve it; and in the process we are led to appreciate more the beauty and wonder of the way in which these two concepts are linked together in the Father and His Son, and to yearn more to perceive and enter into the glory of God's Name, which totally incorporates these two humanly opposed aspects (Ex. 34:6,7; Rom. 11:22).

86:3 There are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not just something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" (Lk. 21:36) in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

86:14 God of course knew all this, but part of the healing therapy of prayer is that we verbalize our situations and tell God about them.

Psalm 87 Feb. 19***A Psalm by the sons of Korah; a Song.***

¹ His foundation is in the holy mountains. ² Yahweh loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. ³ Glorious things are spoken about you, city of God. Selah. ⁴ I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me. Behold, Philistia, Tyre and also Ethiopia: This one was born there. ⁵ Yes, of Zion it will be said, This one and that one was born in her; the Most High Himself will establish her. ⁶ Yahweh will count, when He writes up the peoples, This one was born there. Selah. ⁷ Those who sing as well as those who dance say, All my springs are in You.

Psalm 88 Feb. 19***A Song. A Psalm by the sons of Korah. For the Chief Musician. To the tune of The Suffering of Affliction. A contemplation by Heman, the Ezrahite.***

¹ Yahweh, the God of my salvation, I

have cried day and night before You.

² Let my prayer enter into Your presence, turn Your ear to my cry; ³ for my soul is full of troubles, my life draws near to Sheol. ⁴ I am counted among those who go down into the pit. I am like a man who has no help, ⁵ set apart among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more- they are cut off from Your hand. ⁶ You have laid me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. ⁷ Your wrath lies heavily upon me; You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah. ⁸ You have taken my friends from me, You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut in and I can't escape. ⁹ My eyes are dim from grief; I have called on You daily, Yahweh. I have spread out my hands to You. ¹⁰ Do You show wonders to the dead? Do the dead rise up and praise You? Selah. ¹¹ Is Your grace declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in Destruction? ¹² Are Your wonders made known in the dark? Or Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? ¹³ But

87:5 This verse and the whole Psalm may refer to the way that the judgment throne of Christ will be established in Jerusalem, and therefore all those who will live eternally will have in that sense been born again there, in that they began the physical experience of immortal life in that city.

88:2 It's an amazing thought that the words of our prayers enter into God's personal presence. This was symbolized by the way the incense (representing prayer, Rev. 8:3,4) burnt in the holy place permeated into the Most Holy Place.

88:9 *I have spread out my hands to You* – This is a good physical posture to adopt in our prayers, signifying as it does our openness to God's answer, whatever it may be; and the openness of our heart to Him.

88:10 The faithful Psalmist knew that death was unconsciousness; he wanted to remain alive so as to keep on praising God. And this should also be our very reason for being alive.

88:13 *In the morning* – Starting each day in prayer is a vital habit of the spiritually successful person. How we start the day affects how that day proceeds spiritually.

to You, Yahweh, I have cried. In the morning, my prayer comes before You. ¹⁴ Yahweh, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me? ¹⁵ I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer Your terrors, I am distracted. ¹⁶ Your fierce wrath has gone over me. Your terrors have cut me off. ¹⁷ They came around me like water all day long, they completely engulfed me. ¹⁸ You have put lover and friend far from me, and my friends into darkness.

Psalm 89 Feb. 20

*A contemplation by Ethan,
the Ezrahite.*

¹ I will sing of the grace of Yahweh forever. With my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all generations. ² I indeed declare, Love stands firm forever because You established the skies; Your faithfulness is in them. ³ I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant, ⁴ 'I will establish Your seed forever, and build up Your throne to all generations'. Selah. ⁵ The skies will praise Your wonders, Yahweh; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. ⁶ For who in the skies can be compared to Yahweh? Who among the sons of the heavenly beings is like

Yahweh, ⁷ a very awesome God in the council of the holy ones, to be feared above all those who are around Him? ⁸ Yahweh, God of Armies, who is a mighty one like You? Yah, Your faithfulness is around You. ⁹ You rule the pride of the sea; when its waves rise up, You calm them. ¹⁰ You have broken Rahab in pieces, like one of the slain. You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. ¹¹ The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and its fullness; You have founded them. ¹² The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name. ¹³ You have a mighty arm, Your hand is strong and Your right hand is exalted. ¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; grace and truth go before Your face. ¹⁵ Blessed are the people who learn to acclaim You; they shall walk in the light of Your face, Yahweh. ¹⁶ In Your name they rejoice all day. In Your righteousness, they are exalted. ¹⁷ For You are the glory of their strength. In Your favour, our horn will be exalted. ¹⁸ For our shield belongs to Yahweh; our king to the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁹ Then You spoke in vision to Your saints and said, I have bestowed strength on the warrior. I have exalted a young

89:2 We often doubt God's love and whether He will really keep His covenant with us. Yet the very existence of creation, that it's not been destroyed despite human sin, should be a constant reminder to us of God's faithfulness – if we let ourselves perceive it.

89:12 This shows how God reckons the points of the compass with reference to Jerusalem; He is believer-centric, so central are we to His thinking. We are never forgotten by Him.

man from the people. ²⁰ I have found David My servant, I have anointed him with My holy oil, ²¹ with whom My hand shall be established; My arm will also strengthen him. ²² No enemy will tax him, no wicked man will oppress him. ²³ I will beat down his adversaries before him, and strike those who hate him. ²⁴ But My faithfulness and My grace will be with him; in My name, his horn will be exalted. ²⁵ I will set his hand also on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. ²⁶ He will call to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation!’. ²⁷ I will also appoint him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. ²⁸ I will keep My grace for him forever. My covenant will stand firm through him. ²⁹ I will also make his seed endure forever and his throne as the days of heaven. ³⁰ If his children forsake My law and

don’t walk in My ordinances, ³¹ if they break My statutes and don’t keep My commandments; ³² then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. ³³ But I will not completely take My grace away from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. ³⁴ I will not break My covenant, nor alter what My lips have uttered. ³⁵ Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie to David. ³⁶ His seed will endure forever, his throne like the sun before Me. ³⁷ It will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky. Selah. ³⁸ But you have rejected and spurned, You have been angry with Your anointed. ³⁹ You have renounced the covenant of Your servant; You have defiled his crown in the dust. ⁴⁰ You have broken down all his hedges, You have brought his strongholds to ruin.

89:20 *I have found David My servant* – God is in search of man; this is a repeated theme of the prophets (Hos. 9:10; Dt. 32:1; Is. 50:2; 65:1,2; 66:4). So it’s not us as it were reaching out to God; He is fervently reaching out to us, and we have to come to realize that. We don’t so much as find God, as realize that He already is earnestly with us. And yet we of course feel that we are or have been searching for God, for the ultimate Truth. Yet God is searching for us; in conversion to Christ, God and man meet in a profound way; for there, in Christ, God finds us and we find Him.

89:26–32 This is clearly a commentary on the promises to David concerning his great descendant, who was also to be God’s Son (2 Sam. 7:12–16). They were fulfilled in Christ (Lk. 1:31–35). The fact Christ called God “my God” and God was His salvation, His saviour from death through resurrection, is all more evidence that the Trinitarian understanding of Jesus is wrong. Jesus wasn’t God Himself in person.

89:35 The promises God makes involve a solemn commitment by Him to us – the serious, binding nature of His oath to us is easy to forget. God swore to David “by My holiness”. The Hebrew for “holiness” is the same word translated “dedication”. David’s response to God’s dedication to him was to dedicate [s.w.] all the silver and gold which he had won from this world, to the service of God’s house (1 Kings 7:51; 1 Chron. 26:26; 2 Chron. 5:1). Our response to God’s dedication to us should be a like dedication of what we have to Him. Covenant relationship with God requires much of both Him and us.

41 All who pass by the way rob him; he has become a reproach to his neighbours. 42 You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries, You have made all of his enemies rejoice. 43 Yes, you turn back the edge of his sword and haven't supported him in battle. 44 You have ended his splendour, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45 You have shortened the days of his youth, You have covered him with shame. Selah. 46 How long, Yahweh? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? 47 Remember how short my time is! For what vanity have You created all the children of men! 48 What man is he who shall live and not see death, who shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. 49 Lord, where are Your former graces which You swore to David in Your faithfulness? 50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the mighty peoples, 51 with which Your enemies have mocked, Yahweh, with which they have mocked the footsteps of Your anointed one. 52 Blessed be Yahweh forever. Amen, and Amen.

BOOK IV

Psalm 90 Feb. 21

A Prayer by Moses, the man of God.

¹ Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. ² Before the mountains were brought forth, before You had formed the land and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. ³ You turn man to destruction saying, Return, you children of men. ⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight are just like yesterday when it is past, like a watch in the night. ⁵ You sweep them away as they sleep; in the morning they sprout like new grass. ⁶ In the morning it sprouts and springs up; by evening, it is withered and dry. ⁷ For we are consumed in Your anger, we are troubled in Your wrath. ⁸ You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your face. ⁹ For all our days have passed away in Your wrath, we bring our years to an end as a sigh. ¹⁰ The days of our years are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty years; yet their pride is but labour and sorrow, for it passes quickly,

89:52 *Blessed be Yahweh forever* – Despite all the doubts about God expressed in this Psalm, the faithful writer is still committed to thanking and praising God. His apparent silence in specific areas of our lives shouldn't ever stop us from praising Him for who He is.

90:1 There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with God is essentially *mutual*. We dwell in God, and He dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). Thus "he that lives in love lives in God, *and God in him*" (1 Jn. 4:15,16).

90:10 This is one of many Biblical reasons for understanding the urgency of our need to devote our time to the Lord and not fritter it away. We must number our days, realize their number is only 70 years, and therefore apply our hearts unto wisdom (:10 cp. :12). "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom" (Prov. 4:7).

and we pass away. ¹¹ Who knows the power of Your anger, Your wrath according to the fear that is due to You? ¹² So teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. ¹³ Relent, Yahweh! How long? Have compassion on Your servants! ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with Your grace, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as You have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen evil. ¹⁶ Let Your work appear to Your servants; Your glory to their children. ¹⁷ Let the grace of the Lord our God be upon us; establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalms 91 Feb. 21

¹ He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of Yahweh, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust. ³ For He will deliver you from the snare

of the fowler, and from the deadly plague. ⁴ He will cover you with His feathers, beneath His wings you will take refuge; His faithfulness is your shield and rampart. ⁵ You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day; ⁶ nor of the plagues that stalks in darkness, nor of the destruction that wastes at noonday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. ⁹ Because you have made Yahweh your refuge and the Most High your dwelling place, ¹⁰ no evil shall happen to you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. ¹¹ For He will put His angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways; ¹² they will bear you up in their hands, so that you won't dash your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread on the lion and cobra, you will trample the young lion and the ser-

90:13 *Relent* – Moses several times persuaded God to change His stated purpose concerning Israel, and here once again he is trying to persuade God not to allow the rebellious generation of Israel to perish in the wilderness. The prayer wasn't answered, but it's a fine example of someone very intimate with God pleading with Him to change His mind.

91:1 This Psalm is connected with Ps. 90, and appears to also be part of that prayer of Moses. It's especially addressed to Joshua, who during the wilderness journey lived in the tabernacle (Ex. 33:11), and was one of the few who survived the judgment of the unfaithful generation dying in the wilderness. The situation in :3-7 describes how one by one, that generation died in the wilderness, but Joshua was preserved because he had believed that Israel could inherit the promised land.

91:11, 12 Jesus was tempted to misinterpret these words as meaning that whatever He did from whatever motives, God would somehow preserve Him (Mt. 4:6). Temptation is very subtle; for the believer, misusing God's words in order to justify whatever we feel like doing in the heat of a moment is a common form of temptation. This Psalm was encouragement to Joshua (see on :1), the Hebrew form of 'Jesus'; so it's understandable that Jesus would've been especially aware of these words.

pent underfoot. ¹⁴ Because he has set His love on Me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high, because he has known My name. ¹⁵ He will call on Me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. ¹⁶ I will satisfy him with long life, and show him My salvation.

Psalm 92 Feb. 22

A Psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.

¹ It is a good thing to give thanks to Yahweh, to sing praises to Your name, Most High; ² to proclaim Your grace in the morning and Your faithfulness every night, ³ with the ten-stringed lute, with the harp, and with the melody of the lyre. ⁴ For You, Yahweh, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands! ⁵ How great are Your works, Yahweh! Your thoughts are very deep. ⁶ A senseless man doesn't know, neither does a fool understand this: ⁷ though the wicked spring up as the grass and all the evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed forever. ⁸ But You, Yahweh, are on high forever. ⁹ For, be-

hold, Your enemies, Yahweh, for, behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the evildoers will be scattered. ¹⁰ But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; I am anointed with fresh oil. ¹¹ My eye has also seen my enemies, my ears have heard of the wicked enemies who rise up against me. ¹² The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ They are planted in Yahweh's house, they will flourish in our God's courts. ¹⁴ They will still bring forth fruit in old age. They will be full of sap and green, ¹⁵ to show that Yahweh is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Psalm 93 Feb. 22

¹ Yahweh reigns! He is clothed with majesty! Yahweh is armed with strength. The world also is established to stand firm, so that it can't be moved. ² Your throne is established from long ago; You are from everlasting. ³ The floods have lifted up, Yahweh, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. ⁴ Above the voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of

91:14 Joshua (see on :1) was preserved because he believed that God would really give His people the promised Kingdom; but this faith is here described as loving God and knowing His Name. Joshua wanted Israel to inherit the Kingdom because he loved God, not because he wanted any personal benefit for himself. We see here how the New Testament triad of faith, hope and love were all interwoven within the character of Joshua.

92:2 A regular regime of morning and evening 'quiet time' with God is so important; spiritual life is really all about having the right habits.

93:1 A proof that God will not destroy the earth but will be faithful to His covenant purpose to establish His eternal Kingdom here. Just as the earth stands firm for ever, so does God's word of promise (:5).

the sea, Yahweh on high is mighty.
⁵ Your words stand firm. Holiness
 adorns Your house, Yahweh, forever.

Psalm 94 Feb. 23

¹ Yahweh, You God to whom alone
 vengeance belongs, You God to
 whom vengeance belongs, shine
 forth. ² Rise up, You judge of the
 earth, repay the proud what they de-
 serve. ³ Yahweh, how long will the
 wicked, how long will the wicked
 triumph? ⁴ They pour out arrogant
 words; all the evildoers boast. ⁵ They
 break Your people in pieces, Yahweh,
 and afflict Your heritage. ⁶ They kill
 the widow and the alien, and murder
 the fatherless. ⁷ They say, Yah will
 not see, neither will Jacob's God
 consider. ⁸ Consider, you senseless
 among the people; you fools, when
 will you be wise? ⁹ He who im-
 planted the ear, won't He hear? He
 who formed the eye, won't He see?
¹⁰ He who disciplines the nations,
 won't He punish? He who teaches
 man knows; ¹¹ Yahweh knows the
 thoughts of man, that they are futile.
¹² Blessed is the man whom You dis-

cipline, Yah, and teach out of Your
 law; ¹³ that You may give him rest
 from the days of adversity, until
 the pit is dug for the wicked. ¹⁴ For
 Yahweh won't reject His people,
 neither will He forsake His inheri-
 tance. ¹⁵ For justice will return to the
 righteous, and all the upright in heart
 shall follow it. ¹⁶ Who will rise up
 for me against the wicked? Who will
 stand up for me against the evildo-
 ers? ¹⁷ Unless Yahweh had been my
 help, my soul would have soon been
 silenced. ¹⁸ When I said, My foot is
 slipping! Your grace, Yahweh, held
 me up. ¹⁹ In the multitude of my
 thoughts within me, Your comforts
 delight my soul. ²⁰ Shall the throne
 of wickedness have fellowship with
 You, which brings about mischief by
 statute? ²¹ They gather themselves
 together against the soul of the right-
 eous, and condemn the innocent
 blood. ²² But Yahweh has been my
 high tower, my God, the rock of my
 refuge. ²³ He has brought on them
 their own iniquity, and will cut them
 off in their own wickedness. Yah-
 weh, our God, will cut them off.

94:1 David sees Yahweh as the God of revenge, the one *alone* to whom vengeance belongs. Our response to this is to believe that truly vengeance is God's and therefore we will *not* avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). This applies to all the micro-level 'takings of vengeance' which we so easily do in our words, body language, attitudes etc., in response to the hurt received from others.

94:9 One implication of believing that we were created by God as a special, purposefully designed creation is that we will believe that God sees and knows all things; the designer of the eyes and ears which we have 24/7 can surely see and hear everything going on in our lives.

94:12 True hearkening to the word is a chastening experience. It isn't easy; not as easy as reading a book called the Bible and going through the process of interpretation. Our sufferings make sense and are worked through by God insofar as we are open to and aware of His word; for they are designed to assist us in our being conformed to His word.

Psalm 95 Feb. 23

¹ Oh come, let's sing to Yahweh, let's shout aloud to the rock of our salvation! ² Let's come before His presence with thanksgiving, let's extol Him with songs! ³ For Yahweh is a great God, a great King above all gods. ⁴ In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the mountains are also His. ⁵ The sea is His, and He made it; His hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Oh come, let's worship and bow down; let's kneel before Yahweh, our Maker, ⁷ for He is our God. We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep in His care. Today, oh that you would hear His voice! ⁸ Don't harden your heart, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, ⁹ when your fathers tempted Me, tested Me and saw My work. ¹⁰ Forty long years I was grieved with that generation and said, It is a people that errs in their heart. They have not known My ways. ¹¹ Therefore I swore in My wrath, They will not enter into My rest.

Psalm 96 Feb. 24

¹ Sing to Yahweh a new song! Sing to Yahweh, all the earth. ² Sing to Yahweh! Bless His name! Proclaim His salvation from day to day! ³ Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples. ⁴ For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! He is to be feared above all gods. ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens. ⁶ Honour and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. ⁷ Ascribe to Yahweh, you families of nations, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength. ⁸ Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name, bring an offering and come into His courts. ⁹ Worship Yahweh in holy array, tremble before Him, all the earth. ¹⁰ Say among the nations, Yahweh reigns! The world is also established, so that it can't be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity. ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, let the sea roar, and its fullness! ¹² Let the field and all that is in it exult! Then all the trees of the

95:7 The urgency of hearing “today” applied to Israel in the wilderness, to the community at the time of Ps. 95, and to the first century believers to whom it is applied specifically in Heb. 3:7,15; 4:7. The urgency of the call continues to our “today”. God’s word has a unique way of speaking to us in a kind of eternal present; as if we were there in the wilderness, in the time of Ps. 95, and in the first century church.

96:6 Idols are characterized here as being ultimately unable to create anything. Whilst we may not be tempted to worship literal idols, we have many other potential idols in our lives which take us away from God – endless surfing the internet, involvement in social networking, following sport and celebrities, making money, absorbing hobbies. These are uncreative, ultimately; serving God is the only truly creative thing we can do with our lives.

96:10 *Say among the nations* – The Psalmist was intent on preaching to the Gentiles. See on 18:49.

woods shall sing for joy ¹³ before Yahweh; for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, the peoples with His truth.

Psalm 97 Feb. 24

¹ Yahweh reigns! Let the earth rejoice! Let the multitude of islands be glad! ² Clouds and darkness are around Him, righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. ³ A fire goes before Him and burns up His adversaries on every side. ⁴ His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees, and trembles. ⁵ The mountains melt like wax at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. ⁶ The heavens declare His righteousness; all the peoples have seen His glory. ⁷ Let all them be shamed who serve engraved images, who boast in their idols. Worship Him, all you gods! ⁸ Zion heard and was glad. The

daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of Your judgments, Yahweh. ⁹ For You, Yahweh, are most high above all the earth. You are exalted far above all gods. ¹⁰ You who love Yahweh, hate evil. He preserves the souls of His saints. He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked. ¹¹ Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. ¹² Be glad in Yahweh, you righteous people! Give thanks to His holy Name.

Psalm 98 Feb. 24

A Psalm.

¹ Sing to Yahweh a new song, for He has done marvellous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him. ² Yahweh has made known His salvation, He has openly shown His righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³ He has remembered His grace and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the

96:13 Applied to Christ's return in judgment in Acts 17:31.

97:7 *Worship Him, all you gods* – Here as often in the Psalms, the language presupposes that the gods / idols of the nations are real and living, but Yahweh's greatness is such that effectively they have no power or significance. Yet the Bible clearly teaches that these gods / idols had no real existence. The same principle is used in the way the New Testament speaks about demons, who were also associated with idols (1 Cor. 10:20,21). They are spoken of as if they have some real existence, but the evident power of God in Christ's miracles was such that they were effectively declared as having no real existence or at best being powerless and insignificant.

98:3 The "salvation" spoken of in :1-3 isn't God's saving of Himself, but His salvation of His people through Jesus [the Hebrew form of 'Jesus' means 'Yah's salvation']. It is our personal experience of that salvation which should be the witness which persuades the Gentile world to praise Him. It was God's intention that His salvation of His people from Egypt would have this effect; but Israel despised that salvation, in their hearts reversed it by constantly wanting to return to Egypt, and so they didn't declare His salvation and so the Gentiles didn't hear. We can't keep our experience of salvation to ourselves; we will declare it to the whole world if we really grasp the wonder of it all.

salvation of our God. ⁴ Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth! Burst out and sing for joy, yes, sing praises! ⁵ Sing praises to Yahweh with the harp, with the harp and the voice of melody. ⁶ With trumpets and sound of the ram's horn make a joyful noise before the King, Yahweh. ⁷ Let the sea roar with its fullness; the world, and those who live therein. ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing for joy together. ⁹ Let them sing before Yahweh, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Psalm 99 Feb. 24

¹ Yahweh reigns! Let the nations tremble. He sits enthroned between the cherubim: let the earth be moved. ² Yahweh is great in Zion, He is high above all the peoples. ³ Let them praise Your great and awesome name: He is Holy! ⁴ The King's strength also loves justice; You establish equity, You execute justice and righteousness in Jacob. ⁵ Exalt Yahweh our God, worship at

His footstool. He is Holy! ⁶ Moses and Aaron were among His priests, Samuel among those who call on His name; they called on Yahweh, and He answered them. ⁷ He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud. They kept His testimonies, the statute that He gave them. ⁸ You answered them, Yahweh our God; You are a God who forgave them, although You took vengeance for their doings. ⁹ Exalt Yahweh our God. Worship at His holy hill, for Yahweh, our God, is holy!

Psalm 100 Feb. 25

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

¹ Shout for joy to Yahweh, all you lands! ² Serve Yahweh with gladness, come before His presence with singing. ³ Know that Yahweh, He is God. It is He who has made us and not we ourselves, and we are His. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴ Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, and bless His name. ⁵ For Yahweh is good, His grace endures forever, His faithfulness to all generations.

99:4 *You execute justice and righteousness* – This is the language of judgment, whereby a judge ‘establishes’ principles. The fact God is enthroned means that He is our constant judge and we are always living our lives before His ongoing judgment. His throne is a throne of judgment, so whenever man is before God – which is always – He is our insistent judge, right now.

99:7 *They kept His testimonies* – This is in the context of the time when Israel were in the wilderness and God spoke to them in the cloud. They didn't keep His law then, as the prophets and historical record make clear. The Psalmist is reflecting how God imputed righteousness to His people at this time (Num. 23:21), just as He does for us who cross the Red Sea of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

100:3 The fact that God Himself created us, as His sheep, “and not we ourselves” (a comment applicable, in essence, to theories of atheistic evolution) should lead us to ecstatic singing of praise before Him. Likewise 96:2,5, and so many other examples, invite us to enthusiastically praise God, simply because “the Lord made the heavens”.

Psalm 101 Feb. 25***A Psalm by David.***

¹ I will sing of grace and justice. To You, Yahweh, I will sing praises. ² I will be careful to live a blameless life. When will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a blameless heart. ³ I will set no vile thing before my eyes; I hate the deeds of faithless men. They will not cling to me. ⁴ A perverse heart will be far from me. I will have nothing to do with evil. ⁵ I will silence whoever secretly slanders his neighbour. I won't tolerate one who is haughty and conceited. ⁶ My eyes will be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He who walks in a perfect way, he will serve me. ⁷ He who practices deceit won't dwell within my house. He who speaks falsehood won't be established before my eyes. ⁸ Morning by morning, I will destroy all the wicked of the land; to cut off all the workers of iniquity from Yahweh's city.

Psalm 102 Feb. 26***A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before Yahweh.***

¹ Hear my prayer, Yahweh! Let my

cry come in to You. ² Don't hide Your face from me in the day of my distress, turn Your ear to me. Answer me quickly in the day when I call. ³ For my days consume away like smoke, my bones are burned as a torch. ⁴ My heart is blighted like grass and withered, for I forget to eat my bread. ⁵ By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones stick to my skin. ⁶ I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I have become as an owl of the waste places. ⁷ I watch, and have become like a sparrow that is alone on the housetop. ⁸ My enemies reproach me all day, those who are mad at me use my name as a curse. ⁹ For I have eaten ashes like bread and mixed my drink with tears ¹⁰ because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have taken me up, and thrown me away. ¹¹ My days are like a long shadow, I have withered like grass. ¹² But You, Yahweh, will remain forever; Your renown endures to all generations. ¹³ You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for it is time to have pity on her, yes, the set time has come. ¹⁴ For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and have pity on her dust. ¹⁵ So the nations will fear the name of Yahweh;

God as creator results in joy and praise amongst those of His creation who recognize Him as creator.

101:3 *I will set no vile thing before my eyes* – The context is David speaking of how he strove to be spiritually minded, and he realized that our thoughts are influenced by what we see or watch. These ancient words are so relevant to us who live in the internet generation, where we can privately view many 'vile things' with our eyes. If we want to be spiritually minded, then what we allow ourselves to view must be consciously controlled.

102:13 *The set time has come* – The Psalmist is writing maybe in captivity in Babylon as the predicted 70 years of Judah's captivity there came to a close, and he looks forward to the promised restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem.

all the kings of the earth Your glory.
¹⁶ For Yahweh has built up Zion; He has appeared in His glory. ¹⁷ He has responded to the prayer of the destitute, and has not despised their prayer. ¹⁸ This will be written for the generation to come. A people which will be created will praise Yah. ¹⁹ For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven, Yahweh saw the earth; ²⁰ to hear the groans of the prisoner; to free those who are condemned to death; ²¹ that men may declare the name of Yahweh in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, ²² when the peoples are gathered together, the kingdoms, to serve Yahweh. ²³ He weakened my strength along the course, He shortened my days. ²⁴ I said, My God, don't take me away in the midst of my days. Your years are through-

out all generations. ²⁵ Of old, You laid the foundation of the earth, the heavens are the work of Your hands. ²⁶ They perish, but You will endure. Yes, all of them will wear out like a garment. You will change them like a cloak, and they will be changed. ²⁷ But You are the same, Your years will have no end. ²⁸ The children of Your servants will continue, their seed will be established before You.

Psalm 103 Feb. 27

By David.

¹ Praise Yahweh, my soul! All that is within me, praise His holy name!
² Praise Yahweh, my soul, and don't forget all His benefits; ³ who forgives all your sins; who heals all your diseases; ⁴ who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with grace and tender mercies; ⁵ who sat-

102:16 *Yahweh has built up Zion* – He had not then done so (:13); the earlier part of the Psalm laments this. But the Psalmist believed in God's prophecies of doing so, and considered them as good as already fulfilled. Faith is all about adopting God's perspective, seeing future promises as if they have already been fulfilled, thereby enabling us to live the Kingdom life now in its essence.

102:25 The language of laying foundations is nearly always used about the laying of the foundations of the new, rebuilt temple at the time of return from exile (Ezra 3:10-12; 5:16; Is. 44:28; Hag. 2:18; Zech. 4:9; 8:9); and this is the context of this Psalm (see on :13 and :16). The 'heavens and earth' refer to Israel (Is. 1:2) and the temple. Although they had 'perished' in the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the first temple, God remained and would, the Psalmist believed, install a new temple system (as outlined in Ez. 40-48). However, this never quite happened as God intended due to Judah's weakness, and so these prophecies were reapplied to how the entire Jewish system based around the temple and Law of Moses would 'perish' and God's new temple system based around the exalted Lord Jesus would come into existence (Heb. 1:10 and context).

103:2 The Hebrew translated "benefits" is also translated "praise". The things God gives us are therefore imperatives in themselves to praise Him. Giving thanks before meals is a wonderful habit to get into. As we receive His gifts, or more to the point, *perceive* the receipt of them, the heart breaks forth into a deep thankfulness. This is the true praise.

isfies your desire with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶ Yahweh executes righteous acts, and justice for all who are oppressed. ⁷ He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the children of Israel. ⁸ Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in grace. ⁹ He will not always accuse; neither will He stay angry forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us for our iniquities. ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His grace toward those who fear Him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ Like a father has compassion on His children, so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He knows how we are made, He remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ As for man, His days are like grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶ For the wind passes over it, and it is gone. Its place remembers it no more. ¹⁷ But Yahweh's grace is from everlasting to everlasting with those who fear Him, His righteousness to children's children; ¹⁸ to those who keep His covenant,

to those who remember to obey His precepts. ¹⁹ Yahweh has established His throne in the heavens, His kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ Praise Yahweh, you angels of His, who are mighty in strength, who fulfil His word, obeying the voice of His word. ²¹ Praise Yahweh, all you armies of His, you servants of His, who do His will. ²² Praise Yahweh, all you works of His, in all places of His dominion. Praise Yahweh, my soul!

Psalm 104 Feb. 28

¹ Bless Yahweh, my soul. Yahweh, my God, You are very great. You are clothed with honour and majesty. ² He covers Himself with light as with a garment, He stretches out the heavens like a curtain. ³ He lays the beams of His rooms in the waters, He makes the clouds His chariot, He walks on the wings of the wind. ⁴ He makes His Angels winds; His servants flames of fire. ⁵ He laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved forever. ⁶ You covered it with the deep sea as with a cloak. The waters stood above the mountains. ⁷ At Your rebuke they fled, at the voice of Your thunder they hurried

103:20,21 The emphasis is that *all* the Angels are obedient to God and do His will (Heb. 1:14). There aren't two groups of Angels, some good and some sinful. God tolerates no sin in His presence in Heaven (Hab. 1:13). Sin brings death and yet the Angels cannot die, therefore they cannot sin; our hope is to be made like them in this sense after the resurrection at Christ's return (Lk. 20:35,36). See 148:2.

103:22 *Praise Yahweh, my soul* – David sees himself as in league with the Angels, who likewise are all praising God (:20,21).

104:4 *His Angels winds* – The Hebrew word translated “wind” is that translated “spirit”. God's Spirit works in many ways, but one of those ways is through His Angels. If we were to ask how, mechanically as it were, God's Spirit operates, how He is everywhere present, how He does things – the answer to some extent is that He achieves all these things through His armies of Angels.

away. ⁸ The mountains rose, the valleys sank down, to the place which You had assigned to them. ⁹ You have set a boundary that they may not pass over; that they don't turn again to cover the earth. ¹⁰ He sends forth springs into the valleys, they run among the mountains. ¹¹ They give drink to every animal of the field, the wild donkeys quench their thirst. ¹² The birds of the sky nest by them, they sing among the branches. ¹³ He waters the mountains from His rooms, the earth is filled with the fruit of Your works. ¹⁴ He causes the grass to grow for the livestock, and plants for man to cultivate, that He may bring forth food out of the earth: ¹⁵ wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face to shine, and bread that strengthens man's heart. ¹⁶ Yahweh's trees are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted, ¹⁷ where the birds make their nests. The stork makes its home in the fir trees. ¹⁸ The high

mountains are for the wild goats, the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. ¹⁹ He appointed the moon for seasons, the sun knows when to set. ²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the animals of the forest prowl. ²¹ The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God. ²² The sun rises, and they steal away and lay down in their dens. ²³ Man goes forth to his work, to his labour until the evening. ²⁴ Yahweh, how many are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all. The earth is full of Your riches. ²⁵ There is the sea, great and wide, in which are innumerable living things, both small and large animals. ²⁶ There the ships go, and leviathan, whom You formed to play there. ²⁷ These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. ²⁸ You give to them; they gather. You open Your hand; they are satisfied with good. ²⁹ You hide Your face: they are troubled; You take away their

104:20 *You make darkness* – The rising and setting of the sun is a conscious expenditure of energy by God, rather than happening by some clockwork mechanism which God set up and then withdrew from. He consciously makes the grass grow (:14), and consciously feeds the animals (:28). Likewise the water cycle is not mere clockwork, unstoppable natural law; the rivers are sent forth consciously by God as they bubble over the rocks (:10). This view of creation means that it's easier to believe that the God who consciously does these things every moment can intervene in them at any time in any way; we aren't the helpless victims of a nature which has a life and will of her own.

104:29 *You take away their breath: they die, and return to the dust* – The Hebrew words for “breath” and “spirit” are the same. God made man from the dust and put into him the breath or spirit of life (Gen. 2:7). When we die, that spirit, that life force, returns to God and our bodies to the dust. There is no conscious survival of death, no inherent immortality within man. Life and immortality have only been revealed to some men through the Gospel of Christ and the hope of resurrection to immortality which there is in Him (Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:10). All theories or hopes of reincarnation are disallowed by Bible teaching about the nature of man.

breath: they die, and return to the dust. ³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit: they are created, You renew the face of the ground. ³¹ Let the glory of Yahweh endure forever, let Yahweh rejoice in His works. ³² He looks at the earth, and it trembles. He touches the mountains, and they smoke. ³³ I will sing to Yahweh as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have any being. ³⁴ Let your meditation be sweet to Him. I will rejoice in Yahweh. ³⁵ Let sinners be consumed out of the earth. Let the wicked be no more. Bless Yahweh, my soul. Praise Yah!

Psalm 105 Mar. 1

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh! Call on His name! Make His doings known among the peoples. ² Sing to Him, sing praises to Him! Tell of all His marvellous works. ³ Glory in His holy name, let the heart of those who seek Yahweh rejoice. ⁴ Seek Yahweh and His strength, seek His face forever more. ⁵ Remember His marvellous works that He has done; His wonders, and the judgments of

His mouth, ⁶ you seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones. ⁷ He is Yahweh, our God; His judgments are in all the earth. ⁸ He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, ⁹ the covenant which He made with Abraham, His oath to Isaac, ¹⁰ and confirmed the same to Jacob for a statute; to Israel for an everlasting covenant ¹¹ saying, To you I will give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; ¹² when they were but a few men in number, yes, very few, and foreigners in it. ¹³ They went about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people. ¹⁴ He allowed no one to do them wrong. Yes, He reproved kings for their sakes, ¹⁵ Don't touch my anointed ones! Do my prophets no harm! ¹⁶ He called for a famine on the land, He destroyed the piles of food. ¹⁷ He sent a man before them- Joseph, who was sold for a slave. ¹⁸ They bruised his feet with shackles; his soul was locked in iron, ¹⁹ until the time that His word came true, and Yahweh's

105:17-23 In the context of the Psalm, God is comforting Israel that all their sufferings had been experienced by Joseph. Israel as a nation are often spoken of as being in prison in a Gentile world (Ps. 79:11; 102:20; Is. 42:7,22; 49:9); just as Joseph was. Prison and death are often associated because a spell in prison was effectively a death sentence, so bad were the conditions. Israel being in prison is therefore a symbol of a living death. Just as God had delivered Joseph, so God's people are to take comfort that when the right time comes, we too will be delivered from our present oppression.

105:18 This highlights the mental aspects of Joseph's suffering. The Hebrew for "hurt" means 'to browbeat or depress'; thus his soul was in iron, trapped, oppressively boxed in as he lay in the darkness. Joseph was in this situation until the determined time came for God to suddenly deliver him thanks to the unexpected word from a king; and so Judah, depressed in Babylon, were being comforted that when the predicted 70 years captivity were ended, they too would be likewise delivered – which came true in the decree of king Cyrus for them to return to their land with his every blessing.

word proved Him true. ²⁰ The king sent and freed him; even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free. ²¹ He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all of his possessions; ²² to discipline his princes at his pleasure, and to teach his elders wisdom. ²³ Israel also came into Egypt, Jacob lived in the land of Ham. ²⁴ He increased his people greatly, and made them stronger than their adversaries. ²⁵ He turned their heart to hate His people, to conspire against His servants. ²⁶ He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. ²⁷ They performed miracles among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. ²⁸ He sent darkness, and made it dark. They didn't rebel against His words. ²⁹ He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish. ³⁰ Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the rooms of their kings. ³¹ He spoke, and swarms of beetles came, and lice in all their borders. ³² He gave them hail for rain, with lightning in their land. ³³ He struck their vines and also their fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. ³⁴ He spoke, and the locusts came, and the grasshoppers

without number ³⁵ ate up every plant in their land and devoured the fruit of their ground. ³⁶ He struck also all the firstborn in their land, the first fruits of all their manhood. ³⁷ He brought them forth with silver and gold, there was not one feeble person among His tribes. ³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen on them. ³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering, fire to give light in the night. ⁴⁰ They asked, and He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of the sky. ⁴¹ He opened the rock, and waters gushed out; they ran as a river in the dry places. ⁴² For He remembered His holy word, and Abraham His servant. ⁴³ He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen with singing. ⁴⁴ He gave them the lands of the nations. They took the labour of the peoples in possession, ⁴⁵ that they might keep His statutes, and observe His laws. Praise Yah!

Psalm 106 Mar. 2

¹ Praise Yahweh! Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever. ² Who can utter the mighty acts of Yahweh, or fully

105:19 God has arranged our lives according to a pattern; we have specific times in our lives for various situations. Looking back at the Biblical record of Joseph and Moses, whose life was divided clearly into three periods of 40 years, we see this clearly; but it's of course harder to discern in our own lives as we are still living through it. But God is in control and has a plan for us, desiring only our eternal good in our latter end.

105:37 *There was not one feeble person among His tribes* – Amazingly, there was nobody sick amongst the three million or so who left Egypt that night. At our exodus from this world through our Red Sea baptism into Christ, we are made spiritually strong – and must abide in that strength.

105:45 *That they might keep His statutes* – The whole purpose of being in the Kingdom is so that we might be perpetually obedient to God's word; this is the core reason for our wanting to be there.

declare all His praise? ³ Blessed are those who keep justice. Blessed is the one who does what is right at all times. ⁴ Remember me, Yahweh, with the grace that You show to Your people; visit me with Your salvation, ⁵ that I may see the prosperity of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance. ⁶ We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly. ⁷ Our fathers didn't understand Your wonders in Egypt. They didn't remember the multitude of Your graces, but were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea. ⁸ Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power known. ⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through a desert.

¹⁰ He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. ¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries, there was not one of them left. ¹² Then they believed His words, they sang His praise. ¹³ They soon forgot His works, they didn't wait for His word, ¹⁴ but gave in to their craving in the desert, and tested God in the wasteland. ¹⁵ He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. ¹⁶ They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron, Yahweh's saint. ¹⁷ The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. ¹⁸ A fire was kindled in their company, the flame burned up the wicked. ¹⁹ They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped a molten image. ²⁰ Thus they exchanged their glory for an image of a bull that eats grass. ²¹ They forgot God

106:3 *At all times* – Consistency is most important in spiritual life rather than occasional flashes of devotion and obedience.

106:5 *That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen* – The Psalmist's desire for salvation wasn't merely because he or she wanted to live eternally. There was a desire to see all God's people glorying in salvation. Salvation is made possible in that God's people as a whole have been redeemed; there is such a thing as spiritual selfishness, desiring the Kingdom merely for what it means to us. But if we have the perspective of God's glory, we will desire the coming of salvation because all of us will be glorified. Hence Paul could say that the joy he would have in the Kingdom would be related to his joy that his brethren were also there (1 Thess. 2:19).

106:6 Continuing the thought of :5, the Psalmist felt that he personally was somehow involved in the sin of God's people ("we have sinned"). We aren't called to smug self righteousness, but rather we are to feel a personal involvement in the failures and successes of God's people as a whole.

106:7 *Even at the Red Sea* – Even at the very moment of their salvation they were rebellious. God didn't save them because they had reached a certain level of righteousness, but because of His grace. The Red Sea crossing represents our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2); God has saved us by His grace, not because of our righteousness.

106:15 *But sent leanness into their soul* – If we fulfil our fleshly craving, we will become internally and spiritually hungry. Giving in to our cravings isn't the way to happiness.

their Saviour who had done great things in Egypt, ²² wondrous works in the land of Ham and awesome things by the Red Sea. ²³ Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, so that He wouldn't destroy them. ²⁴ Yes, they despised the pleasant land. They didn't believe His word, ²⁵ but murmured in their tents, and didn't listen to Yahweh's voice. ²⁶ Therefore He swore to them that He would overthrow them in the wilderness, ²⁷ that He would overthrow their seed among the nations, and scatter them in the gentile lands. ²⁸ They joined themselves also to Baal Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. ²⁹ Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds. The plague broke in on them. ³⁰ Then Phinehas stood up, and executed judgment, so the plague was stopped. ³¹ That was credited to him for righteousness, for all generations to come. ³² They angered Him also at the waters of Meribah, so that Moses was troubled for their sakes; ³³ because they were rebellious against His spirit, he spoke rashly with his lips. ³⁴ They didn't destroy the peoples as Yahweh commanded them, ³⁵ but mixed themselves with the nations, and learned their works. ³⁶ They served their idols, which became a snare to them. ³⁷ Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. ³⁸ They

shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. The land was polluted with blood. ³⁹ Thus were they defiled with their works, and prostituted themselves in their deeds. ⁴⁰ Therefore Yahweh burned with anger against His people, He abhorred His inheritance. ⁴¹ He gave them into the hand of the nations. Those who hated them ruled over them. ⁴² Their enemies also oppressed them, they were brought into subjection under their hand. ⁴³ Many times He delivered them, but they were rebellious in their ways, and were brought low in their iniquity. ⁴⁴ Nevertheless He regarded their distress, when He heard their cry. ⁴⁵ He remembered for them His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His graces. ⁴⁶ He made them also to be pitied by all those who carried them captive. ⁴⁷ Save us, Yahweh, our God, gather us from among the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise! ⁴⁸ Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting! Let all the people say, Amen. Praise Yah!

BOOK V

Psalm 107 Mar. 3

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever.

² Let the redeemed by Yahweh say

106:37 Demons refer to idols (:36). Demons or idols have no real existence (1 Cor. 8:4; 10:20). Therefore when we read of demons being cast out in the Gospel records, this is the language of the day used for healing various illnesses rather than any evidence that demons actually exist.

so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary ³ and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. ⁴ They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way, they found no city to live in. ⁵ Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. ⁶ Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses, ⁷ He led them also by a straight way, that they might go to a city to live in. ⁸ Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works to the children of men! ⁹ For He satisfies the longing soul, He fills the hungry soul with good. ¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, ¹¹ because they

rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High. ¹² Therefore He brought down their heart with labour, they fell down, and there was none to help. ¹³ Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. ¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bonds in sunder. ¹⁵ Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works to the children of men! ¹⁶ For He has broken the gates of brass and cut through bars of iron. ¹⁷ Fools are afflicted because of their disobedience and because of their iniquities. ¹⁸ Their soul abhors every kind of food, they draw near to the gates of death. ¹⁹ Then they cry to Yahweh in

107:4 *They found no city to live in* – The LXX of this phrase is quoted about us in Heb. 13:14. We too are on a wilderness journey after our Red Sea baptism, and find no place we can call home in that journey. Our place of rest and settling down isn't in this life, but in the Kingdom which is to come at Christ's return. The implication could be that Israel wanted to settle in the wilderness. They didn't want to return to Egypt (although they did at times), they didn't really desire the unknown promised land... so, they wanted to just settle down there in the wilderness. And so it can be with us. We can be happy with the way to the Kingdom, it can be that the social aspect of the Christian life suites us... we are content with it, and yet it can be that for all that, we lack a real sense of direction towards the Kingdom. The Christian life is but a path leading towards an end, and the end destination is the Kingdom. *If we believe surely that we will be there, we will live lives which reflect this sense of concrete direction and aim.*

107:9 Mary quoted this verse about how she had been filled with good things (Lk. 1:53); but Zacharias quoted the next verse, :10, shortly afterwards (Lk. 1:79). Surely Mary had gotten him thinking in the same paths as she did. Our spirituality can influence others positively, consciously and unconsciously. This is why it's important to mix in spiritual company.

107:11 *Condemned the counsel of the Most High* – This is one of a number of Biblical verses which suggest that we as it were stand in judgment upon God when we encounter His word. He overcomes every claim that His word is untrue and that therefore He is to be condemned (Rom. 3:4). That we mere humans should judge God the judge of all is an arresting concept; but this is what we are in effect doing when we consider His claims, His promises of saving us which are throughout His word.

their trouble, He saves them out of their distresses.²⁰ He sends His word and heals them, and delivers them from their graves.²¹ Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works to the children of men!²² Let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with singing.²³ Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business in great waters;²⁴ these see Yahweh's works, and His wonders in the deep.²⁵ For He commands, and raises the stormy wind which lifts up its waves.²⁶ They mount up to the sky; they go down again to the depths. Their soul melts away because of trouble.²⁷ They reel back and forth and stagger like a drunken man, all their wisdom disappears.²⁸ Then they cry to Yahweh in their trouble and He brings them out of their distress.²⁹ He makes the storm a calm, so that its waves are still.³⁰ Then they are glad because it is calm, and so He brings them to their desired haven.³¹ Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works for the children of men!³² Let them exalt Him also in the gathering of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders.³³ He turns rivers into a desert, water springs into a thirsty ground,³⁴ and a fruitful land into a salt waste because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.³⁵ He turns a desert into a pool of water, and a

dry land into water springs.³⁶ There He makes the hungry live, that they may prepare a city to live in,³⁷ sow fields, plant vineyards, and reap the fruits of increase.³⁸ He blesses them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; He doesn't allow their livestock to decrease.³⁹ Again, they are diminished and bowed down through oppression, trouble, and sorrow.⁴⁰ He pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wander in a trackless waste.⁴¹ Yet He lifts the needy out of their affliction, and increases their families like a flock.⁴² The upright will see it, and be glad. All the wicked will shut their mouths.⁴³ Whoever is wise will pay attention to these things; they will reflect upon the graces of Yahweh.

Psalms 108 Mar. 4

A Song. A Psalm by David.

¹ My heart is steadfast, God. I will sing and I will make music with my soul. ² Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn. ³ I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations, I will sing praises to You among the peoples. ⁴ For Your grace is great above the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. ⁵ Be exalted, God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be over all the earth. ⁶ That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and answer us. ⁷ God has spoken from

107:30 The idea of God stilling a storm and getting terrified sailors immediately to their port clearly had fulfillment in how Christ stilled the storm on the lake of Galilee (Jn. 6:18-21). This doesn't mean that He is God Himself, but rather that Old Testament statements about God were fulfilled in His Son, who manifested the Father to perfection.

His sanctuary: In triumph I will divide Shechem, and measure out the valley of Succoth. ⁸ Gilead is mine. Manasseh is mine. Ephraim also is my helmet. Judah is my sceptre. ⁹ Moab is my wash pot, I will toss my sandal on Edom, I will shout over Philistia. ¹⁰ Who will bring me into the fortified city? Who has led me to Edom? ¹¹ Haven't You rejected us, God? You don't go forth, God, with our armies. ¹² Give us help against the enemy, for the help of man is vain. ¹³ Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who will tread down our enemies.

Psalm 109 Mar. 4

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ God of my praise, don't remain silent, ² for they have opened the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit against me. They have spoken to me with a lying tongue. ³ They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me

without a cause. ⁴ In return for my love, they are my adversaries; but I am in prayer. ⁵ They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. ⁶ Set a wicked man over him, let an adversary stand at his right hand. ⁷ When he is judged, let him come forth guilty, let his prayer be turned into sin. ⁸ Let his days be few, let another take his office. ⁹ Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow; ¹⁰ may his children be wandering beggars, let them be sought from their ruins. ¹¹ Let the creditor seize all that he has, let strangers plunder the fruit of his labour. ¹² Let there be nobody to extend kindness to him, neither let there be anyone to have pity on his fatherless children. ¹³ Let his posterity be cut off, in the next generation may their name be blotted out. ¹⁴ Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered by Yahweh, don't let the sin of his mother be blotted out. ¹⁵ Let them be before Yahweh continually, that He may cut off their memory from the earth;

108:13 The structure of the Psalm is significant in that it begins with praise and then goes on to desperately plead for God's action. There is an intentional double meaning in the Hebrew word translated "hear"; it is also translated "answer". There should be real comfort for us in knowing that prayer really is 'heard'; the hearing is, in a sense, the answer / response, with which a man should be content. Therefore David desired to praise God even before the answer was received; the knowledge God was really hearing him gave such confidence (see too 109:30). We aren't to hide behind the excuse that unanswered prayer just means that God has heard but not answered.

109:6 *An adversary* – The Hebrew word translated "adversary" here is *satan*. 'Satan' is simply a Hebrew word meaning an adversary, totally neutral in meaning; it doesn't of itself refer to any sinful being.

109:8 This is quoted about Judas in Acts 1:20. The disciples saw the similarities with Judas and then decided to concretely take action according to those similarities – they proactively decided to find someone to take his place as this verse requires. We need to use the Bible in this same way – see the similarities between our situations and Biblical precedents, and then act on them accordingly.

¹⁶ because he didn't remember to show kindness, but persecuted the poor and needy man, the broken in heart, to kill them. ¹⁷ Yes, he loved cursing, and it came to him. He didn't delight in blessing, and so it was far from him. ¹⁸ He clothed himself also with cursing as with his garment; it came into his inward parts like water, like oil into his bones. ¹⁹ Let it be to him as the clothing with which he covers himself, like the belt that is always around him. ²⁰ This is the reward of my adversaries from Yahweh, of those who speak evil against my soul. ²¹ But deal with me, Yahweh the Lord, for Your name's sake; because Your grace is good, deliver me; ²² for I am poor and needy. My heart is wounded within me. ²³ I fade away like an evening shadow, I am shaken off like a locust. ²⁴ My knees are weak through fasting, my body is thin and lacks fat. ²⁵ I have also become a reproach to them; when they see me, they shake their head. ²⁶ Help me, Yahweh, my God. Save me ac-

cording to Your grace; ²⁷ that they may know that this is Your hand; that You, Yahweh, have done it. ²⁸ They may curse, but You bless. When they arise, they will be shamed, but Your servant shall rejoice. ²⁹ Let my adversaries be clothed with dishonour, may they cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe. ³⁰ I will give great thanks to Yahweh with my mouth, truly I will praise Him among the multitude. ³¹ For He will stand at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who judge his soul.

Psalm 110 Mar. 5

A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh says to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ² Yahweh will send forth the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ³ Your people offer themselves willingly in the day of your power, in holy attire. Out of the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth. ⁴ Yahweh has

109:30 See on 108:13.

110:1 This verse is quoted in Mt. 22:44 and Acts 2:34,35 with the understanding that David's "lord" or master was Jesus, who was bidden sit in Heaven at His right hand after His resurrection, declared a priest for us in the order of Melchizedek, until He returns to earth to be King in Jerusalem ("Zion") and destroy all God's enemies.

110:2 *Rule in the midst of your enemies* – This supports the impression we get from Psalm 2, that when Christ returns He will establish His Kingdom but there will initially be opposition to Him, and the nations will gather together against Him, surrounding Jerusalem (cp. Rev. 20:9). It's amazing how much humanity wants to carry on as it is, with all their religions, and not be disturbed by the intervention of God in their lives. And this feature of our world will be revealed in their attitudes to Christ at His return.

110:3 The exhortation of Ps. 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in "holy attire" because *He* has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek – they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled.

110:4 This is repeatedly applied to Christ (Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,17,21). The priests

sworn, and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. ⁵ The Lord is at your right hand; He will crush kings in the day of His wrath. ⁶ He will judge among the nations, He will heap up dead bodies, He will crush the ruler of the whole earth. ⁷ He will drink of the brook in the way; therefore He will lift up His head.

Psalm 111 Mar. 5

¹ Praise Yah! I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart, in the council of the upright, and in the congregation. ² Yahweh's works are great, pondered by all those who delight in them. ³ His work is honour and majesty, His righteousness endures forever. ⁴ He has caused His wonderful works to be remembered; Yahweh is gracious and merciful. ⁵ He has given food to those who fear Him; He is ever mindful of His covenant. ⁶ He has shown His people the power of His works, in giv-

ing them the heritage of the nations. ⁷ The works of His hands are truth and justice; all His precepts are sure, ⁸ they are established forever and ever. They are done in truth and uprightness. ⁹ He has sent redemption to His people, He has ordained His covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome! ¹⁰ The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. All those who do His work have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Psalm 112 Mar. 5

¹ Praise Yah! Blessed is the man who fears Yahweh, who delights greatly in His commandments. ² His seed will be mighty in the land, the generation of the upright will be blessed. ³ Wealth and riches are in His house; His righteousness endures forever. ⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the upright, gracious, merciful, and righteous. ⁵ It is well with the man who deals graciously and lends; he will maintain his cause in judgment.

were from the tribe of Levi, whereas Christ was from Judah. Melchizedek was king of Jerusalem and yet also a priest; but he wasn't a Levite. He is therefore chosen as an appropriate type of Christ, the ultimate king-priest. This argument is deployed in Hebrews to answer the Jewish objection that Christ can't be a priest because He wasn't a Levite.

111:5 God is thinking about the covenant made with us *all* the time! And yet how often in daily life do we reflect upon the fact that we really are in covenant relationship with God... how often do we recollect the part we share in the promises to Abraham, how frequently do we feel that we really are in a personal covenant with God Almighty?

111:10 *Those who do His work have a good understanding* – There is an upward spiral in spirituality. The more we do God's work, the more we will come to understand Him. The very process of working with Him reveals more of Him to us.

112:5 *The man who deals graciously and lends* – Our generosity must reflect that of God, because "*He has dispersed, He has given to the poor*" (:9). His generosity to us is largely over matters in which we are responsible for the problem we end up in, and the deeper we realize this the less we will be tempted to be mean to others because we consider their poverty to be 'their fault'.

⁶ For he will never be shaken; the righteous will be remembered forever. ⁷ He will not be afraid of evil news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in Yahweh. ⁸ His heart is established; he will not be afraid in the end when he sees his adversaries. ⁹ He has dispersed, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever, His horn will be exalted with honour. ¹⁰ The wicked will see it, and be grieved. He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away. The desire of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 113 Mar. 6

¹ Praise Yah! Praise, you servants of Yahweh, praise the name of Yahweh. ² Blessed be the name of Yahweh, from this time forth and forever. ³ From the rising of the sun to the going down of it, Yahweh's name is to be praised. ⁴ Yahweh is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like Yahweh our God, who has His seat on high, ⁶ who stoops down to view both heaven and earth? ⁷ He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the

needy from the ash heap; ⁸ that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people. ⁹ He settles the barren woman in her home, as a joyful mother of children. Praise Yah!

Psalm 114 Mar. 6

¹ When Israel went forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign language; ² Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His kingdom. ³ The sea saw it, and fled. The Jordan was driven back. ⁴ The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs. ⁵ What was it, you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you turned back? ⁶ You mountains, that you skipped like rams; you little hills, like lambs? ⁷ Tremble, you earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, ⁸ who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of waters.

Psalm 115 Mar. 7

¹ Not to us, Yahweh, not to us, but to Your name give glory, for Your

112:9 *He has given to the poor* – Quoted in 2 Cor. 9:9 about how God has given His grace of forgiveness and salvation to us the spiritually poor. The Greek word for “grace” also means “gift”. In the context, Paul is urging the early Christians to be materially generous to their poorer brethren because of the grace they have received from God. His spiritual generosity to us is to be reflected in our material generosity to others (see on :5).

114:2 *Israel His kingdom* – Israel were declared God's Kingdom on earth with Him as their King, exercising total sovereignty over them (Ex. 19:5,6). But they wanted a human king and worshipped other gods, so that God overturned that Kingdom with the intention to re-establish it on earth at Christ's return to eternally reign on David's throne in Jerusalem (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:6). The future Kingdom of God on earth will be a re-establishment of the Kingdom that once was, again inviting us to understand it as an entity to be literally established on *earth*. The Bible doesn't teach that the righteous go to Heaven at death to enjoy their salvation there.

the sake of Your grace and truth.
² Why should the nations say, Where is their God now? ³ But our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases. ⁴ Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands; ⁵ they have mouths, but they don't speak, they have eyes, but they don't see. ⁶ They have ears, but they don't hear, they have noses, but they don't smell. ⁷ They have hands, but they don't feel; they have feet, but they don't walk, neither do they speak through their throat. ⁸ Those who make them will be like them; yes, everyone who trusts in them. ⁹ Israel, trust in Yahweh! He is their help and their shield. ¹⁰ House of Aaron, trust in Yahweh! He is their help and their shield. ¹¹ You who fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh! He is their help and their shield. ¹² Yahweh remembers us; He will bless us, He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron. ¹³ He will bless those who fear Yahweh, both small and great. ¹⁴ May Yahweh increase you more and more, you and your children. ¹⁵ Blessed are you by Yahweh, who made heaven and earth. ¹⁶ The heav-

ens are the heavens of Yahweh; but the earth has He given to the children of men. ¹⁷ The dead don't praise Yah, neither any who go down into silence; ¹⁸ but we will bless Yah, from this time forth and forevermore. Praise Yah!

Psalm 116 Mar. 7

¹ I love Yahweh, because He listens to my voice and my cries for mercy. ² Because He has turned His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live. ³ The cords of death surrounded me, the pains of Sheol got a hold on me, I found trouble and sorrow. ⁴ Then I called on the name of Yahweh: Yahweh, I beg You, deliver my soul. ⁵ Yahweh is gracious and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. ⁶ Yahweh preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. ⁷ Return to your rest, my soul, for Yahweh has dealt bountifully with you. ⁸ For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. ⁹ I will walk before Yahweh in the land of the living. ¹⁰ I believed, therefore I said, I was greatly afflicted. ¹¹ I

115:8 *Those who make them will be like them* – We become like what we worship. The Gentile idols are often described in the Bible as “vanities”; we may not worship literal idols but we can easily give our hearts over to obsession with the many vain things which crowd this world and the internet. If we do so, we will become as lost and lacking in direction as they are.

115:11 *Who fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh* – The implication is that some believed in and feared Yahweh, but had yet to trust Him. We need likewise to convert our acceptance of God's existence into practical faith in Him.

116:2 *Because He has turned His ear to me, therefore* – The experience of answered prayer is an upward spiral; because prayer is answered, we are inspired to pray the more.

116:11 *I said in my haste, “All men are liars”* – This verse likely strikes a chord with most of us; we have all likewise at times felt that relationships in this world are useless, nobody is to be trusted.

said in my haste, All men are liars. ¹² What will I give to Yahweh for all His benefits toward me? ¹³ I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of Yahweh. ¹⁴ I will pay my vows to Yahweh, yes, in the presence of all His people. ¹⁵ Precious in the sight of Yahweh is the death of His saints. ¹⁶ Yahweh, truly I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid. You have freed me from my chains. ¹⁷ I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of Yahweh. ¹⁸ I will pay my vows to Yahweh, yes, in the presence of all His people, ¹⁹ in the courts of Yahweh's house, in the midst of you, Jerusalem. Praise Yah!

Psalm 117 Mar. 8

¹ Praise Yahweh, all you nations! Ex-tol Him, all you peoples! ² For His grace is great toward us, Yahweh's faithfulness endures forever. Praise Yah!

Psalm 118 Mar. 8

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh for He is good, for His grace endures forever.

² Let Israel now say that His grace endures forever. ³ Let the house of Aaron now say that His grace endures forever. ⁴ Now let those who fear Yahweh say that His grace endures forever. ⁵ Out of my distress, I called on Yah; Yah answered me with freedom. ⁶ Yahweh is on my side, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me? ⁷ Yahweh is on my side among those who help me. Therefore I will look in triumph at those who hate me. ⁸ It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to put confidence in man. ⁹ It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to put confidence in princes. ¹⁰ All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of Yahweh, I cut them off. ¹¹ They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me. In the name of Yahweh I indeed cut them off. ¹² They surrounded me like bees but they are quenched like the burning thorns. In the name of Yahweh I cut them off. ¹³ You pushed me back hard to make me fall, but Yahweh helped me. ¹⁴ Yah is my strength and song, He has become my salvation. ¹⁵ The voice of rejoicing and salva-

116:13 *I will take the cup of salvation* – This cup was an allusion to one of the cups used at the Passover. In response to all God has done for us, we likewise respond by taking the cup at the communion service. Although our feelings and situations vary each time we take that cup, one strand of motivation within us for doing it should be our desire to do so in gratitude for all the Lord has done for us spiritually and physically.

116:14 *In the presence of all His people* – As in :18, our devotion to God is to be expressed within the context of other believers. Out of church Christianity is a contradiction in terms; we cannot retreat into our own homes and consider we are Christians in the privacy of our hearts. Difficult as it often is, and notwithstanding all the dysfunctions of the church, the community of believers is to be the arena in which we make our response to God's grace. Of course there may be multiple reasons why physical attendance at a literal gathering isn't possible, all of which are appreciated by God, but so far as we can, we should in whatever way seek to be "in the presence of all His people".

tion is in the tents of the righteous: The right hand of Yahweh does valiantly. ¹⁶ The right hand of Yahweh is exalted! The right hand of Yahweh does valiantly! ¹⁷ I will not die, but live, and declare Yah's works. ¹⁸ Yah has punished me severely, but He has not given me over to death. ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will enter into them. I will give thanks to Yah. ²⁰ This is the gate of Yahweh; the righteous will enter into it. ²¹ I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation. ²² The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. ²³ This is Yahweh's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day that Yahweh has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it! ²⁵ Save us now, we beg You, Yahweh! Yahweh, we beg

You, send prosperity now. ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh! We have blessed you out of the house of Yahweh. ²⁷ Yahweh is God, and He has given us light. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar. ²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to You; You are my God, I will exalt You. ²⁹ Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever.

Psalm 119 Mar. 9

ALEPH ¹ Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to Yahweh's law. ² Blessed are those who keep His statutes, who seek Him with their whole heart. ³ Yes, they do nothing wrong; they walk in His ways. ⁴ You have commanded Your precepts, that we should fully obey them. ⁵ Oh that

118:22 *The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner* – Quoted by Jesus about Himself in Mt. 21:42. The Jews were the “builders” (Acts 4:11) who rejected Christ by crucifying Him, but He resurrected to become the corner stone of the new spiritual temple which is being built (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6,7). Non-Christian religions cannot be the way to God because the foundation and critical point of our spiritual building can only be the resurrected Christ.

118:25 *Save us now* – ‘Hosanna’ is the Greek word for ‘Save now!’. This and :26 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh!” were quoted by the crowds in Mt. 21:9. They perceived Jesus as Messiah in the terms of this Psalm, but that same crowd were screaming “Crucify Him!” just days later. This is how fickle our nature is.

119:1 *Yahweh's law* – Every verse in this Psalm contains some reference to God's law. It is arranged according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to indicate how *our* words, our alphabet, our whole formulation of thought and verbalization, should be dominated by *God's* word. It was also done in this way to aid memorization; for in illiterate societies, the Psalms would've been memorized. It's a good thing for us to personally memorize parts of God's word.

119:5 *Oh that my ways were steadfast to obey Your statutes* – This is one of many places in this Psalm (:136) where David laments his own failure to obey God's word completely at all times. And yet the Psalm also speaks of the faithful as being totally obedient to God's word, e.g. “they do nothing wrong” (:3). One resolution of this is that David believed in imputed righteousness, whereby God counts His people as

my ways were steadfast to obey Your statutes! ⁶ Then I wouldn't be ashamed when I obey all of Your commandments. ⁷ I will give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments. ⁸ I will observe Your statutes; don't utterly forsake me.

BET ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word. ¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You; don't let me wander from Your commandments. ¹¹ I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You. ¹² Blessed are You, Yahweh; teach me Your statutes. ¹³ With my lips I have declared all the ordinances of Your mouth. ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. ¹⁵ I will meditate on Your precepts, and consider Your ways. ¹⁶ I will delight myself in Your

statutes, I will not forget Your word.

GIMEL ¹⁷ Do good to Your servant; I will live to obey Your word.

¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of Your law.

¹⁹ I am a stranger on the earth, don't hide Your commandments from me.

²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing for Your ordinances at all times.

²¹ You have rebuked the proud who are cursed, who wander from Your commandments. ²² Take reproach and contempt away from me, for I have kept Your statutes. ²³ Though

princes sit and slander me, Your servant will meditate on Your statutes. ²⁴ Indeed Your statutes are my delight and my counsellors.

DALED ²⁵ My soul is laid low in the dust; revive me according to Your word! ²⁶ I declared my ways, and You answered me. Teach me Your statutes. ²⁷ Let me understand the teach-

totally obedient to His word even though they are not; Ps. 32:2 cp. Rom. 4:8 indicates David understood this principle well.

119:6 *Then I wouldn't be ashamed when I obey all of Your commandments* – The result of moments or periods of obedience to God is that we become ashamed of all the times we are *not* obedient. Spiritual maturity thus involves an ever increasing awareness of our past sins; it doesn't lead to self-righteousness but the very opposite.

119:11 *That I might not sin* – The presence of God's word within our hearts gives strength against temptation, as demonstrated by Christ's overcoming of the wilderness temptations by quoting from God's word.

119:14 *As much as in all riches* – The Psalm often contrasts material wealth with the love of God's law (:36, 72, 127). So many sell their souls to employers, taking demanding jobs or second jobs so as to get more money than they need. And inevitably they have little time or mental energy for the things of God's word. Others lament their lack of wealth; but the simple truth is that the true riches are those of God's word.

119:18 *Open my eyes* – In his search for spiritual mindedness, so often David in this Psalm asks God to directly work on his heart so that he might correctly understand God's word and be obedient to it (:29 "Keep me", :36 "Turn my heart", :133 "establish my footsteps"). God hasn't merely given us the Bible and left us to get on with the job of understanding and obeying it; He is eager to help us in those things.

119:27 David often makes this link between appreciation of God's ways and the in-

ing of Your precepts! Then I will talk of Your wondrous works. ²⁸ My soul is weary with sorrow: strengthen me according to Your word. ²⁹ Keep me from the way of deceit. Grant me Your law graciously! ³⁰ I have chosen the way of truth, I have set Your ordinances before me. ³¹ I cling to Your statutes, Yahweh; don't let me be disappointed. ³² I run in the path of Your commandments, for You have set my heart free.

HEY ³³ Teach me, Yahweh, the way of Your statutes; I will keep them to the end. ³⁴ Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law; yes, I will obey it with my whole heart. ³⁵ Direct me in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in them. ³⁶ Turn my heart toward Your statutes, not toward selfish gain. ³⁷ Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things. Revive me in Your ways. ³⁸ Fulfill Your promise to Your servant, that You may be feared. ³⁹ Take

away my disgrace that I dread, for Your ordinances are good. ⁴⁰ Behold, I long for Your precepts! Revive me in Your righteousness.

WAW Mar. ¹⁰ ⁴¹ Let Your grace also come to me, Yahweh, Your salvation, according to Your word ⁴² so I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word. ⁴³ Don't take the word of truth out of my mouth, for I put my hope in Your ordinances; ⁴⁴ so I will obey Your law continually, forever and ever. ⁴⁵ I will walk in liberty, for I have sought Your precepts. ⁴⁶ I will also speak of Your statutes before kings, and will not be disappointed. ⁴⁷ I will delight myself in Your commandments, because I love them. ⁴⁸ I reach out my hands for Your commandments which I love; I will meditate on Your statutes.

ZAYIN ⁴⁹ Remember Your word to Your servant, because You give me hope. ⁵⁰ This is my comfort in my

evitable witness this will result in. The community of believers is not to simply amass intellectual, theological purity by Bible reading – it must be told forth to others.

119:33 *Teach me, Yahweh, the way of Your statutes; I will keep them* – The better we understand God's word, the more empowered we are to obey it. Understanding and correct interpretation aren't therefore merely of academic interest, or just for those interested in that kind of thing. By the same token, true understanding isn't simply academic, it issues in practical obedience.

119:37 *Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things* – A prayer for our internet, entertainment mad, screen transfixed generation.

119:46 *Before kings* – This is one of several indications that parts of this Psalm reflects David's feelings whilst at the court of Saul as a young man (:100, :161), whereby speaking up for God's word could result in a javelin being thrown at him to kill him if he just happened to touch the conscience of the manic king Saul (1 Sam. 18:11).

119:48 David didn't groan at the number of God's commandments, struggling with a steel will to obey some of them; he so loved God that he asked God to show him more and more of those commandments. Often the verses of this Psalm imply that David sought to know more of God's requirements because they are designed to help us be more obedient to all of them *in toto*.

affliction, for Your word has revived me. ⁵¹ The arrogant mock me excessively, but I don't swerve from Your law. ⁵² I remember Your ordinances of old, Yahweh, and have comforted myself. ⁵³ Indignation has taken hold on me because of the wicked who forsake Your law. ⁵⁴ Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. ⁵⁵ I have remembered Your name, Yahweh, in the night, and I obey Your law. ⁵⁶ This is my life's way, keeping Your precepts.

CHET ⁵⁷ Yahweh is my portion; I promised to obey Your words. ⁵⁸ I sought Your favour with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word. ⁵⁹ I considered my ways and turned my steps to Your statutes. ⁶⁰ I will hurry, and not delay, to obey Your commandments. ⁶¹ The ropes of the wicked bind me, but I won't forget Your law. ⁶² At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You because of Your righteous ordinances. ⁶³ I am a friend of all those who fear You, of those who observe Your precepts. ⁶⁴ The earth is full of Your grace, Yahweh; teach me Your commands.

TET ⁶⁵ Do good to Your servant according to Your word, Yahweh. ⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments. ⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I observe Your word. ⁶⁸ You are good,

and do good; teach me Your statutes. ⁶⁹ The proud have smeared a lie upon me, but with my whole heart I will keep Your precepts. ⁷⁰ Their heart is callous and fat, but I delight in Your law. ⁷¹ It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. ⁷² The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

YUD ⁷³ Your hands have made me and formed me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments. ⁷⁴ Those who fear You will see me and be glad, because I have put my hope in Your word. ⁷⁵ Yahweh, I know that Your judgments are righteous, that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. ⁷⁶ Please let Your grace be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant. ⁷⁷ Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight. ⁷⁸ Let the proud be disappointed, for they have overthrown me wrongfully; but I will meditate on Your precepts. ⁷⁹ Let those who fear You turn to me; they will know Your statutes. ⁸⁰ Let my heart be blameless toward Your decrees, that I may not be ashamed.

KAF Mar. 11 ⁸¹ My soul faints for Your salvation; I hope in Your word. ⁸² My eyes fail for Your word; I say, When will You comfort me? ⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in the

119:63 Even within the people of God, we must choose our friends well.

119:64 David didn't see grace and law as opposed; rather he understood those commandments as ultimately reflective of God's grace.

119:73 David realized that because he had been made in God's physical image he had a duty to be spiritually reformed in His moral image; and thus he sought strength to be obedient to God's will.

smoke, but I don't forget Your statutes. ⁸⁴ How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute Your word on those who persecute me? ⁸⁵ The proud have dug pits for me, contrary to Your law. ⁸⁶ All of Your commandments are faithful. They persecute me wrongfully. Help me! ⁸⁷ They had almost wiped me from the earth, but I didn't forsake Your precepts. ⁸⁸ Preserve my life according to Your grace, so I will obey the statutes of Your mouth.

LAMED ⁸⁹ Yahweh, Your word is settled in heaven forever. ⁹⁰ Your faithfulness is to all generations. You have by a word established the earth, and it remains. ⁹¹ Your laws remain to this day, for all things serve You. ⁹² Unless Your law had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. ⁹³ I will never forget Your precepts, for with them You have revived me. ⁹⁴ I am Yours. Save me, for I have sought Your precepts. ⁹⁵ The wicked have waited for me to destroy me; I will consider Your statutes. ⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all perfection, but Your commands are boundless.

MEM ⁹⁷ How I love Your law! It is my meditation all day. ⁹⁸ Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for Your commandments are always with me. ⁹⁹ I have more

understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, because I have kept Your precepts. ¹⁰¹ I have kept my feet from every evil way, that I might observe Your word. ¹⁰² I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You have taught me. ¹⁰³ How sweet are Your promises to my taste, more than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴ Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

NUN ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path. ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn, and have confirmed it, that I will obey Your righteous ordinances. ¹⁰⁷ I am afflicted very much. Revive me, Yahweh, according to Your word. ¹⁰⁸ Accept, I beg You, the willing offerings of my mouth. Yahweh, teach me Your ordinances. ¹⁰⁹ My soul is continually in my hand, yet I won't forget Your law. ¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I haven't gone astray from Your precepts. ¹¹¹ I have taken Your testimonies as a heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. ¹¹² I have set my heart to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end.

SAMEKH ¹¹³ I hate double-minded men, but I love Your law. ¹¹⁴ You are my hiding place and my shield.

119:88 The whole purpose of our lives, and of our eternal living in God's Kingdom, is to be obedient to God's word. We should have that spirit in our lives now, therefore.

119:96 God's law isn't therefore a limitation which we resentfully have to accept, but rather the way to ultimate freedom. In New Testament terms, we changed masters at baptism; from sin to Christ, and through our bondage to Him we paradoxically find ultimate freedom.

119:105 *My feet... my path* – God's word directs both our short term immediate decisions ("my feet") and also our general direction in life ("my path").

I hope in Your word. ¹¹⁵ Depart from me, You evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. ¹¹⁶ Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live. Let me not be ashamed of my hope. ¹¹⁷ Hold me up and I will be safe, and will have respect for Your statutes continually. ¹¹⁸ You reject all those who stray from Your statutes, for their deceit is in vain. ¹¹⁹ You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. Therefore I love Your testimonies. ¹²⁰ My flesh trembles for fear of You; I am afraid of Your judgments.

AYIN ¹²¹ I have done what is just and righteous. Don't leave me to my oppressors. ¹²² Ensure Your servant's well-being. Don't let the proud oppress me. ¹²³ My eyes fail looking for Your salvation, for Your righteous word. ¹²⁴ Deal with Your servant according to Your grace, teach me Your statutes. ¹²⁵ I am Your servant. Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies. ¹²⁶ It is time to act, Yahweh, for they break Your law. ¹²⁷ Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, more than pure gold. ¹²⁸ Therefore I consider all of Your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.

PEY Mar. 12 ¹²⁹ Your testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul keeps them. ¹³⁰ The entrance of Your words gives light, it gives understanding to the simple. ¹³¹ I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments. ¹³² Turn to me and have mercy on me, as You always do to those who love Your name. ¹³³ Establish my footsteps in Your word; don't let any iniquity have dominion over me. ¹³⁴ Redeem me from the oppression of man, so that I will observe Your precepts. ¹³⁵ Make Your face shine on Your servant. Teach me Your statutes. ¹³⁶ Streams of tears run down my eyes, because they don't observe Your law.

TZADI ¹³⁷ You are righteous, Yahweh; Your judgments are upright. ¹³⁸ You have commanded Your statutes in righteousness; they are fully trustworthy. ¹³⁹ My zeal wears me out, because my enemies ignore Your words. ¹⁴⁰ Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and Your servant loves them. ¹⁴¹ I am small and despised but I don't forget Your precepts. ¹⁴² Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; Your law is truth. ¹⁴³ Trouble and

119:120 God is again paralleled with His word; our attitude to His word is our attitude to Him.

119:128 Accepting the truths of God's word leads us to perceive and proactively reject that which is false, rather than simply accepting truth and being ambivalent to error.

119:130 There is no 'light within' us, our exposure to ultimate truth comes from God's word.

119:140 Because the word is so pure, *therefore* we love it. Our acceptance of the Bible as Divinely inspired rather than a human document therefore encourages our obedience to it; if we continually doubt and question its truth, we will hardly be motivated to obedience.

anguish have taken hold of me, but Your commandments are my delight. ¹⁴⁴ Your testimonies are righteous forever. Give me understanding, that I may live.

KUF ¹⁴⁵ I have called with my whole heart. Answer me, Yahweh! I will keep Your statutes. ¹⁴⁶ I have called to You. Save me! I will obey Your statutes. ¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help, I put my hope in Your words. ¹⁴⁸ My eyes stay open through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your word. ¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice according to Your grace. Revive me, Yahweh, according to Your ordinances. ¹⁵⁰ They draw near who follow after wickedness, they are far from Your law. ¹⁵¹ You are near, Yahweh. All Your commandments are truth. ¹⁵² Of old I have known from Your testimonies, that You have founded them forever.

RESH ¹⁵³ Consider my affliction and deliver me, for I don't forget Your law. ¹⁵⁴ Plead my cause, and redeem me! Revive me according to Your promise. ¹⁵⁵ Salvation is far from the wicked, for they don't seek Your statutes. ¹⁵⁶ Great are Your tender mercies, Yahweh. Revive me according to Your ordinances. ¹⁵⁷ Many are

my persecutors and my adversaries, but I haven't swerved from Your testimonies. ¹⁵⁸ I look at the faithless with loathing, because they don't observe Your word. ¹⁵⁹ Consider how I love Your precepts. Revive me, Yahweh, according to Your grace. ¹⁶⁰ All of Your words are truth, every one of Your righteous ordinances endures forever.

SIN AND SHIN ¹⁶¹ Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your words. ¹⁶² I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great spoil. ¹⁶³ I hate and abhor falsehood but I love Your law. ¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise You because of Your righteous ordinances. ¹⁶⁵ Those who love Your law have great peace; nothing causes them to stumble. ¹⁶⁶ I have hoped for Your salvation, Yahweh. I have done Your commandments. ¹⁶⁷ My soul has observed Your testimonies because I love them exceedingly. ¹⁶⁸ I have obeyed Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You.

TAV ¹⁶⁹ Let my cry come near before You, Yahweh. Give me understanding according to Your word. ¹⁷⁰ Let my supplication come before You

119:143 So often David says that he refuses life's crises to take him away from his meditation on God's word.

119:160 In God's word we see His judgments – how He judges and will judge. And in the wealth of Bible history we see examples of how these judgments have been articulated with men in practice. The final day of judgement shouldn't therefore be a worrying mystery to us; we know how God will judge, for we have in the Bible His word, His judgments.

119:169 *Come near before You* – Prayer is described here as coming near to God; and yet God "is" near already (75:1). Prayer, therefore, is a way of making us realize the presence of the God who is always present.

and deliver me according to Your word. ¹⁷¹ Let my lips utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes. ¹⁷² Let my tongue sing of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness. ¹⁷³ Let Your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts. ¹⁷⁴ I have longed for Your salvation, Yahweh. Your law is my delight. ¹⁷⁵ Let my soul live, that I may praise You. Let Your ordinances help me. ¹⁷⁶ I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek Your servant, for I don't forget Your commandments.

Psalm 120 Mar. 13

A Song of Ascents.

¹ In my distress, I cried to Yahweh. He answered me. ² Deliver my soul, Yahweh, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. ³ What will be given to you, and what will be done more to you, you deceitful tongue? ⁴ Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. ⁵ Woe is me, that I live in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar! ⁶ My soul has had her dwelling too long with him who

hates peace. ⁷ I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

Psalm 121 Mar. 13

A Song of Ascents.

¹ I will lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? ² My help comes from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth. ³ He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ Yahweh is your keeper, Yahweh is your shade on your right hand. ⁶ The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ Yahweh will keep you from all evil; He will keep your soul. ⁸ Yahweh will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.

Psalm 122 Mar. 13

A Song of Ascents. By David.

¹ I was glad when they said to me, Let's go up to Yahweh's house! ² Our feet shall stand within your gates, Jerusalem; ³ Jerusalem, that is built

120 *Song of Ascents* – These Psalms (120-134) were recited as the Israelite worshippers went 'up' to the temple to keep the feasts (122:2,3). However the word translated "Ascents" also means "Degrees", and may well have been written by Hezekiah when the shadow on the sundial went ten degrees backward as a sign that God had healed him (2 Kings 20:11). In response to this, Hezekiah composed or rearranged songs for the temple worship (Is. 38:20). His sickness was at the same time as the Assyrian invasion, and therefore many of these songs allude to the situation at that time.

121:2 Belief in God as creator (rather than in atheistic evolution) inspires our faith in His ability to likewise creatively deliver us from the crises of our lives.

121:5 *Yahweh is your shade* – Alluding to how on the wilderness journey, God provided the pillar of cloud as a shade to Israel (105:39). Our lives are repeatedly described in the Bible as being like the wilderness journey towards the promised land. The allusion is also to how God was a shade or shadow to Hezekiah when the shadow on the sundial went backward (Is. 38:8); what He did for Hezekiah He can in essence do for all His people.

as a city that is compact together; ⁴ where the tribes go up, even Yah's tribes, according to an ordinance for Israel, to give thanks to the name of Yahweh. ⁵ For there are set thrones for judgment, the thrones of David's house. ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; those who love you will prosper. ⁷ Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. ⁸ For my brothers' and companions' sakes I will now say, Peace be within you. ⁹ For the sake of the house of Yahweh our God, I will seek your good.

Psalm 123 Mar. 13

A Song of Ascents.

¹ To You I do lift up my eyes, You who sit in the heavens. ² Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress; so our eyes look to Yahweh our God until He has mercy on us. ³ Have mercy on us, Yahweh, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. ⁴ Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scoffing of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 124 Mar. 13

A Song of Ascents. By David.

¹ If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side, let Israel now say, ² if it had not been Yahweh who was on our side when men rose up against us; ³ then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us; ⁴ then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; ⁵ then the proud waters would have gone over our soul. ⁶ Blessed be Yahweh, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth. ⁷ Our soul has escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare. The snare is broken, and we have escaped. ⁸ Our help is in the name of Yahweh, who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125 Mar. 14

A Song of Ascents.

¹ Those who trust in Yahweh are as Mount Zion which can't be moved but remains forever. ² As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people from this time forth and forever. ³ For the sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the

122:6 Jerusalem's peace will only be when Christ reigns there on David's throne over God's Kingdom on earth; this is the day the faithful should daily plead for.

123:4 This scoffing likely referred to that of Rabshakeh outside the walls of Jerusalem at the time of Hezekiah's illness and Judah's invasion (2 Kings 18:19-25).

125:3 This is amazing encouragement, echoed in 1 Cor. 10:13, that we will never be tested so hard that our sinning is inevitable. In the heat of temptation we persuade ourselves that our situations are too hard for us to endure and that we have no option given our humanity but to sin. But God here promises that He will never allow circumstances to be too great for our spiritual strength; we are left with no option but to accept full, total responsibility for our sins, with nobody and nothing to blame them on apart from ourselves.

righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil. ⁴ Do good, Yahweh, to those who are good, to those who are upright in their hearts. ⁵ But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, Yahweh will lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be on Israel.

Psalm 126 Mar. 14

A Song of Ascents.

¹ When Yahweh brought back those who returned to Zion, we were like those who dream. ² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, Yahweh has done great things for them. ³ Yahweh has done great things for us, and we are glad. ⁴ Restore our fortunes again, Yahweh, like the streams in the Negev. ⁵ Those who sow in tears will reap in joy. ⁶ He who goes out weeping, carrying seed for sowing, will certainly come again with joy carrying his sheaves.

Psalm 127 Mar. 14

A Song of Ascents. By Solomon.

¹ Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labour in vain who build it. Unless Yahweh watches over the city, the watchman guards it in vain. ² It is vain for you to rise up early, to stay up late, eating the bread of toil; for He gives sleep to His beloved ones. ³ Behold, children are a heritage of Yahweh. The fruit of the womb is His reward. ⁴ As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth. ⁵ Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they won't be

ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128 Mar. 15

A Song of Ascents.

¹ Blessed is each one who fears Yahweh, who walks in His ways. ² For you will eat the labour of your hands; you will be happy, and it will be well with you. ³ Your wife will be as a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of your house; your children like olive plants around your table. ⁴ Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears Yahweh. ⁵ May Yahweh bless you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life. ⁶ Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel.

Psalm 129 Mar. 15

A Song of Ascents.

¹ Many times they have afflicted me from my youth up. Let Israel now say, ² many times they have afflicted me from my youth up, yet they have not prevailed against me. ³ The ploughers ploughed on my back; they made their furrows long. ⁴ Yahweh is righteous; He has cut apart the cords of the wicked. ⁵ Let them be disappointed and turned backward, all those who hate Zion. ⁶ Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up; ⁷ with which the reaper doesn't fill his hand, nor the binder of sheaves his belt. ⁸ Neither do those who go by say, The blessing of Yahweh be on you. We bless you in the name of Yahweh.

Psalm 130 Mar. 15***A Song of Ascents.***

¹ Out of the depths I have cried to You, Yahweh. ² Lord, hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my petitions. ³ If You, Yah, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, therefore You are feared. ⁵ I wait for Yahweh. My soul waits. I hope in His word. ⁶ My soul longs for the Lord more than watchmen long for the morning; more than watchmen for the morning. ⁷ Israel, hope in Yahweh, for with Yahweh there is grace, with Him is abundant redemption. ⁸ He will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Psalm 131 Mar. 16***A Song of Ascents. By David.***

¹ Yahweh, my heart isn't haughty, nor my eyes lofty; nor do I concern myself with great matters, or things too wonderful for me. ² Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a

weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. ³ Israel, hope in Yahweh, from this time forth and forever.

Psalm 132 Mar. 16***A Song of Ascents.***

¹ Yahweh, remember David and all his affliction, ² how he swore to Yahweh, and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob: ³ Surely I will not come under the roof of my house, nor go up into my bed; ⁴ I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids; ⁵ until I find out a place for Yahweh, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob. ⁶ Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah. We found it in the field of Jaar: ⁷ We will go into His dwelling place. We will worship at His footstool. ⁸ Arise, Yahweh, into Your resting place; You, and the ark of Your strength. ⁹ Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, let Your saints shout for joy! ¹⁰ For Your servant David's sake, don't turn away the

130:3 God doesn't keep a record or legal list of sins in the sense that He doesn't hold them against us; it's not that He as it were erases those parts of His 'memory', for His word is full of the memory of human sin which He has forgiven. The LXX is applied to each of us in 1 Cor. 13:5 – we too are not to keep a record of others' wrongs against us. God's forgiveness of us is to be the template for our forgiveness of others. It's not possible to forget them, in the sense that we have no power over our brain's mechanism of forgetting; but we can forgive them in the sense that we do not count them any longer against the person.

132 The mutuality possible between God and man is brought out by the structure of several of the Psalms, in which God and David are shown to be involved in a dynamic, two way relationship. Consider this Psalm: A (:1,2) David swears to God; B (:3-5) What David swore; C (:6,7) Search for a dwelling place; D (:8) Prayer to enter into rest; E (:9) Prayer for priests; F (:9) Prayer for saints / holy ones; G (:10) Prayer for Messiah. This was responded to by God: A1 (:11) God swears to David; B1 (:11,12) What God swore; C1 (:13) Designation of the dwelling place; D1 (:14,15) Answer to prayer in D; 1 (:16) Answer to prayer in E; F1 (:16) Answer to prayer in F; G1 (:17,18) Answer to prayer in G.

face of Your anointed one. ¹¹ Yahweh has sworn to David in truth, He will not turn from it: I will set the fruit of your body on your throne. ¹² If your children will keep My covenant, My testimony that I will teach them, their children also will sit on your throne forever. ¹³ For Yahweh has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His habitation. ¹⁴ This is my resting place forever. Here I will live, for I have desired it. ¹⁵ I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread. ¹⁶ Her priests I will also clothe with salvation, her holy people will shout aloud for joy. ¹⁷ There I will make the horn of David to bud. I have ordained a lamp for my anointed. ¹⁸ I will clothe his enemies with shame, but on himself, his crown will be splendid.

Psalm 133 Mar. 16

A Song of Ascents. By David.

¹ See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity! ² It is like the precious oil on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down on the edge of his robes; ³ like the dew of Hermon, that comes down on the hills of Zion: for there Yahweh gives the blessing, even life forever.

Psalm 134 Mar. 16

A Song of Ascents.

¹ Look! Praise Yahweh, all you serv-

ants of Yahweh, who stand by night in Yahweh's house! ² Lift up your hands in the sanctuary. Praise Yahweh! ³ May Yahweh bless you from Zion; even He who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 135 Mar. 17

¹ Praise Yah! Praise the name of Yahweh! Praise Him, you servants of Yahweh, ² you who stand in the house of Yahweh, in the courts of our God's house. ³ Praise Yah, for Yahweh is good. Sing praises to His name, for that is pleasant. ⁴ For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself; Israel for His own possession. ⁵ For I know that Yahweh is great, that our Lord is above all gods. ⁶ Whatever Yahweh pleased, that He has done, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps; ⁷ who causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the land; who makes lightnings with the rain; who brings forth the wind out of His treasures; ⁸ who struck the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and animal; ⁹ who sent signs and wonders into the midst of you, Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on all his servants; ¹⁰ who struck many nations, and killed mighty kings, ¹¹ Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan and all the kingdoms of Canaan, ¹² and gave their land for a heritage, a heritage to Israel, His people. ¹³ Your name, Yahweh, endures forever; Your renown,

135:13 God's Name refers to His essential character, which is distinguished firstly by His grace and forgiveness (Ex. 34:4-6). This is unchanging; God isn't going to turn around and show us another face as it were. His Name is paralleled here with His renown, the reputation He has developed throughout Biblical history by acting consistently with His essential character. The Name of God isn't therefore simply the

Yahweh, throughout all generations. ¹⁴ For Yahweh will judge His people, and be sorry for His servants. ¹⁵ The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. ¹⁶ They have mouths, but they can't speak; they have eyes, but they can't see. ¹⁷ They have ears, but they can't hear; neither is there any breath in their mouths. ¹⁸ Those who make them will be like them; yes, everyone who trusts in them. ¹⁹ House of Israel, praise Yahweh! House of Aaron, praise Yahweh! ²⁰ House of Levi, praise Yahweh! You who fear Yahweh, praise Yahweh! ²¹ Blessed be Yahweh from Zion, He who dwells at Jerusalem. Praise Yah!

Psalms 136 Mar. 17

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good; for His grace endures forever. ² Give thanks to the God of gods; for His grace endures forever. ³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords; for His

grace endures forever: ⁴ to Him who alone does great wonders; for His grace endures forever: ⁵ to Him who by understanding made the heavens; for His grace endures forever: ⁶ to Him who spread out the earth above the waters; for His grace endures forever: ⁷ to Him who made the great lights; for His grace endures forever: ⁸ the sun to rule by day; for His grace endures forever; ⁹ the moon and stars to rule by night; for His grace endures forever: ¹⁰ to Him who struck down the Egyptian firstborn; for His grace endures forever; ¹¹ and brought out Israel from among them; for His grace endures forever; ¹² with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm; for His grace endures forever: ¹³ to Him who divided the Red Sea apart; for His grace endures forever; ¹⁴ and made Israel to pass through its midst; for His grace endures forever; ¹⁵ but overthrew Pharaoh and His army in the Red Sea; for His grace

word Yahweh or Jehovah. That is far too simplistic; the pronunciation and transliteration of Hebrew letters one way or another is irrelevant compared to the essence of the Name itself.

135:14 This parallels the Lord judging His people with His feeling sorry for them. In this sense judgment to come is a comfort not a threat.

135:19, 20 This parallels all Israel with the priestly family. As it was God's intention that Israel were to develop into an entire nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16), rather than just leave it to specialists.

136:8 In this hard and graceless world, we have only to look at the sun and moon, indeed at all of creation, to see God's sensitive grace constantly active.

136:10 The death of the Egyptian firstborn and their army (:15) was a reflection of God's grace to Israel. We may struggle with this but ultimately it is a challenge to our perceptions and understanding rather than any bad reflection against God (see 143:12). We are reminded of how the flood was brought to destroy the world of Noah's day in order to save him (2 Pet. 2:5), so that he was as it were saved by that water just as the water of baptism saves us (1 Pet. 3:19-21).

endures forever: ¹⁶ to Him who led His people through the wilderness; for His grace endures forever: ¹⁷ to Him who struck great kings; for His grace endures forever; ¹⁸ and killed mighty kings; for His grace endures forever: ¹⁹ Sihon king of the Amorites; for His grace endures forever; ²⁰ Og king of Bashan; for His grace endures forever; ²¹ and gave their land as an inheritance; for His grace endures forever; ²² even a heritage to Israel His servant; for His grace endures forever: ²³ who remembered us in our low estate; for His grace endures forever; ²⁴ and has delivered us from our adversaries; for His grace endures forever: ²⁵ who gives food to every creature; for His grace endures forever. ²⁶ Oh give thanks to the God of heaven; for His grace endures forever.

Psalm 137 Mar. 18

¹ By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, and yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. ² On the willows in its midst we hung up our harps. ³ For there, those who led us captive asked us for songs. Those who tormented us demanded us songs

of joy: Sing us one of the songs of Zion! ⁴ How could we sing Yahweh's song in a foreign land? ⁵ If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. ⁶ Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I don't remember you; if I don't prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy. ⁷ Remember, Yahweh, against the children of Edom, the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it! Raze it even to its foundation! ⁸ Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, he will be happy who rewards you as you have served us. ⁹ Happy shall he be, who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock.

Psalm 138 Mar. 18

By David.

¹ I will give You thanks with my whole heart. Before the mighty ones I will sing praises to You. ² I will bow down toward Your holy temple, and give thanks to Your Name for Your grace and for Your truth; for You have exalted above all things your name and your word. ³ In the day that I called, You answered me; You encouraged me with strength in my soul. ⁴ All the kings of the land will

136:23, 24 Understood by Mary as having fulfilment in the birth of Christ as our ultimate deliverer (Lk. 1:48).

137:8, 9 This extreme language may seem hard to square with the spirit of grace in the New Testament. However, vengeance upon God's enemies is also taught in the New Testament, especially in Revelation. These words are applied in Rev. 18:8,21 to what will finally happen to Babylon. Her spiritual children will be dashed against the rock of Christ, the stone of Dan. 2:44, at His return. Another perspective to explore is that it may also be that the Psalmist's attitude was simply wrong, even though the recording of these words was inspired. David likewise spoke words of great grace and also of bitter vengeance against his enemies; the experience of trauma and real evil in life usually makes the sufferer give vent to such extreme feelings.

give You thanks, Yahweh, for they have heard the words of Your mouth. ⁵ Yes, they will sing of the ways of Yahweh; for great is Yahweh's glory. ⁶ For though Yahweh is high, yet He looks after the lowly; but the proud, He knows from afar. ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies. Your right hand will save me. ⁸ Yahweh will fulfil that which concerns me; Your grace, Yahweh, endures forever. Don't forsake the works of Your own hands.

Psalm 139 Mar. 18

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh, You have searched me and You know me. ² You know my sitting down and my rising up, You perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ For there is not a word on my tongue, but, behold, Yahweh, You know it altogether. ⁵ You

hem me in behind and before, You have laid Your hand on me. ⁶ This knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty and beyond me. ⁷ Where could I go from Your Spirit? Or where could I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the dawn, and settle in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will hold me. ¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness will overwhelm me then the light around me will be night; ¹² even the darkness doesn't hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness is like light to You. ¹³ For You formed my inmost being, You knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful and my soul knows that very well. ¹⁵ My frame wasn't hidden from You when I was made in secret, woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my body. In Your

138:8 *That which concerns me* – God has a specific plan for each of us, in the same way as He has given each of us specific talents (Mt. 25:15) and has specified “good works” for us to achieve in our lives (Eph. 2:10). On His part, God will likewise fulfil what He has planned uniquely and individually for each of us – in accordance with our response to the possibilities He has potentially enabled.

139:2 We are *now* in God's presence, and can't escape from it; and the presence of God is judgment language (Acts 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2:19; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10). He not only sees and knows everything in our lives but is judging it too.

139:7-9 Jonah knew the Psalms; his prayer from inside the fish is packed with allusion to them. And yet he thought he could flee from God's presence (Jonah 1:3) – even though these verses almost prophesy of Jonah, that nobody can flee from God's presence; neither the sea itself nor geographical distance can hide from God. Jonah knew this. But he simply acted in a way diametrically opposed to that knowledge. We read the same words he did, and are faced with the same choice as to whether we truly believe them or merely know them.

book my body parts were all written and the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there were none of them. ¹⁷ How precious to me are Your thoughts, God! How vast is their sum! ¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I wake up, I am still with You. ¹⁹ If only You, God, would kill the wicked. Get away from me, you bloodthirsty men! ²⁰ For they speak against You wickedly, Your enemies take Your name in vain. ²¹ Yahweh, don't I hate those who hate You? Am I not grieved with those who rise up against You? ²² I hate them with complete hatred; they have become my enemies. ²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me, and know my thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

Psalm 140 Mar. 19

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

¹ Deliver me, Yahweh, from the evil man. Preserve me from the violent man ² and those who devise mischief

in their hearts. They continually gather themselves together for war, ³ they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent. Viper's poison is under their lips. Selah. ⁴ Yahweh, keep me from the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from the violent men who have determined to trip my feet. ⁵ The proud have hidden a snare for me, they have spread the cords of a net by the path, they have set traps for me. Selah. ⁶ I said to Yahweh, You are my God. Listen to the cry of my petitions, Yahweh. ⁷ Yahweh, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. ⁸ Yahweh, don't grant the desires of the wicked. Don't let their evil plans succeed, or they will become proud. Selah. ⁹ As for the heads of those who surround me, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. ¹⁰ Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise. ¹¹ An evil tongue won't be established in the land; evil will hunt the violent man to overthrow him. ¹² I know that Yahweh will maintain

139:15, 16 If this is the level of intention and planning which God put into us, we at least can draw the certain conclusion: life is not aimless. God has a purpose for us and we therefore ought to be living a purposeful life, not just drifting from experience to experience as in a half-conscious dream. God is focused upon us and we should be upon Him.

139:24 *Wicked way* – The Hebrew translated “wicked” also means ‘sorrow’ or ‘pain’. The way of sin, the path to quick pleasure, is in fact the way of pain and sorrow.

140:11 *An evil tongue* – The reference is not to the small piece of flesh within our mouths, but to an evil speaking *person*, paralleled with “the violent *man*”. But the tongue is put for the person because our words really are a reflection of who we are, in that our words ultimately reflect our hearts (Lk. 6:45) despite our best efforts to insist there's a distance between our real self and our words. Ultimately there isn't, for all our occasional posturing and hypocrisy. How we really think comes out in our words in the end, and thus we ‘are’ our tongue.

the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the needy. ¹³ Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name. The upright will dwell in Your presence.

Psalm 141 Mar. 19

A Psalm by David.

¹ Yahweh, I have called on You. Come to me quickly! Listen to my voice when I call to You. ² Let my prayer be set before You like incense; the lifting up of my hands like the evening sacrifice. ³ Set a watch, Yahweh, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips. ⁴ Don't incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who work iniquity; don't let me eat of their delicacies. ⁵ Let the righteous strike me, it is a kindness; let him reprove me, it is like oil on the head; don't let my head refuse it.; and my prayer will be for them in their calamities. ⁶ When their judges are thrown over the cliff, then they shall hear my words, for they are pleasant. ⁷ As when one ploughs and breaks up the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol; ⁸ but my eyes are on

You, Yahweh, the Lord. In You I take refuge; don't leave my soul destitute. ⁹ Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, from the traps of the workers of iniquity. ¹⁰ Let the wicked fall together into their own nets, while I pass on by.

Psalm 142 Mar. 19

A contemplation by David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.

¹ I cry with my voice to Yahweh, with my voice I ask Yahweh for mercy. ² I pour out my complaint before Him, I tell Him my troubles. ³ When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path. In the way in which I walk, they have hidden a snare for me. ⁴ Look on my right hand and see; for there is no one who is concerned for me. Refuge has fled from me, no one cares for my soul. ⁵ I cried to You, Yahweh. I said, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. ⁶ Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than me. ⁷ Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks

141:2 Prayer is likened to carefully prepared sacrifice, to painstakingly composed incense, beaten small, mixed in just the right proportions. The penalty for not making the incense properly was death. The lesson is that forethought will precede real prayer; it is an offering to God.

142:2 *I tell Him my troubles* – It's therapeutic to tell God our life situation, saying it out loud or writing it down as David did. We know that He already knows, but this exercise is good because it enables us to feel we have opened up before Him. The chronic, existential loneliness of people today could be solved by this opening up to God.

142:4 *No one cares for my soul* – This was indeed how David felt and perhaps it was really so; and yet he recognized that there were a group of people in existence called "the righteous" (:7). Even if we feel none of God's people are helping us as they should, it doesn't mean they aren't God's people or that nobody at all is righteous apart from us.

to Your name. The righteous will surround me, for You will be good to me.

Psalm 143 Mar. 20

A Psalm by David.

¹ Hear my prayer, Yahweh. Listen to my petitions. In Your faithfulness and righteousness, relieve me. ² Don't enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous. ³ For the enemy pursues my soul; he has struck my life down to the ground. He has made me live in dark places, as those who have been long dead. ⁴ Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me. My heart within me is desolate. ⁵ I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your doings, I contemplate the work of Your hands. ⁶ I spread forth my hands to You. My soul thirsts for You, like a parched land. Selah. ⁷ Hurry to answer me, Yahweh. My spirit fails. Don't hide Your face from me, so that I don't become like those who go down into the pit. ⁸ Cause me to hear Your grace in the morning, for I trust in You. Cause me to know

the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You. ⁹ Deliver me, Yahweh, from my enemies. I flee to You to hide me. ¹⁰ Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. Your Spirit is good; lead me in the land of uprightness. ¹¹ Revive me, Yahweh, for Your name's sake. In Your righteousness, bring my soul out of trouble. ¹² In Your loving kindness, cut off my enemies, and destroy all those who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant.

Psalm 144 Mar. 20

By David.

¹ Blessed be Yahweh, my rock, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to battle: ² my source of grace, my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer, my shield and He in whom I take refuge; who subdues my people under me. ³ Yahweh, what is man, that You care for him? Or the son of man, that You think of him? ⁴ Man is like a breath, his days are like a shadow that passes away. ⁵ Part Your heavens, Yahweh, and come down; touch the mountains, and they will

143:10 *Your Spirit is good; lead me* – David felt very strongly that he was being led, and he was confident that although he didn't understand exactly where he was going in the short term, God is fundamentally good and wishes us only good in our latter end. The "spirit" here may refer to an Angel (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7), whom David felt was leading him in his wilderness life under persecution from Saul (:3) just as an Angel led Israel in the wilderness.

143:12 The death of David's enemies was seen by him as God's "kindness". See on 136:10.

144:1, 2 *My rock... my fortress, my high tower* – There are references in the historical record to how David took refuge from Saul (:3) and other enemies in these things (1 Sam. 23:29; 2 Sam. 5:7,9). But David saw that the essence of his safety was not in them but in God. We may use medicines, doctors, insurance, emergency phone numbers... but the essence is that God is our saviour, even if He works through those things.

smoke. ⁶ Throw out lightning and scatter them. Send out Your arrows and defeat them. ⁷ Stretch out Your hand from above, rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, out of the hands of foreigners; ⁸ whose mouths speak deceit, whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. ⁹ I will sing a new song to You, God, on a ten-stringed lyre I will sing praises to You. ¹⁰ You are He who gives salvation to kings, who rescues David His servant from the deadly sword. ¹¹ Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hands of foreigners, whose mouths speak deceit, whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. ¹² Then our sons will be like well-nurtured plants, our daughters like corner stones carved to adorn a palace. ¹³ Our barns will be full, filled with all kinds of provision; our sheep will bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields. ¹⁴ Our oxen will pull heavy loads, there will be no breaking in and no going away,

and no crying in our streets. ¹⁵ Happy are the people who are in such a situation. Happy are the people whose God is Yahweh.

Psalm 145 Mar. 21

A praise psalm by David.

¹ I will exalt You my God as the King. I will praise Your name forever and ever. ² Every day I will praise You, I will extol Your name forever and ever. ³ Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! His greatness is unsearchable. ⁴ One generation will commend Your works to another, and will declare Your mighty acts. ⁵ Of the glorious majesty of Your honour, of Your wondrous works, I will meditate. ⁶ Men will speak of the might of Your awesome acts; I will declare Your greatness. ⁷ They will utter the memory of Your great goodness and will sing of Your righteousness. ⁸ Yahweh is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great grace. ⁹ Yahweh is good to all, His

144:12 David must have shocked many by singing of how our sons shall be as plants and our daughters as corner stones. For the corner stones of a family were perceived to be the male head of the family. The Biblical view of women always sharply contrasted with that of the surrounding world at the time; such is God's valuing of each of His children regardless of their gender or perception within society.

145:1 *You my God as the King* – David was king of Israel, but that meant little to him compared to the greatness of God's sovereign Kingship. It may be that we are exalted a little bit in life, in career, social standing or even respect amongst God's people. An awareness of God's greatness will keep this in perspective for us; we will see it as nothing compared to God's exaltation and our subsequent smallness.

145:5 *Of Your wondrous works, I will meditate* – The rest of this Psalm speaks of David enthusiastically telling others about these things. But the motivation for preaching, the impetus for overcoming the inertia we often face in raising spiritual subjects in conversation, is our personal meditation upon these things, of telling ourselves within our own self-talk of God's greatness and the things of His Kingdom. The more public expression of these things to others will then come naturally without needing to be forced.

tender mercies are over all His works. ¹⁰ All Your works will give thanks to You, Yahweh; Your saints will extol You. ¹¹ They will speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk about Your power; ¹² to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, the glory of the majesty of His kingdom. ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Your dominion endures throughout all generations. Yahweh is faithful in all His words, and loving in all His deeds. ¹⁴ Yahweh upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down. ¹⁵ The eyes of all wait for You; You give them their food in due season. ¹⁶ You open Your hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing. ¹⁷ Yahweh is righteous in all His ways, and gracious in all His works. ¹⁸ Yahweh is near to all those who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. ¹⁹ He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him, He will also hear their cry and save them. ²⁰ Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. ²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of Yahweh; let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.

Psalm 146 Mar. 21

¹ Praise Yah! Praise Yahweh, my soul. ² While I live, I will praise Yahweh. I will sing praises to my God as long as I exist. ³ Don't put your trust in princes, each merely a son of man in whom there is no help. ⁴ His spirit departs, and he returns to the dust. In that very day, his thoughts perish. ⁵ Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Yahweh his God: ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. Yahweh frees the prisoners, ⁸ Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind, Yahweh raises up those who are bowed down, Yahweh loves the righteous. ⁹ Yahweh preserves the strangers, He upholds the fatherless and widow, but the way of the wicked He turns upside down. ¹⁰ Yahweh will reign forever; your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise Yah!

Psalm 147 Mar. 21

¹ Praise Yah, for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and fitting to praise Him. ² Yah-

145:19 This isn't a blank cheque promise to give us whatever we pray for; the "desire" of God's people is paralleled here with salvation. "I want to live forever in God's Kingdom more than anything else in the world" should be our credo; and if this is really the case in our hearts, we shall receive it (2 Tim. 4:8).

146:4 This clearly teaches that death is unconsciousness; we have no 'immortal soul' which consciously exists after death. The allusion is to how God made man from the dust and put into him the breath or spirit of life (Gen. 2:7). When we die, this spirit or life force returns to God, and we return to dust. The practical implication of correctly understanding human mortality is that we won't trust in people, but rather in God; for we will realize their weakness and ultimate inability to save.

147:2 The Jews returned from Babylon to the land of their own volition; but it was Yahweh who *gathered* them back, as if He called them almost of *His* volition rather

weh builds up Jerusalem, He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. ³ He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. ⁴ He counts the number of the stars, He calls them all by their names. ⁵ Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. ⁶ Yahweh upholds the humble; He brings the wicked down to the ground. ⁷ Sing to Yahweh with thanksgiving, sing praises on the harp to our God, ⁸ who covers the sky with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass grow on the mountains. ⁹ He provides food for the livestock, and for the young ravens when they call. ¹⁰ He doesn't delight in the strength of the horse, He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. ¹¹ Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His grace. ¹² Praise Yahweh, Jerusalem! Praise your God, Zion! ¹³ For He has strengthened the bars of your gates, He has blessed your children within you. ¹⁴ He makes peace in your borders, He fills you with the finest of the wheat. ¹⁵ He sends out His commandment to the earth; His

word runs very swiftly. ¹⁶ He gives snow like wool, and scatters frost like ashes. ¹⁷ He hurls down His hail like pebbles- who can stand before His cold? ¹⁸ He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow. ¹⁹ He shows His word to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. ²⁰ He has not done this for any other nation; they don't know His ordinances. Praise Yah!

Psalms 148 Mar. 22

¹ Praise Yah! Praise Yahweh from the heavens! Praise Him in the heights! ² Praise Him, all His angels! Praise Him, all His army! ³ Praise Him, sun and moon! Praise Him, all you shining stars! ⁴ Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, You waters that are above the skies. ⁵ Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for He commanded, and they were created. ⁶ He has also established them forever and ever. He has made a decree which will not pass away. ⁷ Praise Yahweh from the earth, you great sea creatures, and all depths! ⁸ Lightning and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling

than theirs. They rebuilt Jerusalem; but actually, Yahweh did, through His confirmation of all the freewill effort of men like Ezra and Nehemiah. In our exodus from this world and journey to the Kingdom, God is willing and able to confirm every freewill effort we make in every aspect of our lives. The returning exiles had to strengthen the bars of Jerusalem's gates as is emphasized throughout Neh. 3; but God worked through them (:13).

148:2 *All* the Angels are obedient to God; there are no sinful Angels in Heaven; see on 103:20,21.

148:6 God will never destroy the earth and heavens; it is His declared purpose to establish His eternal Kingdom on earth at Christ's return (Dan. 2:44). Any references to the destruction of 'heavens and earth' are using this term in a symbolic sense to describe a system of things on earth (Is. 1:2).

His word; ⁹ mountains and all hills; fruit trees and all cedars; ¹⁰ wild animals and all livestock; small creatures and flying birds; ¹¹ kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth; ¹² both young men and young women; old men and children: ¹³ let them praise the name of Yahweh, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the skies. ¹⁴ He has lifted up the horn of His people, inspiring the praise of all His saints, even of the children of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise Yah!

Psalm 149 Mar. 22

¹ Praise Yahweh! Sing to Yahweh a new song, His praise in the assembly of the saints. ² Let Israel rejoice in Him who made him, let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. ³ Let them praise His name in the dance! Let them sing praises to Him with tambourine and harp! ⁴ For Yahweh takes pleasure in His people, He crowns the humble with salva-

tion. ⁵ Let the saints rejoice in glory, let them sing for joy on their beds. ⁶ May the high praises of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hand; ⁷ to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; ⁸ to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹ to execute on them the judgment written. All His saints have this honour. Praise Yah!

Psalm 150 Mar. 22

¹ Praise Yah! Praise God in His sanctuary! Praise Him in His heavens for His acts of power! ² Praise Him for His mighty acts! Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! ³ Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet! Praise Him with harp and lyre! ⁴ Praise Him with tambourine and dancing! Praise Him with stringed instruments and flute! ⁵ Praise Him with loud cymbals! Praise Him with resounding cymbals! ⁶ Let everything that has breath praise Yah! Praise Yah!

148:14 *Saints* refers to all God's people, not just a few very righteous people.

149:2 *Be joyful in their King* – This Psalm would've been written and used when Israel had a human king. But the Psalmist, perhaps king David, wanted them to understand that whatever system of human leadership there is amongst God's people, He is their ultimate King and His Kingship was to be personally felt by every one of His people, so that they might eternally be His Kingdom, the entity of persons over which He extends rulership and sovereign authority.

150:3-5 The idea is that everything using all methods should praise God. We should never therefore limit the way others praise God, nor be critical of it because it's not our method.

PROVERBS

CHAPTER 1 Mar. 23

The Purpose of the Book

The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel: ² to know wisdom and instruction; to discern the words of understanding; ³ to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; ⁴ to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young man: ⁵ that the wise man may be obedient, and increase in learning; that the man of understanding may attain to sound counsel: ⁶ to understand a proverb, and parables, the words and riddles of the wise. ⁷ The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction.

Embrace Wisdom

⁸ My son, listen to your father's instruction, and don't forsake your mother's teaching: ⁹ for they will be a garland to grace your head, and chains around your neck. ¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, don't consent. ¹¹ If they say, Come with us, let's lay in wait for blood; let's lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; ¹² let's swallow them up alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who

go down into the pit. ¹³ We'll find all kinds of wealth. We'll fill our houses with spoil. ¹⁴ You shall cast your lot among us, we'll all have one purse. ¹⁵ My son, don't walk in the way with them. Keep your foot from their path, ¹⁶ for their feet run to evil. They hurry to shed blood. ¹⁷ For in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird: ¹⁸ but these lay wait for their own blood. They lurk secretly for their own lives. ¹⁹ So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its owners.

Do Not Reject Wisdom

²⁰ Wisdom calls aloud in the street. She utters her voice in the public squares. ²¹ She calls at the head of busy places, at the entrance of the city gates she utters her words: ²² How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? How long will mockers delight themselves in mockery and fools hate knowledge? ²³ Turn at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you, I will make known my words to you. ²⁴ Because I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no one has paid attention; ²⁵ but

1:5 *That the wise man may be obedient* – There is an upward spiral in spiritual life, whereby God's commandments are designed to lead the wise to yet more obedience if they are obeyed; wisdom leads to more wisdom.

1:12 Sheol is the Hebrew word translated "hell" in some Bibles; it is also translated "the grave", and is here parallel with "the pit". It refers simply to the grave and not to any place of eternal torment.

1:23 *My spirit... my words* – The Bible is written by inspiration of God. God's words are a vehicle by which His Spirit works in the lives of His children (Jn. 6:63).

you have ignored all my counsel, and wished none of my reproof; ²⁶ I also will laugh at your disaster. I will mock when calamity overtakes you; ²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when your disaster comes on like a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come on you. ²⁸ Then will they call on me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me; ²⁹ because they hated knowledge, and didn't choose the fear of Yahweh. ³⁰ They wished for none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. ³¹ Therefore they will eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with the fruit of their own schemes. ³² For the backsliding of the simple will kill them. The careless ease of fools will destroy them. ³³ But whoever listens to me will dwell securely and will be at ease, without fear of harm.

CHAPTER 2 Mar. 24

The Benefits of Wisdom

My son, if you will receive my words and store up my commandments within you ² so as to turn your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; ³ yes, if you cry out for wisdom, and lift up your voice for understanding; ⁴ if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For Yahweh gives wisdom. Out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He lays up sound wisdom for the upright, He is a shield to those who walk in integrity; ⁸ that He may guard the paths of justice, and preserve the way of His saints. ⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter into

1:26 *Mock... laugh* – God will mock and laugh at the Gentile nations who come against Him in the last day (Ps. 2:4), and yet He will do just the same to those of His people who refuse wisdom's voice. If we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from them when the judgments fall. We will be "Condemned with the world..." (1 Cor. 11:32). If we don't come out from Babylon, we will share her judgments (Rev. 18:4).

1:28 *Then will they call on me, but I will not answer* – In the day of judgment, everybody will desperately want to be in God's Kingdom, to live eternally in the way of wisdom. The rejected will urgently seek acceptance, but it will be too late (Mt. 25:11; Lk. 13:25).

1:29 *Hated knowledge* – They 'despise' wisdom (:30); but they likely never said so in those words. In their lives they lived in "careless ease" (:32), but this is tantamount to proactively hating spiritual knowledge.

2:3 Wisdom cries out loud to be heard (8:1), and yet the righteous man cries after wisdom, and lifts up his voice for understanding; there is thus a sense of mutuality here between God's wisdom and the sincere seeker. Every genuine believer will have felt this; we urgently cry for wisdom, and yet God's word is crying out to teach us. If this is our attitude, the things of God's word will be our life (4:13). As Israel were to talk about the word as they went out and came in and as they walked along the way, so should the new Israel (7:2,3).

your heart, knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. ¹¹ Discretion will watch over you. Understanding will keep you, ¹² to deliver you from the way of evil, from the men who speak perverse things; ¹³ who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴ who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the perverseness of evil; ¹⁵ who are crooked in their ways, and wayward in their paths: ¹⁶ to deliver you from the Gentile woman, even from the foreigner who flatters with her words; ¹⁷ who forsakes the friend of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God: ¹⁸ for her house leads down to death, her paths to the dead. ¹⁹ None who go to her return again, neither do they attain to the paths of life: ²⁰ that you may walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. ²¹ For the upright will dwell in the land; the perfect will eternally remain in it. ²² But the wicked will be cut off from the land, the deceitful will be rooted out of it.

CHAPTER 3 Mar. 25

More Benefits of Wisdom

My son, don't forget my teaching but let your heart keep my commandments: ² for length of days and years of life, and peace, will they add to you. ³ Don't let grace and truth forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ So you will find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. ⁷ Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear Yahweh, and depart from evil. ⁸ It will be health to your body, and nourishment to your bones. ⁹ Honour Yahweh with your substance, with the first fruits of all your increase: ¹⁰ so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. ¹¹ My son, don't despise Yahweh's discipline, neither be weary of His reproof: ¹² for whom

2:16, 17 Solomon was inspired to write the Proverbs in his youth, and yet he did the very things he warns others against. Here he teaches that wisdom would save a man from the Gentile woman who made a covenant with the God of Israel in her youth (in order to marry an Israelite, by implication), but soon forgot it. This was exactly the case of Solomon, who married Gentile women in his youth; yet he just couldn't see the personal relevance of his own wisdom to himself. The more spiritual knowledge we have, the more prone we are to make this same mistake.

3:4 This is alluded to in Lk. 2:52, where we read that Jesus grew in wisdom and in favour with God and man. The "my Son" spoken of in Proverbs can therefore be understood as *the* Son, the Lord Jesus. It could be that the various warnings to the son about not getting involved with Gentile women, not getting in with bad company in his youth etc. were all speaking directly to temptations the Lord Jesus encountered in His youth. In this case we could build up some picture of the experiences of the Lord's early life on the basis of the "my son" exhortations of Proverbs.

3:11 All Scripture is recorded for *our* learning and comfort (Rom. 15:4). The exhortation here in Prov. 3:11 "speaks unto *you* as unto children..." (Heb. 12:5). We are to constantly personalize Scripture and hear God speaking to *us* directly.

Yahweh loves, He reproves; even as a father reproves the son in whom he delights. ¹³ Happy is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gets understanding. ¹⁴ For her good profit is better than getting silver, and her return is better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies. None of the things you can desire are to be compared to her. ¹⁶ Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honour. ¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Happy is each one who retains her. ¹⁹ By wisdom Yahweh founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens. ²⁰ By His knowledge the depths were broken up and the skies drop down the dew. ²¹ My son, let them not depart from your eyes. Keep sound wisdom and discretion: ²² so they will be life to your soul, and grace for your neck. ²³ Then you shall walk in your way securely; your foot won't stumble. ²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid. Yes, you will lie down, and your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Don't be afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation

of the wicked when it comes: ²⁶ for Yahweh will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being taken. ²⁷ Don't withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do it. ²⁸ Don't say to your neighbour, Go, and come again; tomorrow I will give it to you, when you have it by you. ²⁹ Don't devise evil against your neighbour, since he dwells securely by you. ³⁰ Don't strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm. ³¹ Don't envy the man of violence; choose none of his ways. ³² For the perverse person is an abomination to Yahweh, but His friendship is with the upright. ³³ Yahweh's curse is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habitation of the righteous. ³⁴ Surely He mocks the mockers, but He gives grace to the humble. ³⁵ The wise will inherit glory, but shame will be the promotion of fools.

CHAPTER 4 Mar. 26

The Supremacy of Wisdom

Listen, sons, to a father's instruction. Pay attention and know understanding; ² for I give you sound learning. Don't forsake my law.

3:20 *And the skies drop down the dew* – The historical creation of all things by God's word of command is ongoing, in that His word in an ongoing way commands the dew to fall just as His word re-arranged the waters as recorded in Genesis 1. The idea of :19,20 is that the same word which God used as the agency of physical creation – He said, and it was done – is ongoing in our lives if we respond to the word of wisdom, thereby becoming a new creation through that same word, centred as it is in the Lord Jesus as that word made flesh (2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 1:14).

3:34 *He gives grace to the humble* – Quoted in James 4:5,6 in an appeal to us not to be envious but rather to be humble. The truly humble aren't envious; God's gift of grace to them in Christ is so wonderful that we have quite enough to personally glory in, and there will be no envy of others.

³ For I was a son to my father, tender and an only child in the sight of my mother. ⁴ He taught me, and said to me: Let your heart retain my words. Keep my commandments, and live. ⁵ Get wisdom. Get understanding. Don't forget, neither swerve from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Don't forsake her, and she will preserve you. Love her, and she will keep you. ⁷ Wisdom is supreme. Get wisdom. Yes, though it costs all your possessions, get understanding. ⁸ Esteem her, and she will exalt you. She will bring you to honour when you embrace her. ⁹ She will give to your head a garland of grace. She will deliver a crown of splendour to you. ¹⁰ O my son, receive my sayings; and the years of your life shall be many. ¹¹ I have taught you in the way of wisdom, I have led you in straight paths. ¹² When you go, your steps will not be hampered. When you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Take firm hold of instruction. Don't let her go. Keep her, for she is your life. ¹⁴ Don't enter into the path of the wicked. Don't walk in the way

of evil men. ¹⁵ Avoid it, and don't pass by it; turn from it, and pass on. ¹⁶ For they don't sleep, unless they do evil. Their sleep is taken away, unless they make someone fall. ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn, that shines more and more until the perfect day. ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is like darkness. They don't know what they stumble over. ²⁰ My son, attend to my words. Turn your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Let them not depart from your eyes. Keep them in the midst of your heart. ²² For they are life to those who find them, and health to their whole body. ²³ Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it is the wellspring of life. ²⁴ Put away from yourself a perverse mouth, put corrupt lips far from you. ²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. ²⁶ Make the path of your feet level. Let all of your ways be established. ²⁷ Don't turn to the right hand nor to the left, remove your foot from evil.

4:4-9 This is Solomon quoting to *his* children what his father David had taught him about wisdom. He was raising his children as he had been raised, which is what all parents inevitably tend to do by default. But Solomon himself lived without personally applying the wisdom to himself; all he says is true, but the lesson is that we can accept theoretical truth, pass it on to others with great conviction, and yet be unmoved by it ourselves.

4:16 Doing evil is defined as making another fall. The sinfulness of sin is especially in the negative effect we have upon others.

4:23 The heart is used in the Bible as a metaphor for the mind. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity. How we think now will affect our eternal future.

4:26 *Make the path of your feet level* – Quoted in Heb. 12:13 about the need to do this so that *others* don't stumble in the way of life. Our personal life path must be straight not only for ourselves to reach the Kingdom, but so that others can follow us there. Again we see that spirituality is never limited to ourselves; it always affects others.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 27***The Dangers of Adultery***

My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my understanding: ² that you may maintain discretion, that your lips may preserve knowledge. ³ For the lips of an adulteress drip honey. Her mouth is smoother than oil, ⁴ but in the end she is as bitter as wormwood, and as sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death, her steps lead straight to Sheol. ⁶ She gives no thought to the way of life. Her ways are crooked, and she doesn't know it. ⁷ Now therefore, my sons, listen to me. Don't depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Remove your way far from her. Don't come near the door of her house, ⁹ lest you give your honour to others, and your years to the cruel one; ¹⁰ lest foreigners feast on your wealth, and your labours enrich another man's house. ¹¹ You will groan at your latter end, when your flesh and your body are consumed, ¹² and say, How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; ¹³ neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor turned my ear to those who instructed me! ¹⁴ I have

come to the brink of utter ruin, in the midst of the gathered assembly. ¹⁵ Drink water out of your own cistern, springing water out of your own spring. ¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets, streams of water in the public squares? ¹⁷ Let them be for yourself alone, not for strangers with you. ¹⁸ Let your spring be blessed. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ A loving doe and a graceful deer— let her breasts satisfy you at all times. Be captivated always with her love. ²⁰ For why should you, my son, be captivated with an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another? ²¹ For the ways of man are before the eyes of Yahweh, He examines all his paths. ²² The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare him. The cords of his sin hold him firmly. ²³ He will die for lack of instruction. In the greatness of his own folly he will go astray.

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 28***Avoiding the Trap of Debt and Being Industrious***

My son, if you have become collateral for your neighbour, if you have struck your hands in pledge

5:5 Sheol is translated in some Bibles as “hell”, but the word refers simply to the grave, which is how it is often translated. Here it is parallel with “death”, as in 7:27. It doesn't refer to any place of eternal conscious torment.

5:15 *Springing water out of your own spring* – The metaphor likens the man's wife to a spring of ever fresh water which is personally for himself. A husband should find in his wife something ever fresh, and thus marriages blessed by God don't default into the same old scene scenario, there's always something fresh and new for us in each other if we perceive our partners as we should.

5:21 *For the ways of man are before the eyes of Yahweh* – Sexual unfaithfulness is precluded by the fact that God sees and knows all things; Job likewise answered a false accusation of marital infidelity by saying that this wasn't possible for him, because he lived in the constant presence of the God who sees all things (Job 31:1-4).

for a stranger,² you are trapped by the words of your mouth. You are ensnared with the words of your mouth.³ Do this now my son and deliver yourself, since you have come into the hand of your neighbour. Go, humble yourself. Press your plea with your neighbour.⁴ Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids.⁵ Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.⁶ Go to the ant, you sluggard. Consider her ways, and be wise;⁷ which having no chief, overseer or ruler,⁸ yet provides her bread in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest.⁹ How long will you sleep, lazy one? When will you arise out of your sleep?¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:¹¹ so your poverty will come as a robber, and your scarcity as an armed man.¹² A worthless person, a man of iniquity, is he who walks with a perverse mouth;¹³ who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who motions with his fingers;¹⁴ in whose heart is perverseness, who devises evil continually,

who always sows discord.¹⁵ Therefore his calamity will come suddenly. He will be broken suddenly, and that without remedy.¹⁶ There are six things which Yahweh hates; yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ proud eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood; ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ a false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers.

The Dangers of Promiscuity

²⁰ My son, keep your father's commandment, and don't forsake your mother's teaching.²¹ Bind them continually on your heart. Tie them around your neck.²² When you walk, it will lead you. When you sleep, it will watch over you. When you awake, it will talk with you.²³ For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light. Reproofs of instruction are the way of life,²⁴ to keep you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the wayward wife's tongue.²⁵ Don't lust after her beauty in your heart, neither let her

6:7 *Having no chief, overseer or ruler* – We can learn from meditating upon the natural creation. Human beings tend to work best when overseen by a human leader; but in spiritual life, we are to work for God from self motivation, regardless of whether or not we have good leadership within the family of God.

6:13 God is sensitive to the body language of people, and so should we be.

6:14 *Who always sows discord* – In terms of the sentence structure, this is the crowning characteristic of the wicked man introduced in :12. Division and fracture of human relationships is perceived by God as the end result of sinfulness – thus indicating the huge value He places upon unity amongst His children. Divisiveness is the very essence of sinfulness. Likewise the seven things which God hates culminate in the sin of sowing discord amongst brothers (:16-18). Indeed, :16 could imply that this seventh sin is the ultimate abomination to Him.

6:25 *Neither let her captivate you with her eyelids* – The blindness of Solomon is driv-

captivate you with her eyelids. ²⁶ For a prostitute reduces you to a piece of bread. The adulteress hunts for your precious life. ²⁷ Can a man scoop fire into his lap, and his clothes not be burned? ²⁸ Or can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? ²⁹ So is he who goes in to his neighbour's wife. Whoever touches her will not be unpunished. ³⁰ Men don't despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; ³¹ but if he is found, he shall restore seven times. He shall give all the wealth of his house. ³² He who commits adultery with a woman is void of understanding. He who does it destroys his own soul. ³³ He will get wounds and dishonour, his reproach will not be wiped away. ³⁴ For jealousy arouses the fury of the husband. He won't spare in the day of vengeance. ³⁵ He won't regard any ransom, neither

will he rest content, though you give many gifts.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 29

Beware of the Adulteress

My son, keep my words. Lay up my commandments within you. ² Keep my commandments and live! Guard my teaching as the apple of your eye. ³ Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Tell wisdom, You are my sister. Call understanding your relative, ⁵ that they may keep you from the strange woman, from the foreigner who flatters with her words. ⁶ For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice. ⁷ I saw among the simple ones. I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding, ⁸ passing through the street near her corner, he went the way to her house, ⁹ in the twilight, in the

en home time and again. He warned the young man about being captivated by the eyelids of the Gentile woman; yet it was the eyes of his Egyptian lover that he openly admitted stole his heart (Song 4:9; 6:5). The Gentile woman has words like a honeycomb (5:3); and yet this is exactly how Solomon found his woman's words (Song 4:11).

6:27 These verses powerfully pierce deeply into the psychology of sin, especially sexual sin. We reason that we can go *so* far into it, but not *too* far. But once we launch into sin, we will be damaged by it. The call of wisdom is to total abstinence from it, rather than spiritual brinkmanship.

7:2 The idea of keeping commandments in order to live is a reference back to the many Deuteronomy passages where Moses pleads with Israel to keep *God's* commands and live. But Solomon came to perceive his father David's commands as those of God, and in his generation he watered this down in his own mind until he assumed that *his* commands to his children were to be treated by them as the law of God – no matter how far he had strayed himself from God's law. It's a gripping, frightening psychology. "O my son, receive my sayings; and the years of your life shall be many" (4:10) is alluding to the promise of long life for the obedient to *God's* laws; but never does Solomon make the admission that his laws are only a repetition of God's laws. He was playing God by implying that *his* words carried the weight of *God's* words. He taught his son obedience to him as a father, but not to God Himself.

evening of the day, in the middle of the night and in the darkness. ¹⁰ Behold, there a woman met him with the attire of a prostitute, and with crafty intent. ¹¹ She is loud and defiant. Her feet don't stay in her house. ¹² Now she is in the streets, now in the squares, and lurking at every corner. ¹³ So she caught him, and kissed him. With an impudent face she said to him: ¹⁴ Sacrifices of peace offerings are with me. This day I have paid my vows. ¹⁵ Therefore I came out to meet you, to diligently seek your face, and I have found you. ¹⁶ I have spread my couch with carpets of tapestry, with striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt. ¹⁷ I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. ¹⁸ Come, let's take our fill of loving until the morning. Let's solace ourselves with loving. ¹⁹ For my husband isn't at home. He has gone on a long journey. ²⁰ He has taken a bag of money with him; he will come home at the full moon. ²¹ With persuasive words she led him astray. With the flattering of her lips, she seduced him. ²² He followed her immediately, as an ox goes to the slaughter, as a fool stepping into a noose. ²³ Until an arrow strikes through his liver, as a bird hurries to the snare,

and doesn't know that it will cost his life. ²⁴ Now therefore, sons, listen to me. Pay attention to the words of my mouth. ²⁵ Don't let your heart turn to her ways. Don't go astray in her paths, ²⁶ for she has thrown down many wounded. Yes, all her slain are a mighty army. ²⁷ Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the rooms of death.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 30

Wisdom Personified

Doesn't wisdom cry out? Doesn't understanding raise her voice? ² On the top of high places by the way, where the paths meet, she stands. ³ Beside the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entry doors, she cries aloud: ⁴ To you people I call! I send my voice to the sons of mankind. ⁵ You simple, understand prudence. You fools, be of an understanding heart. ⁶ Hear, for I will speak excellent things. The opening of my lips is for right things. ⁷ For my mouth speaks truth. Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸ All the words of my mouth are in righteousness. There is nothing crooked or perverse in them. ⁹ They are all plain to him who understands, right to those who find knowledge. ¹⁰ Re-

7:14 *Sacrifices of peace offerings are with me* – It is the mixing of spirituality and sensuality which is such a powerful temptation; in the same way as Israel never totally rejected Yahweh, but mixed His worship with that of idols. Likewise many false doctrines contain a mixture of truth and error.

7:16 *With striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt* – Solomon perceived the association of Egypt with failure with women; and yet made the very same mistake which he so well perceived and eloquently preached against to others.

7:18 *Let's solace ourselves with loving* – The justification of any sin, but especially sexual sin, is that we have had hard lives and deserve some break, some solace, some human comfort.

ceive my instruction rather than silver; knowledge rather than choice gold. ¹¹ For wisdom is better than rubies. All the things that may be desired can't be compared to it. ¹² I, wisdom, have made prudence my dwelling. Find out knowledge and discretion. ¹³ The fear of Yahweh is to hate evil. I hate pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse mouth. ¹⁴ Counsel and sound knowledge are mine. I have understanding and power. ¹⁵ By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. ¹⁶ By me princes rule; nobles, and all the righteous rulers of the earth. ¹⁷ I love those who love me. Those who seek me diligently will find me. ¹⁸ With me are riches, honour, enduring wealth, and prosperity. ¹⁹ My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold; my yield than choice silver. ²⁰ I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice; ²¹ that I may give wealth to those who love me. I fill their treasures. ²² Yahweh possessed me in the

beginning of His work, before His deeds of old. ²³ I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth existed. ²⁴ When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵ Before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was brought forth; ²⁶ while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the beginning of the dust of the world. ²⁷ When He established the skies, I was there; when He set a circle on the surface of the deep, ²⁸ when He established the clouds above, when the springs of the deep became strong, ²⁹ when He gave to the sea its boundary, that the waters should not violate His commandment, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; ³⁰ then I was the craftsman by His side. I was a delight day by day, always rejoicing before Him, ³¹ rejoicing in His whole world. My delight was with the sons of men. ³² Now therefore,

8:11 Often Solomon's Proverbs bring out the tension between wealth and wisdom, and the need to choose wisdom (see too 16:16). But whilst he was inspired to write this, and true as it all was, it is inevitable that Solomon said all this with his mind on the way that he had rejected wealth for wisdom when in his youth he was asked by God for his wish (1 Kings 3:11,12). He thought that his right choice in early life [cp. Christian baptism] justified him in later loving wealth rather than wisdom. He taught that wisdom filled the treasures of the wise (:21) – just as his treasures were filled with wealth. Yet in his old age in Ecclesiastes he says that he amassed wealth for himself to see if he could find fulfilment in it – and he seems to have done that because now in his younger days he thought that amassing wealth was justified because he loved the possession of wisdom. Many a middle aged businessman, baptized in his youth and knowing God's truths very well in theory, has made just the same tragic mistake.

8:32 *Now therefore, my sons, listen to me* – These are words attributed to wisdom, but they are the words Solomon uses about his own instruction of his sons in 5:7. Solomon came to assume that he personally was wisdom personified. He had been given wisdom, but the very possession of it led him to assume that he was somehow infallible and spiritually invincible. This was his downfall. The fact we may possess God's

my sons, listen to me, for blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³ Hear instruction, and be wise. Don't refuse it. ³⁴ Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my door posts. ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life, and will obtain favour from Yahweh. ³⁶ But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul. All those who hate me love death.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 30

Wisdom and Foolishness Both Invite Us

Wisdom has built her house, she has carved out her seven pillars, ² she has prepared her bread, she has mixed her wine. She has also set her table, ³ she has sent out her maidens, she cries from the highest places of the city: ⁴ Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! As for him who is void of understanding, she says to him, ⁵ Come, eat some of my bread, drink some of the wine which

I have mixed! ⁶ Leave your simple ways, and live. Walk in the way of understanding. ⁷ He who corrects a mocker invites insult; he who reproves a wicked man invites abuse. ⁸ Don't reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you. Reprove a wise man, and he will love you; ⁹ instruct a wise man, and he will be still wiser. Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. ¹⁰ The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. ¹¹ For by me your days will be multiplied. The years of your life will be increased. ¹² If you are wise, you are wise for yourself. If you mock, you alone will bear it. ¹³ The foolish woman is loud, undisciplined, and knows nothing. ¹⁴ She sits at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, ¹⁵ to call to those who pass by, who go straight on their ways, ¹⁶ Whoever is simple, let him turn in here. As for him who

Truth doesn't mean that we personally are thereby infallible in every aspect of life. We hold those truths in clay, fallible vessels (2 Cor. 4:7).

9:1 In this chapter we have a classic example of where something abstract – like wisdom – is personified. Personification is widely used in the New Testament, where abstract things like sin and God's power, the Holy Spirit, are spoken of as persons even though they aren't.

9:5 An invitation to bread and wine represents fellowship together. The bread and wine of the communion service likewise speak of our fellowship with God and His Son, and our willingness to learn of them.

9:7-9 These verses appear to be the advice of wisdom to her young women who preach her message (:3). We begin the whole enterprise of sharing wisdom with the recognition that we are likely to be rejected and abused by some who hear our message. Wisdom is calling to everyone, it's not that she advises her preachers to ignore people they consider wicked. But she warns her representatives ahead of time that they can expect rejection and hurt as a result of their work.

9:8 An ability to take criticism is required if we are to become wise. But as people increasingly withdraw within themselves in modern society, this is a characteristic increasingly rarely seen.

is void of understanding, she says to him, ¹⁷ Stolen water is sweet. Food eaten in secret is pleasant. ¹⁸ But he doesn't know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 31

The Proverbs of Solomon

The Righteous and the Wicked- Their Attitudes Contrasted

The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a glad father; but a foolish son brings grief to his mother. ² Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death. ³ Yahweh will not allow the soul of the righteous to go hungry, but He thrusts away the desire of the wicked. ⁴ He becomes poor who works with a lazy hand, but the hand of the diligent brings wealth. ⁵ He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during the harvest is a son who causes shame. ⁶ Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the

wicked. ⁷ The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot. ⁸ The wise in heart accept commandments, but a chattering fool will fall. ⁹ He who walks blamelessly walks surely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out. ¹⁰ One winking with the eye causes sorrow, and a chattering fool will fall. ¹¹ The mouth of the righteous is a spring of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. ¹² Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all wrongs. ¹³ Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has discernment, but a rod is for the back of him who is void of understanding. ¹⁴ Wise men lay up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near ruin.

A Disciplined Life

¹⁵ The rich man's wealth is his fortified city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty. ¹⁶ The labour of the righteous leads to life; the increase of the wicked leads to sin. ¹⁷ He is in the way of life who heeds correction,

10:1 Solomon has himself in view here, for he was known internationally for his wisdom. Yet much of his apparent spirituality and zeal for God seems to have been a result of living out David's parental expectation. The emphasis he places in Proverbs upon pleasing fathers reflects Solomon's personal living out of parental hopes. Hence his collapse of faith later in life.

10:11 Our words really can be the water of life to others; this is why how we speak is so important.

10:12 *Love covers all wrongs* – The first and second halves of the verses in Proverbs are often related to each other. The way of love is not to turn a blind eye; but it covers wrongs in the sense that it doesn't 'stir up strife' in the sense of continually exposing the fault lines which there are in every relationship, but rather covers them.

10:15, 16 These verses speak of attitudes to wealth; the rich trust in their wealth and become isolated by it, like a man within a fortified city. The poor are soul destroyed because they are poor, and because they think that not having wealth means they are nothing. However, the righteous labour for God with eternal life as their end in view (:16), thus making their economic status simply not an item in their self-perception.

but he who forsakes reproof leads others astray. ¹⁸ He who hides hatred has lying lips; he who utters a slander is a fool. ¹⁹ In the multitude of words there is no lack of disobedience, but he who restrains his lips does wisely. ²⁰ The tongue of the righteous is like choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth. ²¹ The lips of the righteous feed many, but the foolish die for lack of understanding.

Life Expanded by the Fear of God

²² Yahweh's blessing brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it. ²³ It is a fool's pleasure to do wickedness, but wisdom is a man of understanding's pleasure. ²⁴ What the wicked fear will overtake them, but the desire of the righteous will be granted. ²⁵ When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more; but the righteous stand firm forever. ²⁶ As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him. ²⁷ The fear of Yahweh prolongs days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. ²⁸ The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hope of the wicked will perish. ²⁹ The way of Yahweh is a stronghold to the

upright, but it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity. ³⁰ The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land. ³¹ The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off. ³² The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked is perverse.

CHAPTER 11 Apr. 1

The Righteous and the Wicked— Their Behaviour and Destiny Contrasted

A false balance is an abomination to Yahweh, but accurate weights are His delight. ² When pride comes then comes shame, but with humility comes wisdom. ³ The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them. ⁴ Riches don't profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. ⁵ The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way, but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. ⁶ The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them, but the unfaithful will be trapped by evil desires. ⁷ When a wicked man dies, hope perishes, and

10:20 Note the frequent parallel in Proverbs between the tongue and the heart. Our words reflect how we think; we can't think badly and never reflect it in our speech. Jesus understood, maybe from studying Proverbs, that our mouth speaks in reflection of our heart (Lk. 6:45).

11:4 *The day of wrath* – A reference to the final day of judgment at Christ's return. As we bow there naked before God's Son, it's bizarre to think that bank accounts, home ownership or wealth of any kind will be in the slightest bit relevant.

11:5 *Will direct his way* – If we live according to God's principles, we will not have the rudderless spirit which there is in this world. Somehow our life path becomes naturally clear to us.

11:7 *Hope perishes* – The Bible doesn't teach universal salvation nor some automatic

expectation of power comes to nothing. ⁸ A righteous person is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked walks into it in his place. ⁹ With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbour, but the righteous will be delivered through knowledge. ¹⁰ When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices. When the wicked perish, there is shouting. ¹¹ By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. ¹² One who despises his neighbour is without wisdom, but a man of understanding holds his peace. ¹³ One who brings gossip betrays a confidence, but one who is of a trustworthy spirit is one who keeps a secret. ¹⁴ Where there is no wise guidance the nation falls, but in the multitude of counsellors there is victory. ¹⁵ He who is collateral for a stranger will suffer for it, but he who refuses pledges of collateral is secure. ¹⁶ A gracious woman obtains honour, but violent men obtain riches.

Base Your Life on God

¹⁷ The merciful man does good to his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. ¹⁸ Wicked people earn deceitful wages, but one who

sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. ¹⁹ He who is truly righteous gets life; he who pursues evil gets death. ²⁰ Those who are perverse in heart are an abomination to Yahweh, but those whose ways are blameless are His delight. ²¹ Most certainly, the evil man will not be unpunished, but the seed of the righteous will be delivered. ²² Like a gold ring in a pig's snout, so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion. ²³ The desire of the righteous is only for good; the expectation of the wicked is wrath. ²⁴ There is one who scatters, and increases yet more. There is one who withholds more than is appropriate, but gains poverty. ²⁵ The generous soul shall be made fat; he who waters shall be watered also himself. ²⁶ People curse someone who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it. ²⁷ He who diligently seeks good seeks favour, but he who searches after evil, it shall come to him. ²⁸ He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous shall flourish as the green leaf. ²⁹ He who troubles his own house shall inherit the wind. The foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart. ³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; he who is wise wins souls.

reincarnation of the person after death. The wicked will ultimately remain dead without hope.

11:9 The tongue is more powerful than we think; people can be destroyed by others' words; even whole communities can be (:11). But the righteous will not be destroyed by such words, because their focus instead is on their knowledge or relationship with God.

11:26 A reference to Joseph's wisdom in selling grain to the starving.

11:30, 31 We can be to others as the tree of life was in Eden. We can win people for eternal life; their eternity is delegated by God to us. Such is the power and importance

³¹ Behold, the righteous shall be repaid in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner!

CHAPTER 12 Apr. 2

The Basis of a Righteous Life

Whoever loves correction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. ² A good man shall obtain favour from Yahweh, but He will condemn a man of wicked devices. ³ A man shall not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous shall not be moved. ⁴ A worthy woman is the crown of her husband, but a disgraceful wife is as rotteness in his bones. ⁵ The thoughts of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful. ⁶ The words of the wicked are about lying in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them. ⁷ The wicked are overthrown, and are no more, but the house of the righteous shall stand. ⁸ A man shall be commended according to his wisdom, but he who has a warped mind shall be despised. ⁹ Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant, than he who honours himself, and

lacks bread. ¹⁰ A righteous man respects the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. ¹¹ He who tills his land shall have plenty of bread, but he who chases fantasies is void of understanding. ¹² The wicked desires the plunder of evil men, but the root of the righteous flourishes.

The Importance of Truthfulness

¹³ An evil man is trapped by the sinfulness of his lips, but the righteous shall come out of trouble. ¹⁴ A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth; the work of a man's hands shall be rewarded to him. ¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who is wise listens to counsel. ¹⁶ A fool shows his annoyance the same day, but one who overlooks an insult is prudent. ¹⁷ He who is truthful testifies honestly, but a false witness lies. ¹⁸ There is one who speaks rashly like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals. ¹⁹ Truth's lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only momentary. ²⁰ Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil,

of preaching. It is our fruit which becomes the fruit which gives eternal life. The fruit of the Spirit as seen in our characters is what will attract people to the eternal life, because we are living now how we will eternally live.

12:10 A gracious and sensitive spirit will be reflected in how we treat the natural creation.

12:14 The way we talk is here paralleled with our works, what we do with our hands. How we speak is really so important; good actions don't displace bad speaking.

12:15 *Right in his own eyes* – What seems right to us isn't necessarily so. We aren't born with any natural wisdom; unless we have a teachable spirit, open to God's teaching, then we will have only our very dysfunctional natural senses to guide us.

12:17 *He who is truthful testifies honestly* – This may seem to be obvious; but the idea is that the person who is truthful as a way of life, within their own heart, is going to also be truthful when it comes to having to testify in court.

but joy comes to the promoters of peace. ²¹ No mischief shall happen to the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil. ²² Lying lips are an abomination to Yahweh, but those who do the truth are His delight. ²³ A prudent man keeps his knowledge, but the hearts of fools proclaim foolishness. ²⁴ The hands of the diligent ones shall rule, but laziness ends in slave labour. ²⁵ Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a kind word makes it glad. ²⁶ A righteous person is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. ²⁷ The slothful man doesn't roast his game, but the possessions of diligent men are prized. ²⁸ In the way of righteousness is life; in its path there is no death.

CHAPTER 13 Apr. 3

Discipline, Instruction and Prosperity

A wise son listens to his father's instruction, but a scoffer doesn't

listen to rebuke. ² By the fruit of his lips, a man enjoys good things; but the unfaithful crave violence. ³ He who guards his mouth guards his soul; one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. ⁴ The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing, but the desire of the diligent shall be fully satisfied. ⁵ A righteous man hates lies, but a wicked man brings shame and disgrace. ⁶ Righteousness guards the way of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner. ⁷ There are some who are made rich, yet have nothing. There are some who are made poor, yet have great wealth. ⁸ The ransom of a man's life is his riches, but the poor hear no threats. ⁹ The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out. ¹⁰ Pride only breeds quarrels, but with ones who take advice is wisdom. ¹¹ Wealth gained dishonestly dwindles away, but he who gathers by hand makes it grow. ¹² Hope deferred makes the heart

12:25 *A kind word makes it glad* – Here and in :18 we see how powerful good words can be (Job 6:25). There's a positive power in words, even just one word, which we are prone to ignore, thinking that actions are so much more important than words.

12:28 *In its path there is no death* – We have here an Old Testament equivalent of the times when Jesus says we can have eternal life right now. It doesn't mean that the righteous don't die. They do, and will be resurrected to eternal life at Christ's return. But we can start living right now the kind of Kingdom life which we will eternally live. In this sense we "have eternal life", and there is "no death" in the way of life of the righteous.

13:3 *He who guards his mouth guards his soul* – In this sense as Jesus put it, we will be eternally justified or eternally condemned by our words (Mt. 12:37).

13:7 This last phrase is quoted about the Lord Jesus, who made Himself poor on the cross (2 Cor. 8:9). And yet Solomon, who made himself rich, was the very anti-Christ. These words are also part quoted in Phil. 2:7, about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus made himself poor, of no reputation, and now has been so highly exalted. Our living out of the Lord's cross is shown in our making of ourselves poor, in whatever sense. That is surely the unmistakable teaching of this allusion.

sick, but when longing is fulfilled, it is a tree of life. ¹³ Whoever despises instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command will be rewarded. ¹⁴ The teaching of the wise is a spring of life, to turn others away from the snares of death. ¹⁵ Good understanding wins favour; but the way of the unfaithful is hard. ¹⁶ Every prudent man acts from knowledge, but a fool exposes folly. ¹⁷ A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy gains healing. ¹⁸ Poverty and shame come to him who refuses discipline, but he who heeds correction shall be honoured. ¹⁹ Longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil. ²⁰ One who walks with wise men grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. ²¹ Misfortune pursues sinners, but prosperity rewards the righteous. ²² A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored for the righteous. ²³ An abundance of food is in poor people's fields, but injustice sweeps it away. ²⁴ One who spares the rod

hates his son, but one who loves him is careful to discipline him. ²⁵ The righteous one eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the belly of the wicked goes hungry.

CHAPTER 14 Apr. 4

Fools: Their Characteristics and Destiny

Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish one tears it down with her own hands. ² He who walks in his uprightness fears Yahweh, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him. ³ The fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them. ⁴ Where no oxen are, the crib is clean, but much increase is by the strength of the ox. ⁵ A truthful witness will not lie, but a false witness pours out lies. ⁶ A scoffer seeks wisdom, and doesn't find it, but knowledge comes easily to a discerning person. ⁷ Stay away from a foolish man, for you won't find knowledge on his lips. ⁸ The wisdom of the prudent is to think about his way, but the folly of fools is deceit. ⁹ Fools mock at making

13:14 We have it within our power to disentangle people from the snare of eternal death. And we do this by teaching them. See on 14:27.

13:16 *A fool exposes folly* – The fact something is wrong or foolish doesn't mean that we should therefore always expose it. The way of wisdom is to decide when to speak and when to be silent.

13:19 *Longing fulfilled* – The opposite of this is to “detest turning from evil”. The “longing” is therefore for spiritual growth, for victory against sin. And this is what is the sweetest thing in spiritual experience.

14:7 *Stay away from a foolish man* – This is typical of many such commands in Proverbs. But we should remember that Solomon was writing to Israelites living within the people of God. Just because someone is part of God's people doesn't make them wise; we still have to decide wisely as to with whom we will closely walk in life.

14:8 Folly is here parallel with a lack of serious self-examination. In our day, the breaking of bread service is designed to provoke self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28).

atonement for sins, but among the upright there is good will. ¹⁰ The heart knows its own bitterness and joy; he will not share these with a stranger. ¹¹ The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish. ¹² There is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. ¹³ Even in laughter the heart may be sorrowful, and mirth may end in heaviness.

Consider Carefully Every Word

¹⁴ The unfaithful will be repaid for his own ways; likewise a good man will be rewarded for his ways. ¹⁵ A simple man believes everything, but the prudent man carefully considers his ways. ¹⁶ A wise man fears, and shuns evil, but the fool is hotheaded and reckless. ¹⁷ He who is quick to become angry will commit folly, and a crafty man is hated. ¹⁸ The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. ¹⁹ The evil bow down before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. ²⁰ The poor person is shunned even by his own neighbour, but the rich person has many friends. ²¹ He

who despises his neighbour sins, but blessed is he who has pity on the poor. ²² Don't they go astray who plot evil? But love and faithfulness belong to those who plan good. ²³ In all hard work there is profit, but the talk of the lips leads only to poverty. ²⁴ The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools crowns them with folly. ²⁵ A truthful witness saves souls, but a false witness is deceitful. ²⁶ In the fear of Yahweh is a secure fortress, and He will be a refuge for His children. ²⁷ The fear of Yahweh is a fountain of life, turning people from the snares of death. ²⁸ In the multitude of people is the king's glory, but without people the prince is nothing. ²⁹ He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a quick temper displays folly. ³⁰ The life of the body is a heart at peace, but envy rots the bones. ³¹ He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours Him. ³² The wicked is brought down in his calamity, but in death, the righteous has a refuge. ³³ Wisdom remains in the heart of one who has understand-

14:10 The way of wisdom isn't to wear our heart on our sleeve, sharing our innermost thoughts with everyone and anyone.

14:11 Note the contrast between "the house" and "the tent"; the upright have the attitude that they are just passing through this life, with no permanent abode in this world in this present age (Heb. 13:14).

14:17 Quiet craftiness is as bad as hotheaded behaviour which is visible to everyone.

14:27 *Turning people from the snares of death* – But 13:14 says people are saved from the snares of death by our teaching them. The content of that teaching must therefore be the fear of God. His salvation is there in His word, but it becomes real for people by our teaching of it to them.

14:31 Therefore our attitude to the poor is our attitude to God. Hence Jesus teaches that He will judge us according to how we treated our poor brethren, because they represent Him (Mt. 25:40).

ing, and is even made known in the inward part of fools. ³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. ³⁵ The king's favour is toward a servant who deals wisely, but his wrath is toward one who causes shame.

CHAPTER 15 Apr. 5

The Power of the Tongue and the Fear of Yahweh

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. ² The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of fools gushes out folly. ³ Yahweh's eyes are everywhere, keeping watch on the evil and the good. ⁴ A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but deceit in it crushes the spirit. ⁵ A fool despises his father's correction, but he who heeds reproof shows prudence. ⁶ In the house of the righteous is

much treasure, but the income of the wicked brings trouble. ⁷ The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so with the heart of fools. ⁸ The sacrifice made by the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. ⁹ The way of the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, but He loves him who follows after righteousness. ¹⁰ There is stern discipline for one who forsakes the way: whoever hates reproof shall die. ¹¹ Sheol and Abaddon are before Yahweh— how much more then the hearts of the children of men!

The Great Things of Life

¹² A scoffer doesn't love to be reproofed; he will not go to the wise. ¹³ A glad heart makes a cheerful face; but an aching heart breaks the spirit. ¹⁴ The heart of one who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the

14:33 The fool perceives wisdom in his innermost conscience, but only in passing; it doesn't remain within his consciousness as it does within the heart of the righteous. Passing interest in spirituality is very common in our world; but God's truth must abide within our heart if we are to be truly wise.

15:3 *Yahweh's eyes are everywhere* – A reference to God's presence everywhere through His Angels. This reminder is given in the context of warning us about our words; if we believe that God is really aware of absolutely everything, this will influence our words.

15:4 People are psychologically crushed when they realize that words spoken to them lacked integrity. The importance of our words is therefore because of their influence upon others. Appropriate gentleness in speech can also lead people to eternal life.

15:7 Again we see how the heart and the tongue ("lips") are paralleled; what we think really issues in our words (Lk. 6:45).

15:8 Here and elsewhere in Scripture, prayer is seen as a sacrifice. It requires the same effort and careful preparation beforehand (Heb. 13:15). The altar of incense represented the offering of prayer as a sacrifice (Rev. 8:3,4).

15:12 The implication is that people don't mix with the wise because they subconsciously fear being criticized, directly or indirectly. Those who can bear criticism relax with the wise (:31).

15:14 *Fools feed on folly* – A relevant warning to us who live in an age of constant comedy and entertainment, where folly is presented as joy (:21).

mouths of fools feed on folly. ¹⁵ All the days of the afflicted are wretched, but one who has a cheerful heart enjoys a continual feast. ¹⁶ Better is little with the fear of Yahweh, than great treasure with trouble. ¹⁷ Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fattened calf with hatred. ¹⁸ A wrathful man stirs up contention, but one who is slow to anger appeases strife. ¹⁹ The way of the sluggard is like a thorn patch, but the path of the upright is a highway. ²⁰ A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother. ²¹ Folly is joy to one who is void of wisdom, but a man of understanding keeps his way straight. ²² Where there is no counsel, plans fail; but in a multitude of counsellors they are established. ²³ Joy comes to a man as a result of the reply of his mouth. How good is an appropriate word at the right time! ²⁴ The path of life spirals upward for the wise, to keep him from going downward to Sheol. ²⁵ Yahweh will uproot the house of the proud, but He will keep the widow's borders in-

tact. ²⁶ Yahweh detests the thoughts of the wicked, but the thoughts of the pure are pleasing. ²⁷ He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live. ²⁸ The heart of the righteous weighs answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes out evil. ²⁹ Yahweh is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous. ³⁰ The light of the eyes rejoices the heart; good news gives health to the bones. ³¹ The ear that listens to reproof lives, and will be at home among the wise. ³² He who refuses correction despises his own soul, but he who listens to reproof gets understanding. ³³ The fear of Yahweh teaches wisdom; before honour is humility.

CHAPTER 16 Apr. 6

Our Lives Open before Yahweh

The plans of the heart within man, and the answer of the tongue, is from Yahweh. ² All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but Yahweh weighs the motives. ³ Commit your deeds to Yahweh, and your

15:26 God watches every thought of every person. Such knowledge is amazing. And we can please God Almighty in distant Heaven, just by how we are thinking. Such is the colossal significance of spiritual mindedness.

16:1 The implication is that there is an element to which God controls our thoughts and the words we come out with. This element which is beyond human effort is from God's grace through the operation of His Spirit. This same 'element' is alluded to in :4 – God somehow overrules and uses even the failures of the sinful; and in :9 we have the same theme, that there is an element of Divine direction over and above what we ourselves will in our own minds. Otherwise, salvation would be by steel-willed human effort alone rather than God's grace. This same theme, of God playing a role over and above our own efforts, concludes this chapter in :33. See on 20:24.

16:2 *Yahweh weighs the motives* – Our justification isn't on the basis that we happen to feel good about ourselves (:25); God's judgment rather than our own gut feelings is all important. Although He is Almighty, God "weighs" our motives, expending some effort in analyzing our deepest heart processes.

plans shall succeed. ⁴ Yahweh has made everything for its own end—yes, even the wicked for the day of evil. ⁵ Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to Yahweh: they shall certainly not be unpunished. ⁶ By mercy and truth iniquity is atoned for; by the fear of Yahweh men depart from evil. ⁷ When a man's ways please Yahweh, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. ⁸ Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues with injustice. ⁹ A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps.

Take Life Seriously

¹⁰ Inspired judgments are on the lips of the king. He shall not betray his mouth. ¹¹ Honest balances and scales are Yahweh's; all the weights in the bag are His work. ¹² It is an abomination for kings to do wrong, for the throne is established by righteousness. ¹³ Righteous lips are the delight of kings; they value one who speaks the truth. ¹⁴ The king's wrath is as a messenger of death, but a wise man will pacify it. ¹⁵ In the light of the king's face is life. His favour is like a cloud of the spring rain. ¹⁶ How much better it is to get wisdom than

gold! Yes, to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. ¹⁷ The highway of the upright is to depart from evil. He who keeps His way preserves his soul. ¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall. ¹⁹ It is better to be of a humble spirit with the poor, than to divide the plunder with the proud. ²⁰ He who heeds the word finds prosperity; whoever has faith in Yahweh is blessed. ²¹ The wise in heart shall be called prudent. Pleasantness of the lips promotes instruction. ²² Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the punishment of fools is their folly. ²³ The heart of the wise instructs his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. ²⁴ Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. ²⁵ There is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. ²⁶ The appetite of the labouring man labours for him; for his mouth urges him on. ²⁷ A worthless man devises mischief; his speech is like a scorching fire. ²⁸ A perverse man stirs up strife, a gossip separates close friends. ²⁹ A man of violence entices his neighbour, and leads him in a way that is not good. ³⁰ One who winks his

16:10 Solomon writes inspired truth in Proverbs, but it seems that much of what he writes was written with an eye to his own self-justification, especially about the need to respect the man who has wisdom and the wise man's superiority over all others (:16). He even writes as if the king must be accepted as automatically infallible: "Inspired judgments are on the lips of the king" (see too 20:2). We too can teach God's truths whilst also motivated in doing so by a desire for our own self-justification rather than His glory.

16:20 We see here the connection between God's word and faith; faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17).

16:30 Negative body language may appear so insignificant, but it is judged by God as being "bent on evil".

eyes to plot perversities, one who compresses his lips, is bent on evil.

³¹ Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is attained by a life of righteousness.

³² One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; one who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city.

³³ The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from Yahweh.

CHAPTER 17 Apr. 7

The Family, Relationships and Integrity

Better is a dry morsel of bread with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife. ² A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who causes shame, and shall have a part in the inheritance among the brothers. ³ The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but Yahweh tests the hearts. ⁴ An evil-doer heeds wicked lips; a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue. ⁵ Whoever mocks the poor reproaches his Maker. He who is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished. ⁶ Children's children are the crown of old men; the glory of children are their parents. ⁷ Arrogant speech isn't fitting for a fool, much less do lying lips

fit a prince. ⁸ A bribe is a precious stone in the eyes of him who gives it; wherever he turns, he apparently prospers. ⁹ He who covers an offence promotes love; but he who repeats a matter separates best friends. ¹⁰ A rebuke enters deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred lashes into a fool. ¹¹ An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him. ¹² Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly. ¹³ Whoever rewards evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house. ¹⁴ The beginning of strife is like breaching a dam, therefore stop contention before quarreling breaks out. ¹⁵ He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Yahweh. ¹⁶ Why is there money in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, since he has no understanding?

The Wisdom of Silence

¹⁷ A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity. ¹⁸ A man without understanding strikes hands, and becomes collateral in the presence of his neighbour. ¹⁹ He who

16:32 *One who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city* – A reference to Samson.

17:5 The poor are God manifest to us; how we treat our poor brethren is how we treat God, and is the basis of our final judgment (M 25:40). This is a common theme in Proverbs; and we need to remember it constantly, especially as we are often tempted to consider others' poverty as the result of their own poor decision making and to think this excuses us from helping them.

17:9 *He who covers an offence* – This is paralleled in the second half of the verse with not gossiping about others' failures. It doesn't mean that we are to turn a blind eye to others' sins, rather that we shouldn't gossip about them to others.

17:14 Relationship breakdown needs to be bridged as soon as possible, as a matter of urgency; otherwise irreparable damage will be done and like water bursting from a dam, many others will be affected by it.

loves disobedience loves strife. One who builds a high gate seeks destruction. ²⁰ One who has a perverse heart doesn't find prosperity, and one who has a deceitful tongue falls into trouble. ²¹ He who becomes the father of a fool grieves; the father of a fool has no joy. ²² A cheerful heart makes good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. ²³ A wicked man receives a bribe in secret, to pervert the ways of justice. ²⁴ Wisdom is before the face of one who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool wander to the ends of the earth. ²⁵ A foolish son brings grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him. ²⁶ Also to punish the righteous is not good, nor to flog officials for their integrity. ²⁷ He who spares his words has knowledge. He who is even tempered is a man of understanding. ²⁸ Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is counted wise. When

he shuts his lips, he is thought to be discerning.

CHAPTER 18 Apr. 8

Attitudes about Judgments and Disputes

An unfriendly man pursues selfishness, and defies all sound judgment. ² A fool has no delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own opinion. ³ When wickedness comes, contempt also comes, and with shame comes disgrace. ⁴ The words of a man's mouth are like deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is like a flowing brook. ⁵ To be partial to the faces of the wicked is not good, nor to deprive the innocent of justice. ⁶ A fool's lips come into strife, and his speech asks for beatings. ⁷ A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are a snare to his soul. ⁸ The words of a gossip are like tasty morsels: they go down into a

17:19 *One who builds a high gate seeks destruction* – Isolationism is actually a proactive seeking of destruction for others. In our age of retreat into ourselves, this needs to be considered carefully. 18:1 likewise exhorts against isolationism – it's a form of selfishness.

17:24 *The eyes of a fool wander to the ends of the earth* – Those whose hearts aren't focused upon God and His word are rudderless, looking worldwide for wisdom on the internet, but never finding true direction.

18:4 Words are important; yet they are so common, as we hear and speak millions of them each week, that we can easily forget their profound significance in our lives and those of others.

18:6 *His speech asks for beatings* – According to our words we will be judged at the last day (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 12:47,48); our words now may actually be as it were requesting our punishment then. We must so speak as those who will be judged, knowing that he who showed no mercy in his words will receive none (James 2:12,13); our words of mercy or condemnation, and perhaps *the way we say them*, will be the basis upon which we will be accepted or rejected. In this sense death or life are in the power of our tongue (:21).

18:8 It's attractive to us to hear gossip; the one who hears it will often not just ignore it but will take it deep within themselves.

person's innermost parts. ⁹ One who is slack in his work is brother to him who is a master of destruction. ¹⁰ The name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous run into Him, and are safe. ¹¹ The rich man's wealth is his strong city, like an unscalable wall in his own imagination. ¹² Before destruction the heart of man is proud, but before honour is humility. ¹³ He who gives answer before he hears, that is folly and shame to him. ¹⁴ A man's spirit will sustain him in sickness, but a crushed spirit, who can bear? ¹⁵ The heart of the discerning gets knowledge; the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. ¹⁶ A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men. ¹⁷ He who pleads his cause first seems right; until another comes and questions him. ¹⁸ The lot settles disputes, and keeps strong ones apart. ¹⁹ A brother offended is more difficult to be won than a fortified city; and disputes are like the bars of a castle. ²⁰ A man's stomach is filled with the fruit of his mouth. With the harvest of his lips he is satisfied. ²¹ Death and life are in the power of the tongue; those

who love it will eat its fruit. ²² Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains grace of Yahweh. ²³ The poor plead for mercy, but the rich answer harshly. ²⁴ A man of many companions may be ruined, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

CHAPTER 19 Apr. 9

Discipline, Poverty and Families

Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in his lips and is a fool. ² It isn't good to have zeal without knowledge; nor being hasty with one's feet and missing the way. ³ The foolishness of man subverts his way; his heart rages against Yahweh. ⁴ Wealth adds many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend. ⁵ A false witness shall not be unpunished; he who pours out lies shall not go free. ⁶ Many will entreat the favour of a ruler, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts. ⁷ All the relatives of the poor shun him: how much more do his friends avoid him! He pursues them with pleas, but they are gone. ⁸ He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he

18:9 Again we see passive behaviour – in this case, laziness – paralleled with proactive destructive behaviour.

18:10 This has relevance to us in that we can be baptized into the Lord's Name.

18:11 One implication of this could be that those who trust in wealth isolate themselves from others.

18:18 The use of lots is seen positively here; they were used by the early church in Acts 1:26.

19:2 *Zeal without knowledge* – Applied by Paul to the Jews and all people who seek justification by works rather than faith in God's grace which is in Christ (Rom. 10:2), which is for us the ultimate "knowledge". This is like someone who walks earnestly but in the wrong direction, who has missed "the way", which is Christ (Jn. 14:6).

19:8 This verse is in the context of the preceding reflections that in human life, people who have wealth have friends but the poor have few friends. Whether or not we have

who keeps understanding shall find good. ⁹ A false witness shall not be unpunished; he who utters lies shall perish. ¹⁰ Delicate living is not appropriate for a fool, much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

¹¹ The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger; it is his glory to overlook an offence. ¹² The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favour is like dew on the grass. ¹³ A foolish son is the calamity of his father. A wife's quarrels are a continual dripping. ¹⁴ House and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from Yahweh. ¹⁵ Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep; the idle person shall suffer hunger. ¹⁶ He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is disrespectful in his ways shall die. ¹⁷ He who has pity on the poor lends to Yahweh; He will reward him. ¹⁸ Discipline

your son while there is hope; don't be a willing party to his death. ¹⁹ A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty, for if you rescue him, you must do it again. ²⁰ Listen to counsel and receive instruction, so that you may be wise in your very end. ²¹ There are many plans in a man's heart, but Yahweh's counsel will prevail. ²² That which makes a man to be desired is his kindness; a poor man is better than a liar. ²³ The fear of Yahweh leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm. ²⁴ The lazy buries his hand in the dish; he will not so much as bring it to his mouth again. ²⁵ Flog a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke one who has understanding, and he will gain knowledge. ²⁶ He who robs his father and drives away his mother, is a son who causes shame and brings

popularity with others and human friendships, the wonder of finding the ultimate "understanding" of God, relationship with Him, makes that irrelevant.

19:11 We are not to take up every offence against us with others. There are times when our silence under provocation is in God's eyes our "glory". This verse alludes to the fact that God is slow to anger and overlooks offences without always demanding our specific repentance (Ps. 103:8; 145:8). We are to reflect our experience of this to others.

19:14 *A prudent wife is from Yahweh* – Marriage is in a human sense a gamble, as we never really know our partner until we have been married some time to them. A good partnership is therefore a "grace" from God (18:22); whilst we can do our human best to have a good marriage, it is ultimately God who does the humanly impossible, of joining two different people together (Mt. 19:6); and marriage is therefore a grace from Him.

19:17 Our attitude to the poor is our attitude to God and will be the basis of our judgment (Mt. 25:40).

19:22 The implication is that the poor can still be kind; in our money-obsessed world, there's the wrong impression that generosity and kindness must involve financial giving.

19:25 *The simple will learn* – We are to learn by observing how sinners are punished even in this life.

reproach. ²⁷ If you stop listening to instruction, my son, you will stray from the words of knowledge. ²⁸ A corrupt witness mocks justice, and the mouth of the wicked gulps down iniquity. ²⁹ Penalties are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools.

CHAPTER 20 Apr. 10

The Deep Things of the Heart

Wine is a mocker, and beer is a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. ² The terror of a king is like the roaring of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his own life. ³ It is an honour for a man to keep aloof from strife; but every fool will be quarrelling. ⁴ The lazy will not plough by reason of the winter; therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing. ⁵ Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out. ⁶ Many men claim to be men of unfailing love, but who can find a faithful man? ⁷ A righteous man walks in integrity; blessed

are his children after him. ⁸ A king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes. ⁹ Who can say, I have made my heart pure. I am clean and without sin? ¹⁰ Differing weights and differing measures, both of them alike are an abomination to Yahweh. ¹¹ Even a child makes himself known by his doings, whether his work is pure, or whether it is right.

Drink from the Cup of Knowledge

¹² The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, Yahweh has made even both of them. ¹³ Don't love sleep, lest you come to poverty. Open your eyes, and you shall be satisfied with bread. ¹⁴ It's no good, it's no good, says the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasts. ¹⁵ There is gold and abundance of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a rare jewel. ¹⁶ Take the garment of one who puts up collateral for a stranger; and hold him in pledge for a wayward woman. ¹⁷ Fraudulent food is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth is filled

20:1 *Beer is a brawler* – It is people and not liquid who brawl. The alcoholic drink is therefore put by metonymy for the alcoholic; they become identified with the substance of their addiction. Anything in human life with which we become totally identified, be it football teams or alcohol, is an addiction which takes us away from being the persons God intends us to be.

20:5 There is good wisdom within many faithful people which never becomes apparent until another person draws it out. This should be the result of good company and true spiritual fellowship – bringing out the best in each other which is often latent and would be otherwise unavailable for others' benefit.

20:6 There's much talk in the world about "love", but no word is more misunderstood. Love must be connected to faith and hope if it is to be love as God intends (1 Cor. 13:13); and faith and hope produce love in their ultimate term (Col. 3:14).

20:7 Integrity is what will most influence our children in practice.

20:16 *Hold him in pledge for a wayward woman* – An allusion to Judah's sin with Tamar (Gen. 38:25).

with gravel. ¹⁸ Plans are established by advice; by wise guidance you wage war! ¹⁹ He who goes about as a tale-bearer reveals secrets; therefore don't keep company with him who opens wide his lips. ²⁰ Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in blackness of darkness.

Truth in the Innermost Parts

²¹ An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning won't be blessed in the end. ²² Don't say, I will pay back evil. Wait for Yahweh, and He will save you. ²³ Yahweh detests differing weights, and dishonest scales are not pleasing. ²⁴ A man's steps are from Yahweh; how then can man understand his way? ²⁵ It is a snare to a man to make a rash dedication, then later to consider his vows. ²⁶ A wise king winnows out the wicked, and drives the threshing wheel over them.

²⁷ The spirit of man is Yahweh's lamp, searching all his innermost parts. ²⁸ Love and faithfulness keep the king safe; his throne is sustained by love. ²⁹ The glory of young men is their strength. The splendour of old men is their gray hair. ³⁰ Wounding blows cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the innermost parts.

CHAPTER 21 Apr. 11

God Know All about Us

The king's heart is in Yahweh's hand like the watercourses; He turns it wherever He desires. ² Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but Yahweh weighs the hearts. ³ To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice. ⁴ A high look and a proud heart are the lamp of the wicked, and are sin. ⁵ The plans of the diligent surely lead to profit; and everyone who is hasty surely rushes to poverty. ⁶ Getting

20:22 If we are wronged, the ultimate justice will be done when we are eternally saved at the time of Christ's return – and not in this life.

20:24 There is an element of Divine guidance in our lives over and above our own efforts; see on 16:1.

20:27 Our self-examination is what reveals us to the Lord. What we think about at the memorial meeting, as we are faced with the memory of the crucified Saviour, is therefore an epitome of what we really are. If all we are thinking of is the taste of the wine, the cover over the bread, the music, what we didn't agree with in the meeting, all the external things of our Christianity; or if we are sitting there taking bread and wine as a conscience salver, doing our little religious ritual to make us feel psychologically safe – then we simply don't know Him. We are surface level believers only. And this is the message we give Him. Our spirit / attitude is the candle of the Lord, with which He searches us. Our thoughts when confronted by the cross reveal us to Him who died on it. Likewise Joseph (one of the most detailed types of the Lord Jesus) knew / discerned his brethren by his cup (Gen. 44:5). 1 Cor. 11:31,32 suggests that our self-judgment at the breaking of bread is in fact the Lord's judgment of us.

21:2 *He turns it wherever He desires* – See on 16:1.

21:4 The wicked see life within the light of their own pride; everything becomes subjected to their need to present themselves well.

wealth by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour for those who seek death.

⁷ The violence of the wicked will drive them away, because they refuse to do what is right. ⁸ The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright.

Don't Live Just for Today

⁹ It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than to share a house with a contentious woman. ¹⁰ The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbour finds no mercy in his eyes.

¹¹ When the mocker is punished, the simple gains wisdom. When the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.

¹² The Righteous One considers the house of the wicked, and brings the wicked to ruin. ¹³ Whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he will also cry out, but shall not be heard. ¹⁴ A gift in secret pacifies anger; and a bribe in the cloak, strong wrath. ¹⁵ It is joy to the righteous to do justice; but it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity. ¹⁶ The man who wanders out of the way of understanding shall

remain in the assembly of the dead.

¹⁷ He who loves pleasure shall be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil shall not be rich. ¹⁸ The wicked is a ransom for the righteous; the treacherous for the upright. ¹⁹ It is better to dwell in a desert land, than with a contentious and fretful woman.

²⁰ There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man swallows it up. ²¹ He who follows after righteousness and kindness finds life, righteousness, and honour. ²² A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings down the strength of its confidence.

²³ Whoever guards his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

²⁴ The proud and haughty man, scoff-er is his name; he works in the arrogance of pride. ²⁵ The desire of the lazy kills him, for his hands refuse to labour. ²⁶ There are those who covet greedily all day long; but the righteous give and don't withhold.

²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind!

21:13 We will all cry out for mercy and grace at the day of judgment. The mean may appear prosperous in this life, but we should live ever aware that we are spiritually poor because of our own bad decisions, just as the poor are often poor because of their own weaknesses and poor decision making; and we will cry out to God for His mercy at the last day. We therefore ought to be responsive to the cries of the poor today.

21:16 *Remain in the assembly of the dead* – The punishment for the wicked, including those who once walked with God, is eternal death, and not eternal conscious torment.

21:19 Solomon often interjects some comment about the misery of living with an unspiritual woman, apparently out of context with what he is writing about (:9 also). Although he was inspired in his writing, this may reflect how always weighing on his mind was the fact that his 1000 wives and concubines never brought him happiness but only a desire for isolationism from everybody (1 Kings 11:3); and he therefore keeps on making this kind of comment. Intimacy between persons can only be achieved God's way, which is through lifelong stable relationships bound together by Him (Mt. 19:6).

²⁸ A false witness will perish, but a man who listens speaks consistently. ²⁹ A wicked man hardens his face; but as for the upright, he establishes his ways. ³⁰ There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Yahweh. ³¹ The horse is prepared for the day of battle; but victory is with Yahweh.

CHAPTER 22 Apr. 12

Discipline Provides the Answer

A good name is more desirable than great riches, and loving favour is better than silver and gold. ² The rich and the poor have this in common: Yahweh is the maker of them all. ³ A prudent man sees danger, and hides himself; but the simple pass on, and suffer for it. ⁴ The result of humility and the fear of Yahweh is wealth, honour, and life. ⁵ Thorns and snares are in the path of the wicked: whoever guards his

soul stays away from them. ⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. ⁷ The rich rule over the poor; the borrower is servant to the lender. ⁸ He who sows wickedness reaps trouble, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed. ⁹ He who has a generous eye will be blessed; for he shares his food with the poor. ¹⁰ Drive out the mocker, and strife will go out; yes, quarrels and insults will stop. ¹¹ He who loves purity of heart and speaks gracefully is the king's friend. ¹² The eyes of Yahweh watch over knowledge; but He frustrates the words of the unfaithful. ¹³ The lazy one says, There is a lion outside! I will be killed in the streets! ¹⁴ The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit: he who is under Yahweh's wrath will fall into it. ¹⁵ Folly is bound up in the heart of a child: the rod of discipline drives it far from him. ¹⁶ Whoever

22:2 One implication of believing that God is our personal creator is that we will not be envious of the rich; we will not see them as so fundamentally different from ourselves.

22:4 *Wealth, honour, and life* – The gift of “life” surely refers to eternal life; this will be given at Christ's return along with wealth and honour.

22:5 *Thorns and snares are in the path of the wicked* – The Proverbs often allude to the Law of Moses or earlier Israelite history. Here the reference is to the only other time that “thorns and snares” occur together in the Bible, in Josh. 23:13, where Israel are warned that association and intermarriage with the pagan world around them will be as thorns and snares to them. The wicked therefore put these things in their own path; and again, Solomon makes this warning whilst failing spectacularly himself in this very thing.

22:6 God works with individuals and we are each independently judged regardless of whether we had believing or unbelieving parents, and so it cannot be that someone comes to the Kingdom simply because of faithful parents. And yet none of us will reach salvation purely by our own effort; there are other elements over and above that, and faithful parenting is one such element in the final algorithm which determines who is saved and who isn't. It's an endless motivation for parents, therefore, to raise their children in God's way.

oppresses the poor for his own increase and whoever gives to the rich, both come to poverty.

The Thirty Pieces of Advice

¹⁷ Turn your ear, and listen to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my teaching. ¹⁸ For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. ¹⁹ That your trust may be in Yahweh, I teach you today, even you. ²⁰ Haven't I written to you thirty excellent things of counsel and knowledge, ²¹ to teach you truth, reliable words, to give sound answers to the ones who sent you? ²² Don't exploit the poor, because he is poor and don't crush the needy in court; ²³ for Yahweh will plead their case, and plunder the life of those who plunder them. ²⁴ Don't befriend a hot-tempered man, and don't associate with one who harbours anger; ²⁵ lest you learn his ways, and ensnare your soul. ²⁶ Don't you be one of those who strike hands, of those who are collateral for debts. ²⁷ If you don't have means to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you? ²⁸ Don't move the ancient boundary

stone, which your fathers have set up. ²⁹ Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve kings. He won't serve obscure men.

CHAPTER 23 Apr. 13

When you sit to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before you; ² put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite. ³ Don't be desirous of his dainties, since they are deceitful food. ⁴ Don't weary yourself to be rich; in your wisdom, show restraint. ⁵ Why do you set your eyes on that which is not? For it certainly sprouts wings like an eagle and flies in the sky. ⁶ Don't eat the food of him who has a stingy eye, and don't crave his delicacies; ⁷ for as he thinks about the cost, so he is. Eat and drink! he says to you, but his heart is not with you. ⁸ The morsel which you have eaten you shall vomit up, and lose your good words. ⁹ Don't speak in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words. ¹⁰ Don't move the ancient boundary stone; don't encroach on the fields of the fatherless; ¹¹ for their Defender is strong, He will plead their case

22:16 *Come to poverty* – Considering that the wicked often prosper materially in this life, “poverty” must refer to poverty of spirit.

22:21 *To the ones who sent you* – People came to hear Solomon's wisdom from many nations (1 Kings 4:34), so the book of Proverbs was maybe first compiled as an answer to be sent back to them.

22:25 Bad company, even amongst the people of God, rubs off on us; we are more vulnerable to negative spiritual influences than we think.

23:5 He had all the right theory. Solomon was an active, industrious person by nature; and whilst all his many proverbs criticizing the lazy and glorifying the diligent are true as they stand, is there not in all this some element of self-justification, interpreting his own natural personality type as inherently righteous?

23:11 *He will plead their case* – God is here likened to the counsel for the defence in

against you. ¹² Apply your heart to instruction, and your ears to the words of knowledge. ¹³ Don't withhold correction from a child. If you punish him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ Punish him with the rod, and save his soul from Sheol. ¹⁵ My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad, even mine: ¹⁶ yes, my heart will rejoice, when your lips speak what is right. ¹⁷ Don't let your heart envy sinners; but rather fear Yahweh all the day long. ¹⁸ Indeed surely there is a future hope, and your hope will not be cut off. ¹⁹ Listen, My son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path! ²⁰ Don't keep company with those who drink too much wine, or those who gorge themselves on meat; ²¹ for the drunkard and the glutton shall become poor; and drowsiness clothes them in rags. ²² Listen to your father who gave you life, and don't despise your mother when she is old. ²³ Buy the truth, and don't

sell it. Get wisdom, discipline, and understanding. ²⁴ The father of the righteous has great joy. Whoever fathers a wise child delights in him. ²⁵ Let your father and your mother be glad! Let her who bore you rejoice! ²⁶ My son, give me your heart; and let your eyes observe my ways. ²⁷ For a prostitute is a deep pit; and a Gentile woman is a narrow well. ²⁸ Yes, she lies in wait like a robber, and increases the unfaithful among men. ²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? ³⁰ Those who stay long at the wine; those who go to seek out mixed wine. ³¹ Don't look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. ³² In the end, it bites like a snake, and poisons like a viper. ³³ Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will imagine confusing things. ³⁴ Yes, you will be as he who lies down in the midst

the final court of Divine justice. And yet He is also the judge of all. Each of the situations we find ourselves in is played out before the court of Heaven, and the judgment of the last day will be a statement of those judgments which are happening in our lives today. God hasn't as it were turned off from this world, to open the books at the end of history and see how we behaved; He is watching and passionately judging today.

23:17 Envy of others just isn't on our agenda if we are rejoicing in our relationship with God, and focused on the future hope we have of eternity in God's Kingdom at Christ's return (:18). These things eclipse any tendency to wish we were like the rich and powerful in this brief, fleeting life. See on 24:20.

23:26, 27 Even when married to Gentile women, Solomon could charge his son to "observe my ways. For... a Gentile woman is a narrow well". The fact he himself had fallen into the pit of marriage to unbelievers just didn't seem to occur to him; he was sure that he was in fact an upright example. This passage reflects more than many the extent to which Solomon's conscience was so deeply damaged. For he wasn't saying 'Do as I say but not as I do'. He was beyond that – doing the very wrong that he warned others not to do, and confidently presenting himself to them as a good example. The death of conscience is something we have to watch against all our days.

of the sea, or as he who lies on top of the rigging: ³⁵ They hit me, and I was not hurt! They beat me, and I don't feel it! When will I wake up so that I can do it again?

CHAPTER 24 Apr. 14

The Ways of the Wise

Don't be envious of evil men; neither desire to be with them: ² for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about mischief. ³ Through wisdom a house is built; by understanding it is established; ⁴ by knowledge the rooms are filled with all rare and beautiful treasure. ⁵ A wise man has great power and a knowledgeable man increases strength; ⁶ for by wise guidance you wage your war; and victory is in many advisors. ⁷ Wisdom is too high for a fool: he doesn't open his mouth in the gate. ⁸ One who plots to do evil will be called a schemer. ⁹ The schemes of folly are sin. The mocker is detested by men. ¹⁰ If you falter in the time of trouble, your strength is small. ¹¹ Rescue those who are being led away to death! Indeed, hold back those who are staggering to the slaughter! ¹² If you say, Behold, we didn't know

this; doesn't He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, doesn't He know it? Shall He not render to every man according to his work? ¹³ My son, eat honey, for it is good; the droppings of the honeycomb, which are sweet to your taste: ¹⁴ so you shall feel wisdom to be to your soul; if you have found it, then there will be a reward, your hope will not be cut off. ¹⁵ Don't lay in wait, wicked man, against the habitation of the righteous. Don't destroy his resting place: ¹⁶ for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises up again; but the wicked are overthrown by calamity. ¹⁷ Don't rejoice when your enemy falls, don't let your heart be glad when he is overthrown; ¹⁸ lest Yahweh see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him. ¹⁹ Don't fret yourself because of evildoers; neither be envious of the wicked: ²⁰ for there will be no reward to the evil man; and the lamp of the wicked shall be snuffed out. ²¹ My son, fear Yahweh and the king. Don't join those who are rebellious: ²² for their calamity will rise suddenly; and who knows the destruction of them both?

24:12 As God keeps us from spiritual destruction, so we should try to keep others. We aren't to say within ourselves that we didn't realize that they were going wrong. This is a piercing analysis of our psychology; we hold back from the awkwardness of engagement with others about their life path because we kid ourselves that they are OK really.

24:16 The righteous fall, spiritually and materially – but rise up. This rising up again is one of the characteristics of the righteous, not being swamped by failure.

24:18 God is more angry with gloating over others' fall than over the fall itself.

24:20 Our hope of future, eternal reward at Christ's return means we will not be jealous of others (:19). See on 23:17.

Other Wise Sayings

²³ These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good. ²⁴ He who says to the wicked, You are righteous; peoples shall curse him, and nations shall abhor him—²⁵ but it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and a rich blessing will come on them. ²⁶ An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. ²⁷ Prepare your work outside, and get your fields ready. Afterwards, build your house. ²⁸ Don't be a witness against your neighbour without cause. Don't deceive with your lips. ²⁹ Don't say, I will do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work. ³⁰ I went by the field of the lazy, by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; ³¹ behold, it was all grown over with thorns. Its

surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. ³² Then I saw, and considered well. I saw, and received instruction: ³³ a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; ³⁴ so your poverty will come as a robber, and your want as an armed man.

CHAPTER 25 Apr. 15***Say the Right Thing at the Right Time***

These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. ² It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter. ³ As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable. ⁴ Take away the dross from the silver, and material comes out for the refiner;

24:25 The Proverbs give so much advice about judgment. At first sight it may appear directed to the tiny minority within Israel who were called to be judges; but whilst we cannot condemn others, we are to judge righteously, to have righteous opinions and draw spiritual conclusions about life situations. This is why we have so much advice about how to 'judge'.

24:29 *I will render to the man according to his work* – We are not to say this, because Christ is coming to judge and render to each person according to their work (Rev. 22:12). We can know great peace from resigning the need to render others their judgment.

25:3 When Solomon laments that a sinful land has many rulers, but stability comes from a wise ruler (28:2), he is stating an inspired truth; but it is inevitable that he framed it in such terms as justified his own dictatorial rule, as if his wisdom justified him in crushing any opposition leaders. It was really Solomon's self-justification. Solomon taught that the heart of kings is unsearchable, i.e., it cannot be examined, being as far above the earth as heaven is. Solomon thought that his possession of theological wisdom placed him in a God-like position above his people, and therefore they dare not even begin to question him or examine him; and none should therefore dare to 'exalt himself' in the King's presence (:6). Truly, "knowledge puffs up". And our very possession of 'the truth' of Christ and the word of God carries with it the same potential temptations, leading us to consider the world so far beneath us, that we can do what we wish with no accountability to anyone.

⁵ remove the wicked from the king's presence, and his throne will be established in righteousness. ⁶ Don't exalt yourself in the presence of the king, or claim a place among great men; ⁷ for it is better that it be said to you, Come up here, than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen. ⁸ Don't be hasty in bringing charges to court. What will you do in the end when your neighbour shames you? ⁹ Debate your case with your neighbour, and don't betray the confidence of another; ¹⁰ lest one who hears it put you to shame, and your bad reputation never depart. ¹¹ A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. ¹² As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof to an obedient ear. ¹³ As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to those who send him; for he refreshes the soul of his masters. ¹⁴ As clouds and wind without rain, so is he who boasts of gifts deceptively. ¹⁵ By patience a ruler is persuaded; a soft tongue breaks the bone.

Causes of Misery and Joy

¹⁶ Have you found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for you, lest

you eat too much and vomit it. ¹⁷ Let your foot be seldom in your neighbour's house, lest he be weary of you and hate you. ¹⁸ A man who gives false testimony against his neighbour is like a club, a sword, or a sharp arrow. ¹⁹ Confidence in someone unfaithful in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a lame foot. ²⁰ As one who takes away a garment in cold weather, or vinegar on soda, so is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. ²¹ If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink: ²² for you will heap coals of fire on his head, and Yahweh will reward you. ²³ The north wind brings forth rain: so a backbiting tongue brings an angry face. ²⁴ It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than to share a house with a contentious woman. ²⁵ Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. ²⁶ Like a muddied spring, and a polluted well, so is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked. ²⁷ It is not good to eat much honey; nor is it honourable to seek one's own honour. ²⁸ Like a city that is broken down and without walls is a man whose spirit is without restraint.

25:5 This was justifying the way Solomon killed Shimei at the establishment of his kingdom. His teaching of wisdom is constantly mixed with self-justification; our preaching must never be like this. See on 29:7.

25:7 Jesus says that this is exactly what will happen at the day of judgment (Lk. 14:10).

25:16 Solomon warns about only eating a limited amount of the honey you may find. Yet Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 show how Solomon found honey as it were, he had the opportunity to do and experience what he wanted – and he ate so much he became spiritually sick.

25:22 This is applied to each of us in Rom. 12:20.

CHAPTER 26 Apr. 16***The Folly of Fools***

Like snow in summer and as rain in harvest, so honour is not fitting for a fool. ² Like a fluttering sparrow, like a darting swallow, so the undeserved curse doesn't come to rest. ³ A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools! ⁴ Don't answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. ⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. ⁶ One who sends a message by the hand of a fool is cutting off his own feet and drinking violence. ⁷ Like the legs of the lame that hang loose: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. ⁸ As one who binds a stone in a sling, so is he who gives honour to a fool. ⁹ Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunk person, so is a parable in the mouth of fools. ¹⁰ As an archer who wounds all, so is he who hires a fool or he who hires those who pass by. ¹¹ As a dog that returns to his vomit, so is a fool who repeats his folly. ¹² Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. ¹³ The

lazy person says, There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion roams the streets! ¹⁴ As the door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy one on his bed. ¹⁵ The lazy one buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

The Power of Bad Words

¹⁶ The lazy one is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer with discretion. ¹⁷ Like one who grabs a dog's ears is one who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own. ¹⁸ Like a madman who shoots burning torches, arrows, and death, ¹⁹ so is the man who deceives his neighbour and says, Am I not joking? ²⁰ For lack of wood a fire goes out; without gossip, a quarrel dies down. ²¹ As coals are to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindling strife. ²² The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, they go down into the innermost parts. ²³ Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are smooth words with an evil heart. ²⁴ A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but he harbours evil in his heart. ²⁵ When his speech

26:4, 5 These verses don't contradict, rather the intention is to teach us that we must treat people in different ways at different times; sometimes we should say something, others we should remain silent. It is wisdom which teaches us. It's too simplistic to respond to people the same way every time.

26:11 This verse is applied in 2 Pet. 2:22 to baptized Christian believers who return to their old way of life. The implication is that at our conversion we as it were vomited up our old way of life; to return to it is as vile as a dog returning to its own vomit.

26:13 Laziness is often justified as caution.

26:16 Just assuming that we are right and refusing to be self-critical, allowing discretion or wisdom to teach us, is a form of laziness.

26:22 We all naturally like to hear gossip, we find it tasty; let's not deceive ourselves that actually, we aren't like that; we are, and must make conscious effort not to listen to it.

is charming, don't believe him; for there are seven abominations in his heart. ²⁶ His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly. ²⁷ Whoever digs a pit shall fall into it; whoever rolls a stone, it will come back on him. ²⁸ A lying tongue hates those it hurts; and a flattering mouth works ruin.

CHAPTER 27 Apr. 17

Faithfulness to Friends and Recognising True Values

Don't boast about tomorrow; for you don't know what a day may bring forth. ² Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips. ³ A stone is heavy and sand is a burden;

but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. ⁴ Wrath is cruel and anger is overwhelming; but who is able to stand before jealousy? ⁵ Better is open rebuke than hidden love. ⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend; although the kisses of an enemy are profuse. ⁷ A full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to a hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet. ⁸ As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man who wanders from his home. ⁹ Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart; so does earnest counsel from a man's friend. ¹⁰ Don't forsake your friend and your father's friend. Don't go to your brother's house in the day of your disaster: better is a neighbour who is near than a distant brother. ¹¹ Be wise, my son, and bring joy to

26:26 *Exposed in the assembly* – Yet the wicked prosper in this life, and often go to their graves without their deceitful words having been revealed. Yet they shall be exposed “in the assembly”. There is a theme in Bible teaching about the day of judgment, that our individual judgment will somehow be visible to all (Lk. 12:1-3; Rev. 16:15). All our secret words, thoughts and real intentions will then be made public to all; there's therefore no point to be hypocritical in this life, thinking we have cleverly hidden our real positions and feelings, because ultimately all will be public knowledge to everyone for eternity.

27:1 James 4:14,15 alludes to this verse, teaching that our speech should be characterized by frequent statements that our plans are “God willing” or “If the Lord will”.

27:5 The implication is that if we love someone, we must show it – and that may require us to rebuke them at times, as a reflection of that love we have for them (:6).

27:7 *To a hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet* – The context of the surrounding verses speak of loving friends rebuking their friends in love. So the idea may be that we are all spiritually hungry, and the bitterness of receiving rebuke from our friends will therefore be sweet to us. It's the spiritually proud, who consider themselves full, who have no liking for rebuke.

27:10 This whole section teaches the importance of having faithful, spiritually minded friends. True fellowship within the family of God's people means that we can relate to each other as if we really are natural family. The idea of ‘out of church Christians’ is a contradiction in terms; we are designed to develop spiritually as a result of true fellowship with other believers. Poor church experiences shouldn't lead us to retreat within ourselves, because there is no path to growth within the body of God's people if we cut ourselves off from them (Jn. 15:5).

my heart, then I can answer my tormentor. ¹² A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge; but the simple pass on and suffer for it. ¹³ Take his garment when he puts up collateral for a stranger; hold it for a wayward woman! ¹⁴ He who blesses his neighbour with a loud voice early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse by him. ¹⁵ A continual dropping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike: ¹⁶ restraining her is like restraining the wind, or like grasping oil in his right hand.

Your Heart Shows in Your Face

¹⁷ Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens his friend's countenance. ¹⁸ Whoever tends the fig tree shall eat its fruit; he who looks after his master shall be honoured. ¹⁹ As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man. ²⁰ Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and a man's eyes are never satisfied. ²¹ The crucible is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but man is tested by his praise. ²² Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with grain, yet his foolishness will not be removed from him. ²³ Know well the state of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds: ²⁴ for riches are not forever, nor does even the crown endure

to all generations. ²⁵ The hay is removed, and the new growth appears, the grasses of the hills are gathered in. ²⁶ The lambs are for your clothing, and the goats are the price of a field. ²⁷ There will be plenty of goats' milk for your food, for your family's food, and for the nourishment of your servant girls.

CHAPTER 28 Apr. 18

If You Turn Aside from God's Law

The wicked flee when no one pursues; but the righteous are as bold as a lion. ² In rebellion, a land has many rulers, but order is maintained by a man of understanding and knowledge. ³ A needy man who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain which leaves no crops. ⁴ Those who forsake the law praise the wicked; but those who keep the law contend with them. ⁵ Evil men don't understand justice; but those who seek Yahweh understand it fully. ⁶ Better is the poor who walks in his integrity, than he who is perverse in his ways, and he is rich. ⁷ Whoever keeps the law is a wise son; but he who is a companion of gluttons shames his father. ⁸ He who increases his wealth by excessive interest gathers it for one who has pity on the poor. ⁹ He who turns away his ear from hear-

27:21 How we respond to praise is an indicator of who we really are spiritually, because our response will indicate whether we are proud or humble.

28:2 See on 25:3.

28:5 *Those who seek Yahweh understand it fully* – Note the paradox between 'seeking' and 'fully understanding'. The seeker recognizes he hasn't yet arrived at full understanding; but that process of humble seeking God is in fact reckoned as 'fully understanding'.

28:9 Our attitude to God's word is related to the effectiveness of our prayers; insofar as God's word abides in us, we will ask for things which God will grant (Jn. 15:7), and

ing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. ¹⁰ Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, he will fall into his own trap; but the blameless will inherit good. ¹¹ The rich man is wise in his own eyes; but the poor who has understanding sees through him. ¹² When the righteous triumph, there is great glory; but when the wicked rise, men hide themselves. ¹³ He who conceals his sins doesn't prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. ¹⁴ Blessed is the man who always fears; but one who hardens his heart falls into trouble. ¹⁵ As a roaring lion or a charging bear, so is a wicked ruler over helpless people. ¹⁶ A tyrannical ruler lacks judgment. One who hates ill-gotten gain will have long days. ¹⁷ A man who is tormented by having taken life blood will be a fugitive until death; no one will support him. ¹⁸ Whoever walks blamelessly is kept safe; but one with perverse ways will fall suddenly.

Great Harm in Apparently Harmless Ways

¹⁹ One who works his land will have an abundance of food; but one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. ²⁰ A faithful man is rich with blessings; but one who is eager to be rich will not go unpunished. ²¹ To show partiality is not good; yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread. ²² A stingy man hurries after riches, and doesn't know that poverty waits for him. ²³ One who rebukes a man will afterward find more favour than one who flatters with the tongue. ²⁴ Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, It's not wrong is a partner with a destroyer. ²⁵ One who is greedy stirs up strife; but one who trusts in Yahweh will prosper. ²⁶ One who trusts in himself is a fool; but one who walks in wisdom is kept safe. ²⁷ One who gives to the poor has no lack; but one who closes his eyes will have many curses. ²⁸ When the wicked rise, men hide

we will ask in faith, because faith comes from hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). The various aspects of the believing life, e.g. prayer and Bible reading, mesh together to produce an upward spiritual of spiritual development.

28:11 The problem with wealth is the illusion it brings that everything can be bought for a price, including wisdom and spirituality. It's not surprising therefore that the majority of God's people have been kept poor by Him.

28:14 *Blessed is the man who always fears* – This is in designed contrast to the way :1 speaks of the righteous as bold as a lion, and the wicked as fearful. The 'fear' spoken of here must refer to a fear of God, of sinning against Him – and this, paradoxically, makes us not nervous, but bold and positive in our life path.

28:21 People will betray others and do and say awful things to them just in the hope of a tiny material advantage to them. Judas' betrayal of Christ can be read as largely motivated by a love of money, and a relatively small sum too.

28:25 Seeking after wealth is contrasted with trusting in Yahweh – i.e. in His promise to provide our daily bread and clothing.

28:27 *One who closes his eyes* – This is the opposite of 'giving to the poor'. We often fail to be generous spirited (and we can give to the poor in many ways apart from

themselves; but when they perish, the righteous thrive.

CHAPTER 29 Apr. 19

Consequences of Bad Government

He who is often rebuked and stiffens his neck will be destroyed suddenly, with no remedy. ² When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan. ³ Whoever loves wisdom brings joy to his father; but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth. ⁴ The king by justice makes the land stable, but he who takes bribes tears it down. ⁵ A man who flatters his neighbour spreads a net for his own feet. ⁶ An evil man is snared by his sin, but the righteous can sing and rejoice. ⁷ The righteous care about justice for the poor; the wicked aren't concerned about knowledge. ⁸ Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger. ⁹ If a

wise man goes to court with a foolish man, the fool rages or scoffs, and there is no peace. ¹⁰ The bloodthirsty hate a man of integrity; and they seek the life of the upright. ¹¹ A fool vents all of his anger, but a wise man brings himself under control. ¹² If a ruler listens to lies, all of his officials are wicked. ¹³ The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: Yahweh gives sight to the eyes of both. ¹⁴ The king who fairly judges the poor, his throne shall be established forever.

The Value of Correction

¹⁵ The rod of correction gives wisdom, but a child left to himself causes shame to his mother. ¹⁶ When the wicked increase, sin increases; but the righteous will see their downfall. ¹⁷ Correct your son, and he will give you peace; yes, he will bring delight to your soul. ¹⁸ Where there is no

financially) because we pretend we didn't notice human need, we close the eyes of our perception to the situations we encounter. Notice how deeply our psychology is penetrated by the Proverbs!

29:7 This sounds like a reference to the way Solomon judged the two prostitutes. See on 25:5.

29:14 Solomon is clearly referring to the promises to David, which he assumed were about him. He thought that because he had judged the poor harlots wisely, therefore he would be the promised Messiah. And this was just what David his father had hoped and expected of him. David had even asked Solomon to "do wisely" i.e. to show wisdom, in order that the promises to him about Messiah would be fulfilled (1 Kings 2:3). So *this* was surely one of Solomon's motives in giving them justice and being 'wise'; he sought to live out his father's expectations and to fulfil the requirements of the Messiah figure. Solomon uses language elsewhere used about Messiah's final judgment and applies it to himself in 20:26. He felt that his judgment must be that of God, therefore he had to be right, because he 'had wisdom', he 'had the truth'; he assumed that because he was the king, therefore his heart would inevitably be guided by the Lord (21:1). Those raised in wisdom's way often find it very hard to take criticism in later life. They find tolerance of others' views hard; they perceive themselves to be right to an intolerant extent. Is this not a little bit of the Solomon syndrome?

Divine revelation, the people cast off restraint; but one who keeps the law is blessed. ¹⁹ A servant can't be corrected by words; although he understands, yet he will not respond. ²⁰ Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. ²¹ He who pampers his servant from youth will have him become a son in the end. ²² An angry man stirs up strife, and a wrathful man abounds in sin. ²³ A man's pride brings him low, but one of lowly spirit gains honour. ²⁴ Whoever is an accomplice of a thief is an enemy of his own soul; he takes an oath, but dares not testify. ²⁵ The fear of man proves to be a snare, but whoever puts his trust in Yahweh is kept safe. ²⁶ Many seek the ruler's favour, but a man's justice comes from Yahweh. ²⁷ A dishonest man detests the righteous, and the upright in their ways detest the wicked.

CHAPTER 30 Apr. 20

The Words of Agur

The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle: the man said

30:6 Although we may accept that the Bible is indeed inspired by God, we have a tendency to add to God's word in that we are tempted to look elsewhere for truth. Because God's word is true ("flawless", :5) any other word is relatively speaking untrue, a lie. Having stated that he himself is ignorant, Agur is directing his pupils to God's word; he recognized that wisdom cannot come from within a teacher, but only from God's word which is taught by the teacher.

30:8 *Feed me with the food that is needful for me* – Maybe Jesus was influenced by this in commanding us to ask God each day to give us the food necessary for the day (Mt. 6:11).

30:10 *Along with his master* – Household servants were considered as one with their master. But Agur is teaching that we shouldn't operate guilt by association, but instead recognize that even the humblest member of a community is still an individual and independent person both before God and ourselves.

30:10, 11 *Curses... doesn't bless* – Note how sins of omission [to not bless, in this case] are parallel with sins of commission [to curse].

to Ithiel, even to Ithiel and Ucal:

² Surely I am the most ignorant man, and don't have a man's understanding. ³ I have not learned wisdom, neither do I have the knowledge of the Holy One. ⁴ Who has ascended up into heaven, and descended? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has bound the waters in his garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if you know? ⁵ Every word of God is flawless. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. ⁶ Don't you add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar. ⁷ Two things I have asked of You; don't deny me before I die: ⁸ Remove far from me falsehood and lies. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me; ⁹ lest I be full, deny You, and say, 'Who is Yahweh?', or lest I be poor, and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God. ¹⁰ Don't accuse a servant along with his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty. ¹¹ There is a generation that curses their fa-

ther, and doesn't bless their mother. ¹² There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness. ¹³ There is a generation, oh how proud are their eyes! Their eyelids are lifted up. ¹⁴ There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and their jaws like knives, to devour the poor from the earth, and the needy from among men.

Four Things Never Satisfied

¹⁵ The leach has two daughters: 'Give, give'. There are three things that are never satisfied; four that don't say, 'Enough.' ¹⁶ Sheol; the barren womb; the earth that is not satisfied with water; and the fire that doesn't say, 'Enough'. ¹⁷ The eye that mocks at his father, and scorns obedience to his mother: the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, the young eagles shall eat it.

Four Things too Amazing

¹⁸ There are three things which are too amazing for me, four which I don't understand: ¹⁹ The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maiden. ²⁰ So is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats

and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done nothing wrong'.

Four Intolerable Things

²¹ For three things the earth trembles, and under four, it can't bear up: ²² For a servant when he is king; a fool when he is filled with food; ²³ for an unloved woman when she is married; and a handmaid who is heir to her mistress.

Four Amazing Things

²⁴ There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: ²⁵ The ants are not a strong people, yet they provide their food in the summer. ²⁶ The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks. ²⁷ The locusts have no king, yet they advance in ranks. ²⁸ You can catch a lizard with your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.

Four Dignified Things

²⁹ There are three things which are stately in their march, four which are stately in going: ³⁰ The lion, which is mightiest among animals, and doesn't turn away for any; ³¹ the greyhound, the male goat also; and the king against whom there is no rising up. ³² If you have done foolishly

30:12 The fact we may feel no conscience for sin isn't any cleansing from it; the only effective washing from sin is through baptism into Christ, not playing mind games with ourselves whereby we don't feel bad about our sins.

30:20 There's a connection between the things of :18,19 and the adulterous woman who thinks she has done no wrong. Those things of :18,19 leave no visible trace. Because there is at times no trace of sins like adultery, they fade away as the path of a ship through the sea does, we aren't to think that God doesn't notice and that they will not be brought to judgment.

in lifting up yourself, or if you have thought evil, put your hand over your mouth. ³³ For as the churning of milk brings forth butter, and the wringing of the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of wrath brings forth judgment.

CHAPTER 31 Apr. 21

Make a Case for Justice

The words of king Lemuel; the oracle with which his mother warned him. ² Oh, my son! Oh, son of my womb! Oh, son of my vows! ³ Don't give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings. ⁴ It is not for kings, Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes to say, 'Where is strong drink?' ⁵ lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice due to anyone who is afflicted. ⁶ Give strong drink to him who is ready to perish; and wine to the bitter in soul: ⁷ let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. ⁸ Open your mouth for the

mute, in the cause of all who are left desolate. ⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously, and serve justice to the poor and needy.

The Worthy Woman

¹⁰ Who can find a worthy woman? For her price is far above rubies. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her; he shall have no lack of profit. ¹² She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. ¹³ She seeks wool and flax and works eagerly with her hands. ¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises also while it is yet night, gives food to her household and portions for her servant girls. ¹⁶ She considers a field and then buys it. With the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷ She arms her waist with strength and makes her arms strong. ¹⁸ She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp doesn't go out by night; ¹⁹ she lays her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. ²⁰ She opens her arms to the

30:32, 33 Just as the things of :30,31 are inexorable in their march and will not be deflected by anything, so just as surely judgment will come for sin, and we must repent rather than continuing to churn up Divine judgment against us.

31:1 *Lemuel* – An equivalent name for Solomon, having a similar meaning to Solomon's other name, Jedediah (2 Sam. 12:25). This chapter would therefore be the inspired words of his mother Bathsheba.

31:3 Bathsheba was warning Solomon not to make the mistake his father David had, who destroyed his family for the sake of his adultery with Bathsheba. The warning against sinning with women under the influence of alcohol, which would lead the king to forget God's law, could suggest that David sinned with Bathsheba whilst under the influence of alcohol.

31:8 There are those who whilst not physically mute are relatively voiceless; and we are to be a voice for them, to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves.

31:15 *Portions for her servant girls* – The wise woman is great because she serves those who are her servants; we see here the New Testament principle of servant leadership.

poor; yes, she extends her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet. ²² She makes for herself carpets of tapestry, her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is respected in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them, and delivers sashes to the merchant. ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, she laughs at the time to come.

²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, faithful instruction is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household, and doesn't eat the bread of laziness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also praises her: ²⁹ Many women do noble things, but you excel them all! ³⁰ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears Yahweh, she shall be praised. ³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands! Let her works praise her in the gates!

31:23 The implication is that the respect given her husband is thanks to her, for the surrounding verses are speaking of what *she* achieves for her family.

ECCLESIASTES

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 22

The Vanity of Life 'Under the Sun'

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem: ² Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What does man gain from all his labour in which he labours under the sun? ⁴ One generation goes, and another generation comes; but the earth remains forever. ⁵ The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hurries to its place where it rises. ⁶ The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north. It turns around continually as it goes, and the wind returns again to its courses. ⁷ All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again. ⁸ All things are full of weariness beyond uttering. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ That which has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. ¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it may be said, Behold, this is new? It has been long ago, in the

ages which were before us. ¹¹ There is no memory of the former; neither shall there be any memory of the latter that are to come, among those that shall come after.

The Preacher Decides to Search for Wisdom

¹² I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the sky. It is a heavy burden that God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with. ¹⁴ I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a chasing after wind. ¹⁵ That which is crooked can't be made straight; and that which is lacking can't be counted. ¹⁶ I said to myself, Behold, I have obtained for myself great wisdom above all who were before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. ¹⁷ I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also was a chasing after wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much grief; and he

1:4 *The earth remains forever* – It is God's promised plan to establish His eternal Kingdom on this earth; He will not destroy it. The Biblical descriptions of "heaven and earth" being destroyed are to be read as figurative of the destruction of the present world order, rather than literally.

1:12 This book appears to be the meditations of Solomon at the end of his life. He had been given Divine wisdom and retained it (2:9), but he rejected its claim upon him personally. He therefore says much which is true, and yet he speaks with the cynicism of the person who has rejected the true faith for himself whilst still offering it to others, especially the young. This explains the apparently contradictory strands of teaching within the book.

who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 23

The Preacher Seeks for Satisfaction in Pleasure

I said in my heart, Come now, I will test you with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also was vanity. ² I said of laughter, It is foolishness; and of mirth, What does it accomplish?

³ I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold of folly, until I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their lives. ⁴ I made myself great works. I built myself houses. I planted myself vineyards. ⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit. ⁶ I made myself pools of water, to water from it the forest where trees were reared. ⁷ I bought male servants and female servants, and had servants born in my house. I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all who were before me in Jerusalem; ⁸ I also gathered silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and of the provinces. I got myself male and female singers, and the delights of the sons of men—musical instruments, and that of all sorts. ⁹ So I was great, and increased more than all who were

before me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also remained with me. ¹⁰ Whatever my eyes desired, I didn't keep from them. I didn't withhold my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour, and this was my portion from all my labour.

¹¹ Then I looked at all the works that my hands had worked, and at the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

The Preacher Despairs of Earthly Life

¹² I turned myself to consider wisdom, madness, and folly: for what can the king's successor do? Just that which has been done long ago.

¹³ Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as far as light excels darkness. ¹⁴ The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness—and yet I perceived that one event happens to them all. ¹⁵ Then I said in my heart, As it happens to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶ For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no memory for ever, since in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. Indeed, the wise man must die just like the fool! ¹⁷ So I hated life, because the work that is worked under the sun was grievous to me; for all

2:9 Solomon insists that throughout his life, his wisdom had remained with him. The theoretical wisdom which he had did not affect his life practically, and thus it was as if he lacked wisdom completely. Mere possession of truth leads to great temptations – for like Solomon, we can reason that this alone justifies us in any behaviour.

is vanity and a chasing after wind. ¹⁸ I hated all my labour in which I laboured under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who comes after me. ¹⁹ Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have rule over all of my labour in which I have laboured, and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. ²⁰ Therefore I began to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour in which I had laboured under the sun. ²¹ For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, with knowledge, and with skilfulness; yet he shall leave it for his portion to a man who has not laboured for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. ²² For what has a man of all his labour, and of the striving of his heart, in which he labours under the sun? ²³ For all his days are sorrows, and his travail is grief; yes, even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. ²⁴ There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God. ²⁵ For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? ²⁶ For to the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy;

but to the sinner He gives travail, to gather and to heap up, that He may give to him who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 24

A Time for All Things.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: ² a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; ³ a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; ⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; ⁵ a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; ⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; ⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; ⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

The Hand of God in the Midst of Human Frustrations.

⁹ What profit has he who works in that in which he labours? ¹⁰ I have seen the burden which God has giv-

2:18, 21 Solomon saw “wisdom” as something he had worked for [forgetting it was God’s gracious gift to him], and he treated it as a material possession. Because he saw that he couldn’t take it with him, he felt therefore it was useless – he didn’t, it seems, want to leave it to his son because he felt it was only for him. This was the spirit of the man who buried his talent of Divine Truth in the ground and thought that would be enough – he wouldn’t risk it with others or share it with them. And so Solomon ended up hating all his labour for wisdom because at the end of his life that mere knowledge and teaching of it to others hadn’t transformed his personal life. The rejected at the day of judgment may well, tragically, feel the same. But *now* is the time to personally apply God’s Truth to ourselves and to be *humbled* by the very possession of it.

en to the sons of men to be afflicted with. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in their hearts, yet so that man can't find out the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end. ¹² I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good as long as they live. ¹³ Also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labour, is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; and God has done it, that men should fear before Him. ¹⁵ That which is has been long ago, and that which is to be has been long ago; and God seeks again that which is passed away. ¹⁶ Moreover I saw under the sun, in the place of justice, that wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, that wickedness was there. ¹⁷ I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. ¹⁸ I said in my heart, As for the sons of men, God tests them, so that they may see that they themselves

are like animals. ¹⁹ For that which happens to the sons of men happens to animals. Even one thing happens to them. As the one dies, so the other dies. Yes, they have all one breath; and man has no advantage over the animals: for all is vanity. ²⁰ All go to one place. All are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. ²¹ Who knows the spirit of man, whether it goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, whether it goes downward to the earth? ²² Therefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who can bring him to see what will be after him?

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 25

The Preacher Observes Oppression and Loneliness

Then I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of those who were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. ² Therefore I praised the dead who have been long dead more than the living who

3:19 One and the same spirit – The Hebrew word translated “spirit” has a wide range of meaning, but includes the idea of “breath”. By nature, man and the animals are the same. The same thing happens when we die; and Solomon so wished that men would perceive this whilst they were alive (:18) so that they would give themselves to God the more fully. There's no difference in where the spirit goes after death, whether we are man, animal or plant (:21). We are made of dust and will return to dust; the spirit, or life force which animates us, returns to God, whether we are good or bad. Those who are responsible to God will be resurrected and judged; the wicked will die for ever, the second death, again returning to dust; and those counted righteous by God's grace will live for ever with immortal bodies in His eternal Kingdom on earth. There is no conscious survival of death taught in the Bible; we're not born with any 'immortal soul'. This is a non-Christian idea. Immortality is only revealed to those who are in Christ (2 Tim. 1:10).

are yet alive. ³ Yes, better than them both is him who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. ⁴ Then I saw all the labour and achievement that is the envy of a man's neighbour. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. ⁵ The fool folds his hands together and ruins himself. ⁶ Better is a handful, with quietness, than two handfuls with labour and chasing after wind. ⁷ Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun. ⁸ There is one who is alone, and he has neither son nor brother. There is no end to all of his labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with wealth. For whom then, do I labour, and deprive my soul of enjoyment? This also is vanity. Yes, it is a miserable business. ⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. ¹⁰ For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls, and doesn't have another to lift him up. ¹¹ Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² If a man prevails against one who is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. ¹³ Better is a poor and wise

youth than an old and foolish king who doesn't know how to receive admonition any more. ¹⁴ For out of prison he came forth to be king; yes, even in his kingdom he was born poor. ¹⁵ I saw all the living who walk under the sun, that they were with the youth, the other, who succeeded him. ¹⁶ There was no end of all the people, even of all them over whom he was—yet those who come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 26

The Preacher Advises to Fear God

Guard your steps when you go to God's house; for to draw near to listen is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they don't know that they do evil. ² Don't be rash with your mouth, and don't let your heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and you on earth. Therefore let your words be few. ³ For as a dream comes with a multitude of cares, so a fool's speech with a multitude of words. ⁴ When you vow a vow to God, don't defer to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay that which you vow. ⁵ It is better that you should not vow,

4:8 The billionaire always wants another billion... "Hell and destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20 RV), Solomon wrote in his youth; and then in old age, he came to basically the same conclusion, having spent his life working back to the truth that he had been taught in his youth (see too 1:8). And there are many men and women who have done the same. We all tend to be empirical learners; and yet this is the great power of God's word, that through it we don't have to learn everything through our failures; but we can receive His Truth, trust it, and simply live by it. Otherwise we shall be like Solomon...

5:2 *God is in heaven, and you on earth* – God is revealed as existing as a personal being in a specific location, Heaven. Although He is present everywhere by His Spirit, this doesn't mean that He has no personal existence.

than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Don't allow your mouth to lead you into sin. Don't protest before the messenger that this was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷ For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, as well as in many words: but you must fear God. ⁸ If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a district, don't marvel at the matter: for one official is eyed by a higher one; and there are officials over them.

The Preacher Observes Wealth

⁹ Moreover the profit of the earth is for all. The king profits from the field. ¹⁰ He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, those who eat them are increased; and what advantage is there to its owner, except to feast on them with his eyes? ¹² The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not allow him to sleep. ¹³ There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: wealth kept by its owner to his harm. ¹⁴ Those riches perish by misfortune,

and if he has fathered a son, there is nothing in his hand. ¹⁵ As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. ¹⁶ This also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit does he have who labours for the wind? ¹⁷ All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath. ¹⁸ Behold, that which I have seen to be good and proper is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labour, in which he labours under the sun, all the days of his life which God has given him; for this is his portion. ¹⁹ Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat of it, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour—this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he shall not often reflect on the days of his life; because God occupies him with the joy of his heart.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 27

Frustration from Dependency on Material Things

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is heavy on men: ² a man to whom God gives

5:6 *Don't protest before the messenger* – The Hebrew word 'malak' translated "messenger" is the usual word translated "angel". It can be used of men, e.g. priests, or anyone who is a 'messenger'. The Angels of God don't sin (Lk. 20:35,36 cp. Rom. 6:23), but the word 'malak' can be applied to ordinary men, who of course can sin. The Greek word 'aggelos', usually translated 'angel', is applied to the human messengers of John the Baptist (Lk. 7:24). This confusion has led to some misunderstanding the few Bible verses which speak (in some translations) of 'angels' sinning; but those 'angels' referred to are human beings, representatives, servants or messengers of others, and don't refer to 'angels' in the sense of spirit beings.

riches, wealth, and honour, so that he lacks nothing for his soul of all that he desires, yet God gives him no power to eat of it, but an alien eats it. This is vanity, and it is an evil disease. ³ If a man fathers a hundred children, and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not filled with good, and moreover he has no burial; I say, that a stillborn child is better than he: ⁴ for it comes in vanity, and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. ⁵ Moreover it has not seen the sun nor known it. This has rest rather than the other. ⁶ Yes, though he live a thousand years twice told, and yet fails to enjoy good, don't all go to one place? ⁷ All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. ⁸ For what advantage has the wise more than the fool? What has the poor man, who knows how to walk before the living? ⁹ Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind. ¹⁰ Whatever has been, its name was given long ago; and it is known what man is; neither can he contend with him who is mightier than he. ¹¹ For there are

many words that create vanity. What does that profit man? ¹² For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he spends like a shadow? For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

CHAPTER 7 Apr. 28

Oppression, Anger and Discontent

A good name is better than fine perfume; and the day of death better than the day of one's birth. ² It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living should take this to heart. ³ Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the face the heart is made good. ⁴ The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. ⁵ It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. ⁶ For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity. ⁷ Surely extortion makes the wise man foolish; and a bribe destroys the understanding. ⁸ Better is the end of a thing than its beginning.

6:2 Prov. 6:26 warns the young man that the Gentile woman will take his money and leave him destitute at the end. These words seem to be alluded to by Solomon years later here, where he laments that despite his wealth and success, a Gentile would have it all after his death. He saw in later life that his warnings to the young men of Israel had been in the form of painting a picture of a typical young man who epitomized youthful folly; but now he realized that he had been making a detailed prophecy of himself. Likewise in 2:18,19 he laments that his labours will achieve nothing; doubtless alluding back to his words in Prov. 5:10, where he says that the Gentile wife will make the young Israelite's labours meaningless. Sin never satisfies. We can know truth on a theoretical level as Solomon did, and yet not live it out in practice.

7:2-4 The continual emphasis of society upon 'fun' and 'entertainment' doesn't lead to wisdom before God, but the very opposite.

The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. ⁹ Don't be hasty in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. ¹⁰ Don't say, Why were the former days better than these? For you do not ask wisely about this.

Wisdom Excels All Else

¹¹ Wisdom is as good as an inheritance. Yes, it is more excellent for those who see the sun. ¹² For wisdom is a defence, even as money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. ¹³ Consider the work of God, for who can make that straight, which He has made crooked? ¹⁴ In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; yes, God has made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out anything after Him. ¹⁵ All this have I seen in my days of vanity: there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who lives long in his evildoing. ¹⁶ Don't be overly righteous, neither make yourself overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself? ¹⁷ Don't be too wicked, neither be foolish. Why should you die before

your time? ¹⁸ It is good that you should take hold of this. Yes, also from that don't withdraw your hand; for he who fears God will come forth from them all. ¹⁹ Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. ²⁰ Surely there is not a righteous man on earth, who does good and doesn't sin. ²¹ Also don't take heed to all words that are spoken, lest you hear your servant curse you; ²² for often your own heart knows that you yourself have likewise cursed others. ²³ All this have I proved in wisdom. I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. ²⁴ That which is, is far off and exceedingly deep. Who can find it out? ²⁵ I turned around, and my heart sought to know and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know that wickedness is stupidity, and that foolishness is madness. ²⁶ I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and traps, whose hands are chains. Whoever pleases God shall escape from her; but the sinner will be ensnared by her. ²⁷ Behold, I have found this, says the Preacher, one to another, to find out the scheme; ²⁸ which my soul still seeks; but I have not found. One man among a

7:23 Solomon recognized that although he had loved the idea of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted him personally: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me". His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom.

7:28 Solomon had all the instruction he could wish for; but he didn't allow it to really sink home. He started out on the search for an ultimately satisfying woman, but out of the 1000 he had (1 Kings 11:3) he never found one, even when he sat down and analyzed each of them. And even politically, his marriages with all those Gen-

thousand have I found; but I have not found a woman among all those. ²⁹ Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they search for many schemes.

CHAPTER 8 Apr. 29

The Supremacy of the King.

Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. ² I say, Keep the king's command! because of the oath to God. ³ Don't be hasty to go out of his presence. Don't persist in an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him, ⁴ for the king's word is supreme. Who can say to him, What are you doing? ⁵ Whoever keeps the commandment shall not come to harm, and his wise heart will know the time and procedure. ⁶ For there is a time and procedure for every purpose, although the misery of man is heavy on him. ⁷ For he doesn't know

that which will be; for who can tell him how it will be? ⁸ There is no man who has power over the spirit to contain the spirit; neither does he have power over the day of death. There is no discharge in war; neither shall wickedness deliver those who practice it.

The Destiny of the Wicked

⁹ All this have I seen, and applied my mind to every work that is done under the sun. There is a time in which one man has power over another to his hurt. ¹⁰ So I saw the wicked buried. Indeed they came also from holiness. They went and were forgotten in the city where they did this. This also is vanity. ¹¹ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. ¹² Though a sinner commits crimes a hundred times, and lives long, yet surely I know that it will be better with those who fear

tile women didn't seem to achieve the support he desired from their home countries; Egypt gave refuge to Jeroboam, Solomon's main rival (1 Kings 11:40), even though he always acquiesced to his wives and even in his very old age he still didn't destroy the idol temples he built for them (2 Kings 23:13).

8:1 Solomon didn't see the relevance of his wisdom to his own personal family life. Yet he proudly insisted: "Who is like the wise man?", as if the possession of theoretical truth and wisdom was the ultimate possession; and he then goes on to say that this made him beyond criticism (:2-4). This is a danger for any community or individual who says they have "the truth" and who considers the possession of it to be of the utmost importance.

8:4 It is only God who cannot be questioned in this way. But Solomon felt that because he possessed God's wisdom, he could therefore act as God. :2 could suggest that he thought his commandments were in fact God's. So the possession of Truth, which we too have, can lead to an incredible arrogance, a lack of openness to others' comments upon us, and a certainty that we are right in all that we do and are beyond criticism in every area. The hardness of a man is changed by true wisdom (:1) but despite knowing this, Solomon became hard hearted and abused his people. He had the wisdom – but as he said, it was far from him personally.

God, who are reverent before him.¹³ But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he lengthen days like a shadow; because he doesn't fear God.¹⁴ There is a vanity which is done on the earth, that there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked. Again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.¹⁵ Then I commended mirth, because a man has no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be joyful: for that will accompany him in his labour all the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on the earth (for also there is that neither day nor night sees sleep with his eyes),¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man can't find out the work that is done under the sun, because however much a man labours to seek it out, yet he won't find it. Yes even though a wise man thinks he can comprehend it, he won't be able to find it.

CHAPTER 9 Apr. 30

Equality in Death

For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this: that the right-

eous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; whether it is love or hatred, man doesn't know it; all is before them.² All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, to the clean, to the unclean, to him who sacrifices, and to him who doesn't sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath, as he who fears an oath.³ This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event to all: yes also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.⁴ For to him who is joined with all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion.⁵ For the living know that they will die, but the dead don't know anything, neither do they have any more a reward; for their memory is forgotten.⁶ Also their love, their hatred, and their envy has perished long ago; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.⁷ Go your way—eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works.⁸ Let your garments be always white, and don't let your head lack oil.⁹ Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your

9:5 *The dead don't know anything* – The Bible clearly teaches that death is unconsciousness. See on 3:19.

9:6 *Neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun* – Human theories of ghosts and reincarnation aren't compatible with the Bible. The Biblical hope for life after death is in the form of a bodily resurrection to stand before God's judgment and then by grace receive eternal life in His Kingdom on earth; and this is not for all, but for those who have consciously made a covenant with God in this life.

life of vanity, which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity: for that is your portion in life, and in your labour in which you labour under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, where you are going. ¹¹ I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. ¹² For man also doesn't know his time. As the fish that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, even so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly on them. ¹³ I have also seen wisdom under the sun in this way, and it seemed great to me. ¹⁴ There was a little city, and few men within it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. ¹⁵ Now a poor wise man was found in it, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. ¹⁶ Then I said, Wisdom

is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. ¹⁷ The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the cry of him who rules among fools. ¹⁸ Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good.

CHAPTER 10 May 1

Miscellaneous Observations

Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odour; so does a little folly outweigh wisdom and honour. ² A wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart at his left. ³ Yes also, when the fool walks by the way, his understanding fails him, and he says to everyone that he is a fool. ⁴ If the spirit of the ruler rises up against you, don't leave your place; for gentleness lays great offenses to rest. ⁵ There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, the sort of error which proceeds from the ruler. ⁶ Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place. ⁷ I have seen servants on horses, and princes walking like servants on the earth. ⁸ He who digs a pit may fall into it; and whoever breaks through

9:10 *Sheol, where you are going* – ‘Sheol’, translated ‘hell’ in some Bibles and ‘the grave’ in others, is simply death; all people, good and bad, go there. It's not a place of conscious punishment for the wicked, it refers simply to the grave.

10:1 Solomon had ‘honour’ to an unprecedented extent (1 Kings 3:13). But in this same book he admits that he, the man famed world-wide for wisdom, gave himself to folly (2:3). He knew so well the error and folly of his ways, but he could only preach the lesson but not heed it. A true fool is one whose wisdom fails him in practice (when he ‘walks by the way’, :3); and especially is this acute when this ‘error... proceeds from the ruler’ (:5). It's all about Solomon himself. His self-analysis, like that of many an alcoholic and drug addict, was excellent. The very possession of truth and wisdom seems to be of itself a temptation to live the very opposite way, which is why believers who go wrong often end up behaving far worse than unbelievers.

a wall may be bitten by a snake.
⁹ Whoever carves out stones may be injured by them. Whoever splits wood may be endangered thereby.
¹⁰ If the axe is blunt, and one doesn't sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but skill brings success.
¹¹ If the snake bites before it is charmed, then is there no profit for the charmer's tongue.
¹² The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but a fool is swallowed by his own lips.
¹³ The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.
¹⁴ A fool also multiplies words. Man doesn't know what will be; and that which will be after him, who can tell him?
¹⁵ The labour of fools wearies every one of them; for he doesn't know how to go to the city.
¹⁶ Woe to you, land, when your king is a servant, and your princes eat in the morning!
¹⁷ Blessed are you, land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!
¹⁸ By slothfulness the roof sinks in; and through idleness of the hands the house leaks.
¹⁹ A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes the life glad; and money is the an-

swer for all things.
²⁰ Don't curse the king, no, not in your thoughts; and don't curse the rich in your bedroom: for a bird of the sky may carry your voice, and that which has wings may tell the matter.

CHAPTER 11 May 2

The Preacher Observes Generosity and Diligence.

Cast your bread on the waters; for you shall find it after many days.
² Give a portion to seven, yes, even to eight; for you don't know what evil will be on the earth.
³ If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree falls toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there shall it be.
⁴ He who observes the wind won't sow; and he who regards the clouds won't reap.
⁵ As you don't know what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child; even so you don't know the work of God who does all.
⁶ In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening don't withhold your hand; for you don't know which will prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both will be equally good.
⁷ Truly the light is

10:16, 17 Solomon had been so confident that he was or would be the Messiah that he seems to have felt that he was beyond the possibility of sinning; real self-examination and the sense of the possibility of failure just didn't exist for him. He says that the land of Israel is happy or blessed because her king is the son of a noble, and she will be cursed if her ruler is a servant. Solomon proudly presented himself as the son of King David – and he makes a clear swipe at Jeroboam, the pretender to the throne who was a servant (1 Kings 11:26). By reasoning like this, Solomon sets himself in direct opposition to the spirit of Jesus, who declared that the servant is to be the King of all. Thus Solomon's self-justification, his self-defensiveness, his lack of focus on the future Messiah, led him to miss totally the spirit of Christ.

sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to see the sun.⁸ Yes, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity.

The Preacher Appeals to Youth

⁹ Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things there is a God who will

bring you into judgment for them.¹⁰ Therefore remove anger from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

CHAPTER 12 May 3

Youth, Age and Life's End

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw near, when you will say, I have no pleasure in them;² Before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are

11:9 *For all these things there is a God who will bring you into judgment* – Solomon knows judgment will come, at least for the young people, but he reasons as if it won't – at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. But in 7:12 he says that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But then again in 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, its benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. He knew and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice. His final recommendation in chapter 12 is for young people to go the way of wisdom, as this is their duty. He had evidently minimized the coming of judgment, as his obsession with himself being the Messiah had lead him to minimize the reality of the coming of Christ. How deeply do we struggle with our own humanity, and deeply long for the second coming? Has our materialism made the Hope of the Kingdom mean practically nothing? Solomon's complaint at the pointlessness of wisdom in 2:15-20 is liberally sprinkled with personal pronouns; his self-centredness was part of his materialism and lack of faith in the Kingdom. And for us too, familiarity with the glorious principles of Divine Truth with which we have been entrusted can lead us to the blasphemy of saying, in effect, that those principles are unimportant; they come to mean little to us personally, and thereby we effectively deny their value and worth.

11:10 The tragic brevity of life means that youth is vanity; we should quit the time wasting follies of youth or overgrown childhood (and the modern world is full of these), and therefore we too should remove anger from our hearts. Ecclesiastes uses the mortality of man not only as an appeal to work for our creator and quit anger, but to simply have faith in His existence (as 2 Cor. 1:9).

12:2 *And the clouds return after the rain* – Solomon's father, David, had in his old age rejoiced in the prospect of God's Kingdom coming on earth at Christ's return, which he imagined would be like the clear shining after the rain (2 Sam. 23:4). Solomon in

darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; ³ in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look out of the windows are darkened, ⁴ and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; ⁵ yes, they shall be afraid of heights, and terrors will be in the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goes to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: ⁶ before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the spring, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

The Preacher's Final Thoughts

⁸ Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher. All is vanity! ⁹ Further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge. Yes, he pondered, sought out, and set in order many proverbs. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written blamelessly, words of truth. ¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads; and like nails well fastened are words from the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. ¹² Furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. ¹³ This is the end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.

his old age saw only negativity, the return of the clouds, whereas David in old age looked ahead with hope to the Kingdom. Whilst Solomon spoke so often of his father David, he failed to personally grasp the wonder of the hope of Christ and His Kingdom which his father had; for this cannot be passed on through the generations, that wonder has to be learnt from experience and years of spiritual devotion.

12:3-5 This is a picture of a man in old age, perhaps based upon Solomon himself, having lost his strength and his teeth ("the grinders"), with darkened eyesight, poor of hearing and jumpy, scared of heights having lost his balance, with white hair like the almond tree and having lost sexual desire. Solomon presents this picture of man at his last end to those yet young, with the appeal to therefore not waste life ingratiating the senses, but rather in serving God.

SONG OF SOLOMON

CHAPTER 1 May 4

The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.

The Beloved

² Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for your lovemaking is better than wine. ³ Your oils have a pleasing fragrance. Your name is oil poured forth, therefore the virgins love you. ⁴ Take me away with you. Let's hurry. The king has brought me into his rooms!

Daughters of Jerusalem

We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will praise your love more than wine!

Beloved

They are right to love you. ⁵ I am dark, but lovely, you daughters of Jerusalem, like Kedar's tents, like Solomon's curtains. ⁶ Don't stare at me because I am dark, because the sun has scorched me. My mother's sons were angry with me. They made me keeper of the vineyards, but I haven't kept my own vineyard. ⁷ Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you graze your flock, where you rest them at noon; for why should I be as one who is veiled beside the flocks of your companions?

Lover

⁸ If you don't know, most beautiful among women, follow the tracks of

The set of dialogues we have in this Song indicate that here we have a romance which went too far too quickly between Solomon and an Egyptian girl. He ought to have married an Israelite, one of the "daughters of Jerusalem". The Song is full of tension between the girl and these "daughters", whom she fears as being more attractive to Solomon than herself; and they speak to her sarcastically. Solomon in the Proverbs warned the Israelites about being attracted by pretty Gentile women who would lead them astray; and yet he does the very opposite of what he had taught to be true. The Song ends not with a wedding, as the genre of love poems might suggest, but with the couple parting in acrimony. Not running relationships God's way doesn't lead to satisfaction.

1:2 The Song begins by the daughters of Jerusalem and the Egyptian girl being in some kind of competition for Solomon; they both state their desire for him, and both of them compare his love to wine (:2, 4). Note how the Song doesn't begin as a romance is supposed to – with the first meeting, a love at first sight scene. As early as 1:2 she comments that "your lovemaking is more delightful than wine". This is all a subversion of the whole genre of romance. It was all too far too fast. The Egyptian justifies her darker complexion to the Jerusalem girls, and praises her own beauty: "I am dark but lovely" (:5). She likewise yells at them not to sexually stimulate her lover, Solomon (2:7). "My beloved is *mine*" (2:16) is the same catty kind of defensiveness. The girl is jealous of how the daughters of Jerusalem admire Solomon, not least because of his fame in Israelite circles (:3,4). And the Jerusalem girls respond with sarcasm as in 6:1.

the sheep. Graze your young goats beside the shepherds' tents. ⁹ I have compared you, my love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots. ¹⁰ Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels. ¹¹ We will make you earrings of gold, with studs of silver.

Beloved

¹² While the king sat at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance. ¹³ My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh, that lies between my breasts. ¹⁴ My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi.

Lover

¹⁵ Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are doves.

Beloved

¹⁶ Behold, you are beautiful, my be-

loved, yes, pleasant; and our couch is verdant.

Lover

¹⁷ The beams of our house are cedars. Our rafters are firs.

CHAPTER 2 May 5

Beloved

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

Lover

² As a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters.

Beloved

³ As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, his fruit was sweet to my taste. ⁴ He brought me to the banquet hall. His banner over me is love. ⁵ Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I

1:9 Solomon should have admired neither the horses nor the women of Egypt; yet he begins his Song with an unashamed breach of the command not to desire either of these things. The unashamedness of Solomon coupled with his spirituality indicates that at this time he was genuinely convinced that what he was doing was deeply spiritual; when in fact it was completely carnal. He totally ignored his own advice in Proverbs about choosing a spiritual Israelite woman as a wife.

1:11 The Song is shot through with allusion to the Law and tabernacle rituals; he speaks of making her borders on her clothes, alluding to the borders of blue to be worn by the faithful Israelite. Solomon wanted her to be a spiritual woman, and he was going to make her one in his mind, to his eyes. He wanted to see her as a spiritual woman, and eventually he became persuaded that she was just this. This is often the psychology of marriage out of the faith.

2:1 The girl says she is merely a common "rose of Sharon", but Solomon responds that in his eyes, she is like a lily among thorns, referring to the Jerusalem girls. Ironically enough, Num. 33:55 had warned that the Gentiles within the land promised to Abraham would be "thorns" to Israel if they married them. And yet Solomon sees the Israelite women as "thorns" and the Gentile as a lily amongst them. He likewise compares her to them in 6:8,9.

am faint with love. ⁶ His left hand is under my head. His right hand embraces me. ⁷ I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, or by the hinds of the field, that you not stir up, nor stimulate love, until it so desires. ⁸ The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills. ⁹ My beloved is like a roe or a young hart. Behold, he stands behind our wall! He looks in at the windows. He glances through the lattice. ¹⁰ My beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. ¹¹ for, behold, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone. ¹² The flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. ¹³ The fig tree ripens her green figs. The vines are in blossom. They give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Lover

¹⁴ My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the moun-

tainside; let me see your face. Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. ¹⁵ Catch foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards; for our vineyards are in blossom.

Beloved

¹⁶ My beloved is mine, and I am his. He browses among the lilies. ¹⁷ Until the day is cool, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether.

CHAPTER 3 May 6

By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but I didn't find him. ² I will get up now, and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but I didn't find him. ³ The watchmen who go about the city found me; I asked, Have you seen him whom my soul loves? ⁴ I had scarcely passed from them, when I found him whom my soul

2:10-13 Solomon describes her in Jewish terms, likening her to many well-known places in Israel: the Heshbon fishpools, the tower of Lebanon etc. (see too 4:1,4). He wanted to see her as an Israelite girl, and so that was how she appeared to him. Such is the self-deception we are capable of when we seek to justify ourselves. Solomon takes her on a tour of Israel (4:8), enthusing about the sights, speaking of them as the things of "our land". See on 4:16.

2:13, 14 It was because of the impossible tension between the Egyptian girl and the Jerusalem maidens that there's the constant theme of needing to hold meetings in secrecy, often in the countryside or mountains around Jerusalem, and to "go away" in order to be together. They appear to have slept together in the open air, beneath the trees (1:16,17; 7:11). 2:17 and 4:6 suggest they spent a night together in the hills, and then before dawn Solomon got back to Jerusalem. Illicit relationships are powerfully attractive at the time, but doomed to ultimate failure.

3:4 She walked the streets of Jerusalem whilst he was confined in the palace (:2). Her mother moved to Jerusalem from Egypt, but it wasn't possible for Solomon and her to

loves. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, into the room of her who conceived me. ⁵ I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the hinds of the field, that you not stir up, nor stimulate love, until he so desires. ⁶ Who is this who comes up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all spices of the merchant? ⁷ Behold, it is Solomon's carriage! Sixty mighty men are around it, of the mighty men of Israel. ⁸ They all handle the sword, and are expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night. ⁹ King Solomon made himself a carriage of the wood of Lebanon. ¹⁰ He made its pillars of silver, its bottom of gold, its seat of purple, its midst being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. ¹¹ Go forth, you daughters of Zion, and see king Solomon, with the crown with which his mother has crowned him in the day of his wed-

dings, in the day of the gladness of his heart.

CHAPTER 4 May 7

Lover

Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is as a flock of goats, that descend from Mount Gilead. ² Your teeth are like a newly shorn flock, which have come up from the washing, where every one of them has twins. None is bereaved among them. ³ Your lips are like scarlet thread. Your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like David's tower built for an armoury, whereon a thousand shields hang, all the shields of the mighty men. ⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe, which feed among the lilies. ⁶ Until the day is cool, and the shadows flee away, I will go to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense. ⁷ You are all beauti-

easily be together in that house (also 8:2). 3:4 is very similar to Solomon's own warnings against Gentile marriage in Prov. 7:13,27; 5:8. We have an amazing ability to do the very opposite of what we know is right.

3:4, 11 This is her sarcastic comment to the Jerusalem girls, mocking the crown his mother Bathsheba had made for him, wishing instead that he would be under the influence of *her* mother.

4:1 Parts of the Song are very sexually explicit once the allusions are figured out. He's describing the vaginal lips of his girlfriend, his intended spouse (4:1,3,8); and he has seen "behind your veil", the symbol of her virginity. And yet he glorifies all this in his song. Quite clearly, Solomon was guilty of fornication with the one whom he wished to marry, although the ending of the Song seems to imply the relationship somehow broke up. And this was all right at the beginning of his reign.

4:4 She loves him because of his ointment, and he loves her because of her jewellery (:4). He says that deep kissing with her gives the same after effect as drinking enough wine that you talk in your sleep afterwards (7:9). It's all very human and carnal; one lesson of the Song is that superficial attraction isn't the basis for true love.

ful, my love. There is no spot in you.
⁸ Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.
⁹ You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride. You have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.
¹⁰ How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine! The fragrance of your perfumes than all kinds of spices!
¹¹ Your lips, my bride, drip like the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under your tongue. The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.
¹² A locked up garden is my sister, my bride; a locked up spring, a sealed fountain.
¹³ Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with

precious fruits: henna with spikenard plants,¹⁴ spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree; myrrh and aloes, with all the best spices,¹⁵ a fountain of gardens, a spring of living waters, flowing streams from Lebanon.

Beloved

¹⁶ Awake, north wind; and come, you south! Blow on my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and taste his precious fruits.

CHAPTER 5 May 8

Lover

I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

4:15, 16 Solomon saw her as a “paradise”, a garden with rivers and exotic fruits, surrounded by a wall – the language of Eden. And she was a fount of “living waters”, the language of Messiah. He saw her as the Kingdom / Eden personified. And yet her response to being described in this way is almost inappropriate – for she invites him to come and eat the fruit of the garden (:16), exactly after the pattern of Eve destroying Adam. Yet Solomon didn't want to see this connection; she was the Kingdom to him, just as so many have felt that having their new partner means that *nothing*, not even the Kingdom, is meaningful any more. See on 2:10-13.

5:1 Song 5 seems to give insight into the unworthy elements of the potential bride of Christ. Notice the sequence: While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes; Lk. 12:36 uses the same figure, of the Lord's return being like a knock]. She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]. He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]. Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]. She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]. But he's gone, he *with-*

Eat, friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, beloved.

Beloved

² I was asleep, but my heart was awake. It is the voice of my beloved who knocks: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my hair with the dampness of the night.

³ I have taken off my robe. Indeed, must I put it on? I have washed my feet. Indeed, must I defile them?

⁴ My beloved thrust his hand in through the latch opening. My heart pounded for him. ⁵ I rose up to open for my beloved. My hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock.

⁶ I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had left; he had gone away. My heart went out when he spoke. I looked for him, but I didn't find him. I called him, but he didn't answer. ⁷ The watchmen who go about the city found me. They beat me. They bruised me. The keepers of the walls took my cloak away from me. ⁸ I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am faint with love.

Daughters of Jerusalem

⁹ How is your beloved better than another beloved, you fairest among women? How is your beloved better than another beloved, that you so adjure us?

draws himself [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]. Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]. She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; Hos. 5:6; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him]. She feels tired of her relationship with him ("sick of love"). She is persecuted by the world around her ["condemned with the world"]. If we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our cosmetics, but with a basic overriding love of Him, and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him. This will be the ultimate and crucial divide – between those who believe in the Lord's love for us; and those who think they need to make themselves good enough for Him. Solomon called to the girl through the keyhole: "...my undefiled...". But she doesn't want to immediately come to Him because she doesn't want to meet him with 'defiled' feet (:2,3). She couldn't believe his words, that in his eyes, she was *undefiled*. And the enormity of the passion of Christ for us is likewise so hard for us to accept. In 3:1 we find the girl again at night, dreaming of having Solomon with her. But when one night he does actually come, she doesn't go to meet him immediately. And there's a warning for us. Like Israel we may 'desire the day of the Lord', study prophecy about it, write about it, enthuse about it. But when He comes, to what end will it be to us? Will we *in a moment* drop everything and go to Him, believing that He loves us just as we are? Or will we run off to buy oil, slap makeup on...? She finally realized that he had loved her for who she was, how she was. But it was tragically too late. He'd gone. We need to learn that lesson *now*, to know the love of Christ... so that in that moment when we know for sure 'He's back!', we will without hesitation *go to Him* with that perfect / mature love, that casts out fear.

Beloved

¹⁰ My beloved is white and ruddy. The best among ten thousand. ¹¹ His head is like the purest gold. His hair is bushy, black as a raven. ¹² His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks, washed with milk, mounted like jewels. ¹³ His cheeks are like a bed of spices with towers of perfumes. His lips are like lilies, dropping liquid myrrh. ¹⁴ His hands are like rings of gold set with beryl. His body is like ivory work overlaid with sapphires. ¹⁵ His legs are like pillars of marble set on sockets of fine gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. ¹⁶ His mouth is sweetness; yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 6 May 9**Daughters of Jerusalem**

Where has your beloved gone, you fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

Beloved

² My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. ³ I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He browses among the lilies.

Lover

⁴ You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. ⁵ Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats, that lie along the side of Gilead. ⁶ Your teeth are like a flock of ewes, which have come up from the washing; of which each one has twins; none is bereaved among them. ⁷ Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind your veil. ⁸ There are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and virgins without number. ⁹ My dove, my perfect one, is unique. She is her mother's only daughter. She is the favourite one of her who bore her. The daughters saw her, and called her blessed; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. ¹⁰ Who is she who looks forth as the morning, beautiful as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners? ¹¹ I went down into the nut tree grove, to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower. ¹² Without realizing it, my desire set me with my royal people's chariots.

Daughters of Jerusalem

¹³ Return, return, Shulammit! Return, return, that we may gaze at you.

6:13 Solomon boasts that he has many Jewish queens and concubines, but there is only one woman, the Egyptian, that he truly loves (6:8,9); he even calls her his "sister", associating himself thereby with Egypt. Perhaps this tension between the two groups – the Jerusalem women and the Egyptian girl and her family – is behind the enigmatic reference to "the company of two armies" or "the dance of the two camps" or lines. She suspects there may be two camps in Solomon's mind.

Lover

Why do you desire to gaze at the Shulammite, as at the dance of Mahanaim?

CHAPTER 7 May 10

How beautiful are your feet in sandals, prince's daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a skilful workman. ² Your body is like a round goblet, no mixed wine is wanting. Your waist is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies. ³ Your two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a roe. ⁴ Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are like the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus. ⁵ Your head on you is like Carmel. The hair of your head is like purple. The king is held captive in its tresses. ⁶ How beautiful and how pleasant you are, love, for delights! ⁷ This, your stature, is like a palm tree, your breasts like its fruit. ⁸ I said, I will climb up into the palm tree. I will take hold of its fruit. Let your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the smell of your breath like apples, ⁹ your mouth like the best wine, that goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding through the lips of those who are asleep.

7:12 See on 8:1.

8:1 She deeply wished that Solomon was her brother, i.e. an Egyptian, because in that case their relationship could be much more open, they would not be despised because of their love, and Solomon could come and live in her mother's house back in Egypt. Clearly she was attracted to Solomon rather than to the God of Israel. In :2,3 she seems to be saying 'I'll have sex with you, as you offered in 7:12, *if you agree to be an Egyptian*' (and 4:16; 5:1,4-6 could imply they *did* have intercourse).

8:5 The daughters of Jerusalem mock her by saying this. We expect a romantic song to end with the wedding; but it doesn't. It ends with the couple parting; and this dream

Beloved

¹⁰ I am my beloved's. His desire is toward me. ¹¹ Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages. ¹² Let's go early up to the vineyards. Let's see whether the vine has budded, its blossom is open, and the pomegranates are in flower. There I will give you my love. ¹³ The mandrakes give forth fragrance. At our doors are all kinds of precious fruits, new and old, which I have stored up for you, my beloved.

CHAPTER 8 May 11

Oh that you were like my brother, who nursed from the breasts of my mother! If I found you outside, I would kiss you; yes, and no one would despise me. ² I would lead you, bringing you into my mother's house, who would instruct me. I would have you drink spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate. ³ His left hand would be under my head. His right hand would embrace me. ⁴ I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up, nor stimulate my love, until he so desires.

Daughters of Jerusalem

⁵ Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?

Beloved

Under the apple tree I aroused you.
There your mother conceived you.
There she was in labour and bore
you.

Lover

⁶ Set me as a seal on your heart, as a
seal on your arm; for love is strong
as death. Jealousy is as cruel as
Sheol. Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a very flame of Yahweh. ⁷ Many wa-
ters can't quench love, neither can
floods drown it. If a man would give
all the wealth of his house for love,
he would be utterly scorned.

Daughters of Jerusalem

⁸ We have a little sister. She has no

breasts. What shall we do for our
sister in the day when she is to be
spoken for? ⁹ If she is a wall, we
will build on her a turret of silver.
If she is a door, we will enclose her
with boards of cedar.

Beloved

¹⁰ I was a wall, and my breasts
were like towers, then I found ac-
ceptance in his eyes. ¹¹ Solomon
had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He
leased out the vineyard to keep-
ers. Each was to bring a thousand
shekels of silver for its fruit. ¹² My
own vineyard is mine alone. The
thousand are for you, Solomon;
two hundred for those who tend its
fruit.

wedding is no more than the Egyptian girl fantasizing. The fact the wedding 'scene', in the form of a dream about it, comes in the middle of the song rather than at the end is again a subversion of the whole genre of romance. The climax is in the wrong place. And this just indicates how unfulfilling are relationships which flout Divine principles.

8:12 She utters the final warning to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon, and then breaks down with the lament that jealousy is cruel as death (:6) and unrequited love is impossible; Solomon's true love cannot be bought by her. The daughters of Jerusalem then speak of how they have a younger sister whose breasts aren't yet developed, but they will care for her until she is ready for Solomon (:8,9). The Egyptian girl then reminisces in the past tense: "I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers; then I found acceptance in his eyes" (8:10). Solomon throughout the Songs has commented positively upon her breasts; and now she is left to lament that that is all just how it was, it's all over now. She then makes the enigmatic comment about how Solomon has a vineyard which he leases out, and yet she is a vineyard which belongs to her alone. The Songs have likened her to a vineyard (2:13,15), but Solomon's vineyard, she says, was associated with Baal-Hamon, Lord / husband of a multitude. She finally realized that he was a womanizer, who would go on to have over 1000 women in his life... Lord [or husband] of a multitude. Perhaps his 1000 wives and concubines lay behind her reference to the 1000 shekels that Solomon can have for his vineyard (:12). But now she was splitting up with him, her vineyard was hers alone, her grapes were now solely at her disposal and were not his any more. The final couplet of the Song is one of bitter sarcasm, typical of the worst order of romantic breakup. Solomon says that his "companions" – the daughters of Jerusalem whom she had so hated – are listening carefully to her, as he is. And she responds by

Lover

¹³ You who dwell in the gardens,
with friends in attendance, let me
hear your voice!

Beloved

¹⁴ Go away, my beloved. Be like a
gazelle or a young stag on the moun-
tains of spices.

telling him to run away, whilst still calling him her “beloved” – for although jealousy is cruel as the grave, her love for him was unquenchable by many waters. So the Song ends with Solomon in rather a bad light – off to his next women, whilst the Egyptian girl walks off the scene bitterly protesting her love for him and how she’s a victim of circumstance and jealousy. Yet Solomon, presumably, authored the Song. We read it therefore in the same way as we do Ecclesiastes – his jaded statement of how life has been for him, how he sought fulfilment of his human lusts but it never worked out, leaving him with a tragic sense of unfulfilment because he had not gone God’s way.

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 1 May 11

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Yahweh Rebukes Judah

² Hear, heavens and listen, earth; for Yahweh has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. ³ The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel doesn't know Me, My people don't consider. ⁴ Ah sinful nation, a people loaded with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken Yahweh, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and backward. ⁵ Why should you be beaten more, that you revolt more and more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart

faint. ⁶ From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it: wounds, welts, and open sores. They haven't been closed, neither bandaged, neither soothed with oil. ⁷ Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; foreigners devour your land in your presence and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. ⁸ The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a field of melons, like a besieged city. ⁹ Unless Yahweh of Armies had left to us a very small remnant, we would have been as Sodom; we would have been like Gomorrah. ¹⁰ Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ What are the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?, says Yahweh. I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed animals. I don't delight in the blood of

1:2 'Heaven and earth' are used here to describe a whole system of things; maybe the 'heavens' refer to the leaders of Judah, and the 'earth' the ordinary people. Verse 10 addresses the rulers and ordinary people separately in keeping with this. When we read in other Scriptures of the 'heavens and earth' being destroyed, we have to understand this figuratively, as referring to an entire system of things, human society – rather than the literal Heaven, which is God's dwelling place, and the earth, upon which He intends to establish His eternal Kingdom at Christ's return.

1:7 *Is desolate... are burned* – But this hadn't yet happened at the time Isaiah was prophesying. But so certain was God's word of fulfilment that he could speak in the present tense. We likewise should try to envisage prophesied future things as if they effectively are now – and live accordingly.

1:9 *We would have been as Sodom* – But :10 speaks to them as if they *are* Sodom. They were as Sodom to God, but for the sake of the faithful remnant, He wasn't judging them as Sodom. This shows how faithful third parties can have a huge effect upon the destiny of an unspiritual mass of God's people – so sensitive is God to the righteousness of even one man, as exemplified supremely in the achievement of Christ's work for us.

bulls, or of lambs, or of male goats.
¹² When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to trample My courts? ¹³ Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to Me; new moons, Sabbaths, and holy gatherings: I can't bear with evil assemblies.
¹⁴ My soul hates your New Moons and your appointed feasts. They are a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you. Yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶ Wash yourselves, make yourself clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, ¹⁷ learn to do well, seek justice, relieve the oppressed judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. ¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together, says Yahweh: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it.

The Unfaithful City

²¹ How the faithful city has become a prostitute! She was full of justice; righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. ²² Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed

with water. ²³ Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves. Each one loves bribes and follows after rewards. They don't judge the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come to them. ²⁴ Therefore the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, the Mighty One of Israel, says: Ah, I will get relief from My adversaries, and avenge Myself of My enemies; ²⁵ and I will turn My hand on you, thoroughly purge away your dross, and will take away all your tin. ²⁶ I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterwards you shall be called 'The city of righteousness, a faithful city'. ²⁷ Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness. ²⁸ But the destruction of transgressors and sinners shall be together, and those who forsake Yahweh shall be consumed. ²⁹ For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired, and you shall be confounded for the gardens that you have chosen. ³⁰ For you shall be as an oak whose leaf fades, and as a garden that has no water. ³¹ The strong will be like tinder, and his work like a spark. They will both burn together, and no one will quench them.

CHAPTER 2 May 13

The Mountain of the Lord

This is what Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² It shall happen in the latter days,

2:2 'Mountains' are used figuratively in the Bible to refer to kingdoms. Here we have a prophecy of the future establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, centred on Jerusalem. The Bible teaches the literal return of Christ to earth to establish God's Kingdom here, rather than the righteous going to Heaven at death.

that the mountain of Yahweh's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. ³ Many peoples shall go and say, Come, let's go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Pride Will be Destroyed

⁶ For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled from the east with those who practice divination like the Philistines, and they shake hands with the children of foreigners. ⁷ Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures. Their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chari-

ots. ⁸ Their land also is full of idols, they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. ⁹ Man is brought low, and mankind is humbled; therefore don't forgive them. ¹⁰ Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of His majesty. ¹¹ The lofty looks of man will be brought low, the arrogance of men will be bowed down, and Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day. ¹² For there will be a day of Yahweh of Armies for all that is proud and haughty, and for all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low: ¹³ for all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, for all the oaks of Bashan, ¹⁴ for all the high mountains, for all the hills that are lifted up, ¹⁵ for every lofty tower, for every fortified wall, ¹⁶ for all the ships of Tarshish and for all pleasant imagery. ¹⁷ The pride of man shall be bowed down, and the arrogance of men shall be brought low; and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day. ¹⁸ The idols shall utterly pass away. ¹⁹ Men shall go into the caves of the rocks and into the holes of the earth from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the

2:5 In view of the great future hope of God's Kingdom, God's people should in this life live in the spirit of it, and walk in God's light now as they will eternally.

2:7 The reference to silver, gold, horses and chariots recalls God's forbidding of Israel to trade with other nations in order to get these things, lest they become proud and fear Yahweh alone (Dt. 17:16-20). They did exactly that – and became proud, which is the very reason God wanted to destroy them as this chapter explains in such a repeated manner. Wealth and human strength lead to pride and idolatry – that principle is just as true today. Yet we can so easily seek those things, and the worldly associations through which they can apparently be acquired... Yet humility is of the essence, and this comes from being forced to trust in God alone.

glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. ²⁰ In that day men shall cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold which have been made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats; ²¹ to go into the caverns of the rocks and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. ²² Stop trusting in man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for of what account is he?

CHAPTER 3 May 14

Judgement on Jerusalem and Judah

For, behold, the Lord Yahweh of Armies takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah supply and support, the whole supply of bread, and the whole supply of water; ² the mighty man, the man of war, the judge, the prophet, the diviner, the elder, ³ the captain of fifty, the honourable man, the counsellor,

the skilled craftsman and the clever enchanter. ⁴ I will give boys to be their princes, and children shall rule over them. ⁵ The people will be oppressed, everyone by another, and everyone by his neighbour. The child will behave himself proudly against the old man, and the base against the honourable. ⁶ Indeed a man shall take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, You have clothing, you be our ruler, and let this ruin be under your hand. ⁷ In that day he will cry out, saying, I will not be a healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing. You shall not make me ruler of the people. ⁸ For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against Yahweh, to provoke the eyes of His glory. ⁹ The look of their faces testify against them. They parade their sin like Sodom. They don't hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought judgment upon themselves. ¹⁰ Tell the righteous Good! For they shall eat the fruit of their

2:20 In the day of Christ's return, bank accounts, property, investments etc. will be totally irrelevant, indeed people will seek to dissociate themselves from such things. Yet we live in the presence of God's glory and majesty every day of this life, if only we would perceive it.

3:9 *The look of their faces testify against them. They parade their sin* – God's intense awareness of and sensitivity to human behaviour extends even to His noticing of their body language (see too :16). Out of all the many things for which He could have condemned His people, He focuses on pride. Pride is simply so extremely abhorrent to God. "Testify against them" is legal language – their own body language as it were stands up in court in the witness box and condemns them, and in this sense they "brought judgment upon themselves". It is they rather than God who ask for the sentence of condemnation. He as the final judge arises to proclaim the verdict (:13), but it is Judah who have asked for it. Judgment is in this sense ongoing; it's not that God will only open the books and consider our case at Christ's return. Our own behaviour right now is the statement of the witness in the box, with God now making the judgment and assessing that witness (:13).

deeds. ¹¹ Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them; for the deeds of his hands will be paid back to him. ¹² As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. My people, those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.

The Lord Judges His People

¹³ Yahweh stands up to contend, and stands to judge the peoples. ¹⁴ Yahweh will enter into judgement with the elders of His people, and their leaders: It is you who have eaten up the vineyard. The spoil of the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵ What do you mean that you crush My people, and grind the face of the poor? says the Lord, Yahweh of Armies.

A Warning to the Women

¹⁶ Moreover Yahweh said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and flirting eyes, walking to trip as they go, jingling ornaments on their feet; ¹⁷ therefore the Lord brings sores on the crown of the head of the women of Zion, and Yahweh will make their scalps bald. ¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, the headbands, the crescent necklaces, ¹⁹ the earrings, the bracelets, the veils, ²⁰ the headdresses, the ankle chains, the sashes, the perfume bottles, the charms, ²¹ the signet rings,

the nose rings, ²² the fine robes, the capes, the cloaks, the purses, ²³ the hand mirrors, the fine linen garments, the tiaras, and the shawls. ²⁴ It shall happen that instead of sweet spices, there shall be rottenness; instead of a belt, a rope; instead of well set hair, baldness; instead of a robe, a wearing of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty. ²⁵ Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war. ²⁶ Her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be desolate and sit on the ground.

CHAPTER 4 May 14

Seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own clothing: only let us be called by your name. Take away our reproach. Jerusalem To Be Restored

² In that day, Yahweh's branch will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the beauty and glory of the survivors of Israel. ³ It will happen, that he who is left in Zion, and he who remains in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even everyone who is written among the living in Jerusalem; ⁴ when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst, by the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning. ⁵ Yahweh will create over the whole habita-

3:16 Again, God notices and condemns the body language of people, so closely does He analyze human behaviour and so hypersensitive is He to any human pride; see on :9.

4:5 The allusion is to the pillar of cloud and fire which led Israel through the wilderness. Israel's history, like our personal lives, is a wilderness journey, led by the Angel in the cloud and fire; but finally the pillar comes to rest, over Jerusalem.

tion of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. ⁶ There will be a pavilion for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a refuge and for a shelter from storm and from rain.

CHAPTER 5 May 15

The Song of the Vineyard

Let me sing for my well beloved a song of my beloved about His vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. ² He dug it up, gathered out its stones, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in its midst, and also cut out a wine press therein. He looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, please judge between Me and My vineyard. ⁴ What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not

done in it? Why, when I looked for it to yield grapes, did it yield wild grapes? ⁵ Now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it will be eaten up. I will break down its wall of it, and it will be trampled down. ⁶ I will lay it a wasteland. It won't be pruned nor hoed, but it will grow briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it. ⁷ For the vineyard of Yahweh of Armies is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry of distress.

The Evil That Men Do

⁸ Woe to those who join house to house, who lay field to field until there is no room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! ⁹ In my ears Yahweh of Armies says: Surely many houses will be desolate,

5:3 *Please judge between Me and My vineyard* – At times, God invites us to judge Him (see Rom. 3:4). We may find this idea of putting God in the dock to be inappropriate and something we shy away from; but every time we doubt that in fact God has created an ideal environment for our bearing of spiritual fruit, this is in fact what we are doing.

5:4 God has done absolutely everything possible so that we His vineyard bring forth fruit. We need to remember this when we complain that if only this or that situation would be different in my life, then I could bring forth far more fruit to God. Jesus based His parable of the vineyard on this song (Mt. 21:33-41). But He concludes it rather differently. Instead of the vineyard being destroyed, the workers (the Jews) are destroyed in judgment and the vineyard is given to other workers (the body of Christ). But the same fruit is required of us as it was from them – justice and righteousness towards others (:7). In these very two things, we exalt God if we exalt the lowly by giving them justice (:16).

5:5, 6 This describes how Judah was trampled by invaders and left waste for 70 years whilst Judah were in captivity in Babylon. God's hope was that the vineyard would again be fruitful at their return, but it wasn't.

5:9 *In my ears* – Isaiah spoke publically what God had spoken in his ears. The spirit of the prophets should be our spirit in our testimony for Jesus (Rev. 19:10). Jesus con-

even great and beautiful ones, uncultivated. ¹⁰ For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield an ephah. ¹¹ Woe to those who rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; who stay late into the night, until wine inflames them! ¹² The harp, lyre, tambourine, and flute, with wine, are at their feasts; but they don't respect the work of Yahweh, neither have they considered the operation of His hands. ¹³ Therefore My people go into captivity for lack of knowledge. Their honourable men are famished, and their multitudes are parched with thirst. ¹⁴ Therefore Sheol has enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure; and their glory, their multitude, their pomp, and he who rejoices among them, descend into it. ¹⁵ So man is brought low, mankind is humbled, and the eyes of the arrogant ones are humbled; ¹⁶ but Yahweh of Armies is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness. ¹⁷ Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture, and strangers will eat the ruins of the rich. ¹⁸ Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and wickedness as with cart rope; ¹⁹ who say, Let Him make

speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it! ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet. ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! ²² Woe to those who are mighty to drink wine, and champions at mixing strong drink; ²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice for the innocent! ²⁴ Therefore as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as the dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of Yahweh of Armies, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. ²⁵ Therefore Yahweh's anger burns against His people, and He has stretched out His hand against them, and has struck them. The mountains tremble, and their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is still stretched out. ²⁶ He will lift up a banner for the nations from far, and He will whistle for them from the end of the land.

firms this by telling *us* that what *we* (like Isaiah) hear in the ear, we are to openly proclaim (Mt. 10:27). It must've been hard and counter-instinctive for Isaiah to proclaim his message to a people who generally didn't want to hear nor have their comfort zones invaded – just as it is for us.

5:13 *For lack of knowledge* – This “lack” was a moral issue, not an intellectual one. To ‘know’ God doesn’t mean to amass theory, but to not follow the selfish materialism criticized in the previous verses.

5:15, 16 Humility exalts God; this paradox is found throughout the Bible, supremely in the exaltation of the supremely humble Jesus to the greatest height.

5:26 The Gentile nations situated at the end or borders of Judah came and attacked her from their own motives, but ultimately God was using them and had called them

Behold, they will come speedily and swiftly. ²⁷ None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the belt of their waist be untied, nor the latches of their shoes be broken: ²⁸ whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent. Their horses' hoofs will be like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind. ²⁹ Their roaring will be like a lioness, they will roar like young lions. Yes, they shall roar and seize their prey and carry it off, and there will be no one to deliver. ³⁰ They will roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea. If one looks to the land behold, darkness

and distress. The light is darkened in its clouds.

CHAPTER 6 May 16

God Calls to Isaiah

In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple. ² Above Him stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet and with two he flew. ³ One called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of Armies! The whole earth is full of His glory! ⁴ The foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of Him

to come and do His work of judgment. Total unbelievers are in God's hand and are moved around the board of life by God in relation to His intentions for His people.

6:1 In :1-4 we have a vision of "the Lord high and lifted up", enthroned in the temple, with an earthquake, the temple filled with smoke, the doorposts that held up the veil being shaken (with the implication that the veil falls, :4). Rev. 15:5-8, building on this passage, has the veil being removed, the Most Holy opened, and the temple filled with smoke. This sends the mind straight to the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion and the earthquake (Mt. 27:51). The Lord "high and lifted up" is a phrase that occurs later in Isaiah (52:13), concerning the crucified Lord Jesus, lifted up and exalted "very high" by the cross. John 12:37-41 tells us that Isaiah 6 is a prophetic vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; and in this passage John quotes both Isaiah 6 and 53 together, reflecting their connection and application to the same event, namely the Lord's crucifixion. When Isaiah saw this vision he was convicted of his sinfulness, as we should be before the cross: "Woe is me, for I am undone...". And yet the same vision comforted him with the reality of forgiveness, and inspired him to offer to go forth and witness to Israel of God's grace. The vision of the cross convicts men of their sin, and yet inspires them to go forward in service. Rev. 4:9 alludes to the Isaiah 6 vision, and applies it to the future judgment. Yet silhouetted within the vision of the judgment throne is a slain lamb (Rev. 5:6), as if before the judgment, all will be aware of the Lord's sacrifice. The accepted will utter praise immediately after realising the wonderful verdict pronounced for them – in terms of praising Jesus for his sacrifice, and recognising their eternal debt to the blood of His cross (Rev. 5:9). The cross, the judgment and reward are connected. In Jn. 12:31,32, in the same passage in which Isaiah 6 and 53 are connected and applied to the crucifixion, Jesus Himself foretold that His death would be "the judgment of this world". Whenever we come before the cross we come before our judgment, and therefore self-examination at the breaking of bread service is natural.

who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then I said, Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of Armies! ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said, Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin forgiven. ⁸ I heard the Lord's voice, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here I am. Send me! ⁹ He said, Go, and tell this people, 'You hear indeed, but don't understand; and you see indeed, but don't perceive'. ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat. Make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. ¹¹ Then I said, Lord, how long? He answered, Until the cities are waste without inhabitant and houses without man and the land becomes utterly waste, ¹² and Yahweh has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. ¹³ If there is a tenth left in it, that also will in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stump remains when they are felled; so the holy seed is its stump.

CHAPTER 7 May 17

Isaiah Is Sent to King Ahaz

It happened in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham the son of Uzziah,

king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. ² It was told the house of David, saying, Syria is allied with Ephraim! His heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind. ³ Then Yahweh said to Isaiah, Go out now to meet Ahaz, you, and Shearjashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field. ⁴ Tell him, 'Be careful, and keep calm. Don't be afraid, neither let your heart be faint because of these two tails of smoking torches, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, ⁶ Let's go up against Judah and tear it apart, and let's divide it among ourselves, and set up a king in its midst, even the son of Tabeel. ⁷ This is what the Lord Yahweh says: It shall not stand, neither shall it happen. ⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken in pieces, so that it shall not be a people; ⁹ and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established'.

A Sign from God

¹⁰ Yahweh spoke again to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ Ask a sign of Yahweh your God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. ¹² But Ahaz said, I

will not ask, neither will I tempt Yahweh. ¹³ He said, Listen now, house of David. Is it not enough for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of My God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings you abhor shall be forsaken. ¹⁷ Yahweh will bring on you, on your people and on your father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. ¹⁸ It will happen in that day that Yahweh will whistle for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ They shall come, and shall all rest in the desolate valleys, in the clefts of the rocks, on all thorn hedges, and on all pastures. ²⁰ In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired in the parts beyond the River Euphrates, even with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard. ²¹ It shall happen in that day that a man shall keep alive a young

cow, and two sheep; ²² and it shall happen, that because of the abundance of milk which they shall give he shall eat curds: for everyone will eat curds and honey who is left in the midst of the land. ²³ It will happen in that day that every place where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silver shekels, shall be for briers and thorns. ²⁴ People will go there with arrows and with bow, because all the land will be briers and thorns. ²⁵ All the hills that were cultivated with the hoe, you shall not come there for fear of briers and thorns; but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of sheep.

CHAPTER 8 May 18

The Sign of Isaiah's Son

Yahweh said to me, Take a large tablet, and write on it with a man's pen, 'For Maher Shalal Hash Baz;' ² and I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to testify: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. ³ I went to the prophetess, and she conceived, and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, Call his name 'Maher Shalal Hash Baz'. ⁴ For before the child knows how to say, 'My father', and, 'My mother', the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria.

7:12 False humility is as obnoxious to God as human pride.

7:14 This prophecy is applied to the Lord Jesus, the final "Emmanuel" ['God with us'] in Mt. 1:23. But clearly the prophecy had a primary fulfilment in the time of Isaiah (perhaps in 8:3,4). God's prophecies could be validated by those who first heard them, because they would have a fulfilment in their times (Dt. 18:22), but they also often had their major fulfilment in far distant times.

8:6 *This people have refused the waters of Shiloah* – Referring to how Isaiah had stood by the gentle waters in 7:3 and urged them not to fear the Syria-Ephraim con-

The Invasion and Warnings

Yahweh spoke to me yet again, saying, ⁶ Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; ⁷ now therefore, behold, the Lord brings upon them the mighty flood waters of the River Euphrates: the king of Assyria and all his glory. It will come up over all its channels, and go over all its banks. ⁸ It will sweep onward into Judah. It will overflow and pass through; it will reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, Immanuel. ⁹ Make an uproar, you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Listen, all you from far countries: dress for battle, and be shattered! Dress for battle, and be shattered! ¹⁰ Take counsel together, and it will be brought to nothing; speak the word, and it will not stand: for God is with us. ¹¹ For Yahweh spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, ¹² Don't

say, 'A conspiracy!' concerning all about which this people say, 'A conspiracy!' neither fear what they fear, nor be terrorized. ¹³ Yahweh of Armies is who you must respect as holy. He is the one you must fear; He is the one you must dread. ¹⁴ He will be a sanctuary for both houses of Israel, but He will be a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Many will stumble over it, fall, be broken, be snared, and be captured. ¹⁶ Wrap up the testimony. Seal the law among My disciples. ¹⁷ I will wait for Yahweh, who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him. ¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Yahweh of Armies, who dwells in Mount Zion. ¹⁹ When they tell you, Consult with those who have familiar spirits and with the wizards, who chirp and who mutter: shouldn't a people consult with their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ Turn to the law

federacy but trust in God, who for all their sins was prepared to deliver them from that threat. Yet instead they tried to find salvation from it by human means. Because of this, God was going to go ahead and bring the Assyrians upon them as He had initially planned. Notice that although He had threatened to do this from the start of Isaiah's prophecy, He gave them a potential way out by asking them to trust in Him and not fear Ephraim's threatened invasion. But they failed that test.

8:18 *I and the children whom Yahweh has given me* – This applies not only to Isaiah's natural children but to his "disciples" who formed a school of prophets who also preached God's word to Judah (:16). Yet this is quoted in Heb. 2:13 as a proof that Christ was of the same nature as us. We are therefore invited to see Isaiah here as a type of Christ, and us as that small group of supporters who assisted him in teaching God's word to a generally unresponsive people. We too are to be people of sign to those around us.

8:20 This is to be our attitude too – we are to assess the claims of others by how far they are in harmony with God's word. By turning to His word in this way, we are 'consulting with our God' rather than men (:19).

and to the testimony! If they don't speak according to this word, surely there is no light in them. ²¹ They will pass through it, very distressed and hungry; and it will happen that when they are hungry, they will worry, and curse by their king and by their God. They will turn their faces upward, ²² and look to the earth, and see distress, darkness, and the gloom of anguish. They will be driven into thick darkness.

CHAPTER 9 May 19

Unto Us a Child Is Born

But there shall be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time He has made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who lived in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light has shined. ³ You have multiplied the nation, but You have not

increased their joy. They will rejoice before You according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, You have broken as in the day of Midian. ⁵ For all the armour of the armed man in the noisy battle and the garments rolled in blood will be for burning, fuel for the fire. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Divine Warrior, Father of the Eternal Age, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of Yahweh of Armies will perform this.

Punishment

⁸ The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it falls upon Israel. ⁹ All the peo-

9:2 Quoted in Mt. 4:13-16 about how Jesus began His ministry in the areas of northern Israel which were most despised by devout Jews for being associated with Gentiles. God loves working in this way – firstly revealing Himself to those despised by others.

9:6 *For to us a child is born* – This must have had some primary fulfilment in the promised son of sign who had been promised in Isaiah's time in previous chapters (7:14; 8:3). This son was to be known as 'God with us', 'Immanuel', but this didn't make him God Himself in person. The major fulfilment of the prophecy in Jesus likewise doesn't make Him to be God Himself. His *name* was to be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, Divine Warrior"; Jesus as God's Son carried God's Name (Jn. 5:43), and therefore all the titles of God can be applied to Him. The list of titles here seems borrowed from the traditional titles of the rulers of the surrounding nations. The point was that Messiah was to be Israel's true king, reigning on God's behalf and carrying His Name and authority.

9:7 Christ will rule "on the throne of David" in the sense that His Kingdom on earth will have a literal centre in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Lk. 1:31-35).

ple will know, including Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart,¹⁰ The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with cut stone. The sycamore fig trees have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.¹¹ Therefore Yahweh will set up on high against him the adversaries of Rezin, and will stir up his enemies,¹² the Syrians in front and the Philistines behind; and they will devour Israel with open mouth. For all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.¹³ Yet the people have not turned to Him who struck them, neither have they sought Yahweh of Armies.¹⁴ Therefore Yahweh will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed, in one day.¹⁵ The elder and the honourable man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail.¹⁶ For those who lead this people lead them astray; and those who are led by them are destroyed.¹⁷ Therefore the Lord will not rejoice over their young men, neither will He have compassion on their fatherless and widows; for each one is profane and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.¹⁸ For wickedness burns like a fire, it devours the briers and thorns; yes, it kindles in the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column

of smoke.¹⁹ Through the wrath of Yahweh of Armies, the land is burnt up; and the people are the fuel for the fire. No one spares his brother.²⁰ One will devour on the right hand, and be hungry; and he will eat on the left hand, and they will not be satisfied. Everyone will eat the flesh of his own arm:²¹ Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh; and they together shall be against Judah. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

CHAPTER 10 May 20

Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers who write oppressive decrees;² to deprive the needy from justice, and to rob the poor among My people of their rights, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!³ What will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? Where will you leave your wealth?⁴ They will only bow down under the prisoners, and will fall under the slain. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

How God Used Assyria

⁵ Alas Assyrian, the rod of My anger, the staff in whose hand is My indignation!⁶ I will send him against a profane nation, and against the

9:12 *With open mouth* – The nations surrounding Judah are here likened to a beast; when we later read of a dramatic beast in conflict with God's people in the last days, this may also refer to a confederacy comprised of the nations which surround Israel.

10:7 *He doesn't mean so* – Unbelieving people and entire nations can be controlled by

people who anger Me will I give him a command to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷ However he doesn't mean so, neither does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off not a few nations. ⁸ For he says, Aren't all of my princes kings? ⁹ Isn't Calno like Carchemish? Isn't Hamath like Arpad? Isn't Samaria like Damascus? ¹⁰ As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose engraved images exceeded those of Jerusalem and of Samaria; ¹¹ shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? ¹² Therefore it will happen, that when the Lord has performed His whole work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will punish the fruit of the wilful proud heart of the king of Assyria, and the insolence of his arrogant looks. ¹³ For he has said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding: and I have removed the boundaries of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures. Like a valiant man I have brought down their rulers. ¹⁴ My hand has

found the riches of the peoples like a nest, and like one gathers eggs that are abandoned, have I gathered all the earth. There was no one who moved their wing, or that opened their mouth, or chirped. ¹⁵ Should an axe brag against him who chops with it? Should a saw exalt itself above him who saws with it? As if a rod should lift those who lift it up, or as if a staff should lift up someone who is not wood. ¹⁶ Therefore the Lord Yahweh of Armies will send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory a burning will be kindled like the burning of fire. ¹⁷ The light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day. ¹⁸ He will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field, both soul and body. It will be as when a standard bearer faints. ¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, so that a child could write their number.

A Remnant

²⁰ It will come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and those who have escaped from the house

God to do His purpose, but their hearts are far from consciously realizing the role they are playing. Assyria was used by God to punish various Gentile nations and also Judah to some extent, but when he went too far and thought he would destroy the Jerusalem temple because Yahweh was merely another idol who couldn't withstand his strength (:11-13) – then God punished him. Truly all things are for our sakes as God's people (2 Cor. 4:15), and God even watches and disciplines those unbelievers who play a role in our lives if they intend to go further than what God has intended. His level of involvement in human life is awesome. We need to remember this in those times when we may feel God to be distant and uninvolved.

10:20 *Will no more again lean on him who struck them* – God's people had a bizarre habit of worshipping the very idols which their enemies worshipped. Any worship of

of Jacob will no more again lean on him who struck them, but shall lean on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. ²¹ A remnant will return, even the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. ²² For though your people, Israel, are like the sand of the sea, a remnant of them shall return. A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. ²³ For the Lord Yahweh of Armies, will make a full end as already determined, in the midst of all the earth.

The Lord Will Punish Assyria

²⁴ Therefore the Lord Yahweh of Armies, says My people who dwell in Zion, don't be afraid of the Assyrian, though he strike you with the rod, and lift up his staff against you, as Egypt did. ²⁵ For yet a very little while, and the indignation against you will be accomplished, and My anger will be directed to his destruction. ²⁶ Yahweh of Armies will stir up a scourge against him, as in the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb. His rod

will be over the sea, and He will lift it up like He did against Egypt. ²⁷ It will happen in that day, that his burden will depart from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing oil. ²⁸ He has come to Aiath, he has passed through Migron; at Michmash he stores his baggage; ²⁹ they have gone over the pass; they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul has fled. ³⁰ Cry aloud with your voice, daughter of Gallim! Listen, Laishah! You poor Anathoth! ³¹ Madmenah is a fugitive, the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety, ³² this very day he will halt at Nob. He shakes his hand at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. ³³ Behold, the Lord Yahweh of Armies will lop the boughs with terror. The tall will be cut down, and the lofty will be brought low. ³⁴ He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

this world's idols is just as bizarre, but in the heat of our human situation, we don't see the absurdity of it as we should.

10:22 This is quoted in Rom. 9:27 and the remnant is interpreted as the minority of Israel who would believe in Christ. Always God works with relatively small numbers. Israel were one of the smallest of the nations in their world, and yet God chose them; and yet out of them, He finally worked only with a remnant. In the context of Romans 9, Paul also appears to understand God's definition of a remnant here as meaning that they were a remnant only by grace; as if even our correct belief and living before God is to some degree a result of His gracious calling.

10:25 *My anger will be directed to his destruction* – God's anger isn't emotion out of control. His anger was against Judah, and He was using Assyria to punish them; but He can assure His people that soon that anger will be redirected against the Assyrian, and He will save Jerusalem itself, although the rest of the land of Judah would be conquered – :28-30 describe the Assyrian advance through the other cities of Judah. Even whilst angry with Judah, God felt sorry for them – hence “You poor Anathoth!” (:30). In wrath He remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).

CHAPTER 11 May 21***Perfect Justice in Messiah's Kingdom***

A shoot will come out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh. ³ His delight will be in the fear of Yahweh; he will not judge by the sight of his eyes, neither decide by the hearing of his ears; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with equity for the humble of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow and the

bear will graze, their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the ox, ⁸ the nursing child will play near a cobra's hole, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹ They will not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.

The Exiles Will Return

¹⁰ It will happen in that day that the nations will seek the root of Jesse, who stands as a banner of the peoples; and his resting place will be glorious. ¹¹ It will happen in that day that the Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant that is left of His people from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. ¹² He will set up a banner for the nations and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from

11:1 Jesus was the branch whose root was in David, son of Jesse; He was a literal descendant of David through Mary (Acts 2:30). He therefore couldn't have personally pre-existed before His birth of her.

11:2 These words were clearly true of Christ (Lk. 4:18).

11:4 The descriptions of how Christ in His life and future Kingdom would bring justice to the poor is set within the context of Isaiah's repeated condemnation of Judah for not doing justice to the poor (3:14; 10:2). He would be an embodiment of all that God's people ought to have been; had they followed God's commandments, they could have been His Kingdom on earth. But they failed, as we do. Therefore Christ is presented as the essence of God's Kingdom, it's even one of His titles (Lk. 17:21). If we want to understand what the Kingdom of God will essentially be like, we must look at the character of Christ. If that's not what we wish to be in ourselves 24/7, there will be no point in our being in His Kingdom. But if we long to be like that, and for the whole world to be as Him, then the coming Kingdom of God is truly good news for us.

11:9 A clear prophecy of God's future Kingdom to be established on earth under Christ's rulership – and not in Heaven.

the four corners of the earth. ¹³ The envy also of Ephraim will depart, and those who persecute Judah will be cut off. Ephraim won't envy Judah, and Judah won't persecute Ephraim. ¹⁴ They will fly down on the shoulders of the Philistines on the west. Together they will plunder the children of the east. They will extend their power over Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon will obey them. ¹⁵ Yahweh will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His scorching wind He will wave His hand over the River, and will split it into seven streams, and cause men to march over in sandals. ¹⁶ There will be a highway for the remnant that is left of His people from Assyria, like there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

CHAPTER 12 May 22

Hymn of Praise

In that day you will say, I will give thanks to You, Yahweh; for though You were angry with me, Your anger has turned away and You comfort me. ² Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and will not be afraid; for Yah, Yahweh, is my strength and song; and He has become my

salvation. ³ Therefore with joy you will draw water out of the wells of salvation. ⁴ In that day you will say, Give thanks to Yahweh! Call on His name. Declare His doings among the peoples. Proclaim that His name is exalted! ⁵ Sing to Yahweh, for He has done excellent things! Let this be known in all the earth! ⁶ Cry aloud and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for the Holy One of Israel is great in the midst of you!

CHAPTER 13 May 23

God Will Punish Babylon

The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw: ² Set up a banner on the bare mountain! Lift up your voice to them! Wave your hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. ³ I have commanded My consecrated ones; yes, I have called My mighty men for My anger, even My proudly exulting ones. ⁴ The noise of a multitude is in the mountains, as of a great people; the noise of an uproar of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together! Yahweh of Armies is mustering the army for the battle. ⁵ They come from a far country, from the uttermost part of heaven, even Yahweh, and the weapons of His indignation,

12:6 *The Holy One of Israel is great in the midst of you* – God Himself personally, perhaps manifested through His Son but perhaps in person, will ultimately dwell literally in Jerusalem.

13:1 Prophesying like this against a city like Babylon would've been as bizarre as declaring that the world's great cities such as London, Moscow or New York will soon become deserted wasteland because God is angry with their pride (:19). Isaiah's faith, and that of his hearers, would've been sorely tested in preaching and believing this message; just as our proclamation of Christ's return is a challenge to our faith when we consider its' real implications for our current world.

to destroy the whole land. ⁶ Wail; for the day of Yahweh is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷ Therefore all hands will be feeble, and everyone's heart will melt. ⁸ They will be dismayed. Pangs and sorrows will seize them, they will be in pain like a woman in labour. They will look in amazement one at another, their faces will be faces of flickering flame. ⁹ Behold, the day of Yahweh comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy its sinners out of it. ¹⁰ For the stars of the sky and its constellations will not give their light, the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. ¹¹ I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will humble the arrogance of the terrible. ¹² I will make people more valuable than fine gold, even a person than the pure gold of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place in the wrath of Yahweh of Armies, and in the day of His fierce anger. ¹⁴ It will happen that like

a hunted gazelle, and like sheep that no one gathers, they will each turn to their own people, and will each flee to their own land. ¹⁵ Everyone who is found will be thrust through. Everyone who is captured will fall by the sword. ¹⁶ Their infants also will be dashed in pieces before their eyes. Their houses will be ransacked, and their wives raped. ¹⁷ Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not value silver, and as for gold, they will not delight in it. ¹⁸ Their bows will dash the young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb. Their eyes will not spare children. ¹⁹ Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be like when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰ It will never be inhabited, neither will it be lived in from generation to generation. The Arabian will not pitch a tent there, neither will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. ²¹ But wild animals of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of jackals. Ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will frolic there. ²² Wolves will cry in their castles, and jackals in the

13:12 *I will make people more valuable than fine gold* – The value and meaning of persons will be the principle which is to be enforced upon this earth by the destruction of all those systems which mean otherwise.

13:13 Heavens and earth are used figuratively here to describe a system of things – see on 1:2. There is nothing imperfect in Heaven which needs judgment or destruction.

13:20-22 Much has been made of the fact that the historical site of Babylon has been deserted for long periods. But there have been attempts to rebuild it at times and some dwelling there. This prophecy must therefore have its final fulfilment when Christ returns, which suggests there will be a literal Babylon in existence, persecuting God's people as did the historical Babylon. Perhaps the fall of Babylon at Christ's return which is described in Revelation has a literal element to it. Bible students therefore

pleasant palaces. Her time is near to come, and her days will not be prolonged.

CHAPTER 14 May 24

Israel Allowed to Return

For Yahweh will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land. The foreigner will join himself with them, and they will unite with the house of Jacob. ² The peoples will take them, and bring them to their place. The house of Israel will possess them in Yahweh's land for servants and for handmaids. They will take as captives those whose captives they once were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

Babylon Is Destroyed

It will happen in the day that Yahweh will give you rest from your sorrow from your trouble and from the hard service in which you were made to serve, ⁴ that you will take up this parable against the king of Babylon and

say, How the oppressor has ceased! The golden city has ceased! ⁵ Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers, ⁶ who struck the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke, who ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restrained. ⁷ The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet. They break out in song. ⁸ Yes, the fir trees rejoice with you, with the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since you are humbled, no lumberjack has come up against us. ⁹ Sheol from beneath has moved for you to meet you at your coming. It stirs up the dead for you, even all the rulers of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. ¹⁰ They all will answer and ask you, Have you also become as weak as we are? Have you become like us? ¹¹ Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, with the sound of your stringed instruments. Maggots are spread out under you, and worms cover you. ¹² How you have fallen from heaven, morning

watch the situation in Iran and Iraq, the areas of historical Babylon and Assyria, with great interest.

14:12 It is assumed by some that Lucifer was once a powerful angel who sinned at Adam's time and was therefore cast down to earth. This isn't Biblical. The words "Devil", "Satan" and "angel" never occur in this chapter. This is the only place in Scripture where the word "Lucifer" occurs in some translations. There is no evidence that Isaiah 14 is describing anything that happened in the garden of Eden; if it is, then why are we left 3,000 years from the time of Genesis before being told what really happened there? Lucifer is described as being covered in maggots (:11) and mocked by men (:16) because he no longer has any power; so there is no justification for thinking that Lucifer is now on earth leading believers astray. Why is Lucifer punished for saying, "I will ascend into heaven" (:13), if he was already there? Lucifer is to rot in sheol [the grave] (:11). Seeing angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35,36), Lucifer therefore cannot be an angel; the language is more suited to a man. It wasn't until Milton's *Paradise Lost* that the term 'Lucifer' took on any connotation of 'Satan' or a force of evil in secular thinking. Isaiah 13–23 is a series of "burdens" on various nations, e.g. Baby-

star [Lucifer], son of the dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, who laid the nations low! ¹³ You said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven! I will exalt my throne above the stars of God! I will sit on the mountain of assembly, in the far north! ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds! I will make myself like the Most High! ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the pit. ¹⁶ Those who see you will stare at you. They will ponder you, saying, Is this the man who made the earth to tremble, who shook kingdoms; ¹⁷ who made the world like a wilderness, and overthrew its cities; who didn't release his prisoners to their home? ¹⁸ All the kings of the nations sleep in glory, each one in his own house. ¹⁹ But you are cast away

from your tomb like a hated branch, clothed with the slain, who are thrust through with the sword, who go down to the stones of the pit; like a dead body trodden under foot. ²⁰ You will not join them in burial, because you have destroyed your land. You have killed your people. The seed of evildoers will not be mentioned by name forever. ²¹ Prepare for slaughter of his children because of the iniquity of their fathers, that they rise not up and possess the earth, and fill the surface of the world with cities. ²² I will rise up against them, says Yahweh of Armies, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, and son and son's son, says Yahweh. ²³ I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools of water. I will sweep it with the broom of destruc-

lon, Tyre, Egypt. 14:4 sets the context as being a parable against the king of Babylon. The prophecy is therefore about the human king of Babylon, who is described as the morning star. He is clearly defined as a man in :16, a king like any other king (:9,10). In the parable, this star proudly decides to "ascend (higher) into heaven... exalt my throne above the (other) stars of God" (:13). "The stars of God" can refer to the leaders of Israel (Gen. 37:9; Joel 3:15; Dan. 8:10). Because of this, the star is cast down to the earth. The star represents the king of Babylon. Daniel 4 explains how Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had a pride which reached unto heaven (Dan. 4:22). Because of this he was made as an animal (Dan. 4:33). This sudden humbling of one of the world's most powerful men to a deranged lunatic was such a dramatic event as to call for the parable about the falling of the morning star from heaven to earth. Stars are symbolic of powerful people (Gen. 37:9; Is. 13:10; Ez. 32:7). Ascending to heaven and falling from heaven are Biblical idioms often used for increasing in pride and being humbled (Job 20:6; Jer. 51:53; Lam. 2:1; Mt. 11:23). 14:8 records the relief that now the "Lucifer" figure would no longer cut down cedars in Lebanon and hew mountains. This is exactly the language used by Nebuchadnezzar: "What no former king had done, I achieved: I cut through steep mountains, I split rocks, I opened passages and constructed a straight road for the transport of cedars... To Marduk, my king, mighty cedars... The abundant yield of the Lebanon". Clearly the figure spoken of in Is. 14 was Nebuchadnezzar. 14:12 says that Lucifer was to be "cut down to the ground" – implying he was a tree. This provides a further link with Daniel 4:8–16, where Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are likened to a tree being cut down.

tion, says Yahweh of Armies. ²⁴ Yahweh of Armies has sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it happen; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: ²⁵ that I will break the Assyrian in My land, and tread him under foot on My mountains. Then his yoke will leave them, and his burden leave their shoulders. ²⁶ This is the plan that is determined for the whole earth. This is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. ²⁷ For Yahweh of Armies has planned, and who can stop it? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back? ²⁸ This burden was in the year that king Ahaz died.

Philistines Destroyed

Don't rejoice, O Philistia, all of you, because the rod that struck you is broken; for out of the serpent's root an adder will emerge, and his fruit will be a fiery flying serpent. ³⁰ The first-born of the poor will eat, and the needy will lie down in safety; and I will kill your root with famine, and your remnant will be killed. ³¹ Howl, gate! Cry, city! You are melted away, Philistia, all of you; for smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks. ³² What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That Yahweh has founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of His people will take refuge.

CHAPTER 15 May 25

Moab Destroyed

The burden of Moab: for in a night, Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to nothing; for in a night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to nothing. ² They have gone up to Bayith, and to Dibon, to the high places, to weep. Moab wails over Nebo and over Medeba. Baldness is on all of their heads; every beard is cut off. ³ In their streets they clothe themselves in sackcloth. In their streets and on their housetops everyone wails, weeping abundantly. ⁴ Heshbon cries out with Elealeh. Their voice is heard even to Jahaz. Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud, their souls tremble within them. ⁵ My heart cries out for Moab! Her nobles flee to Zoar, to Eglath Shelishiyah; for they go up by the ascent of Luhith with weeping; for in the way of Horonaim, they raise up a cry of destruction. ⁶ For the waters of Nimrim will be desolate; for the grass has withered away, the tender grass fails, there is no green thing. ⁷ Therefore they will carry away the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have stored up, over the brook of the willows. ⁸ For the cry has gone around the borders of Moab; its wailing to Eglaim, and its wailing echoes back to Beer Elim. ⁹ For the waters of Dimon are full

15:5 *My heart cries out for Moab!* – Isaiah was emotionally caught up in his message. Having prophesied how Moab, the enemy of his people, would weep and cry out, Isaiah starts crying for them. Like God, he had no joy in the death or judgment of his enemies. He grieved at any person who turns against God, even if they were his personal enemy. The message of Christ's return is also a message of judgment on this earth, and we must ask ourselves whether we have ever cried tears for the lost? See on 16:7.

of blood; for I will bring yet more on Dimon, a lion on those of Moab who escape, and on the remnant of the land.

CHAPTER 16 May 26

Moab's Hopeless Situation

Send the lambs for the ruler of the land from Selah to the wilderness, to the mountain of the daughter of Zion. ² For it will be that as wandering birds, as a scattered nest, so will the daughters of Moab be at the fords of the Arnon. ³ Give counsel! Execute justice! Make your shade like the night in the midst of the noonday! Hide the outcasts! Don't betray the fugitive! ⁴ Let My outcasts dwell with you! As for Moab, be a hiding place for him from the face of the destroyer. For the extortioner is brought to nothing. Destruction ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. ⁵ A throne will be established in grace, one will sit on it in truth, in the tent of David, judging, seeking justice, and swift to do righteousness. ⁶ We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud; even of his arrogance, his pride, and his wrath. His boastings are noth-

ing. ⁷ Therefore Moab will wail for Moab, all of them will wail. You will mourn for the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth, utterly stricken. ⁸ For the fields of Heshbon languish like the vine of Sibmah. The lords of the nations have broken down its choice branches which reached even to Jazer, which wandered into the wilderness. Its shoots were spread abroad, they passed over the sea. ⁹ Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah. I will water you with my tears, Heshbon, and Elealeh: for on your summer fruits and on your harvest the battle shout has fallen. ¹⁰ Gladness is taken away, and joy out of the fruitful field; and in the vineyards there will be no singing, neither joyful noise. Nobody will tread out wine in the presses; I have made the shouting stop. ¹¹ Therefore my heart sounds like a harp for Moab, and my inward parts for Kir Heres. ¹² It will happen that when Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself on the high place and comes to his sanctuary to pray, that he will not prevail. ¹³ This is the word that Yahweh spoke concerning Moab in time past. ¹⁴ But now Yah-

16:7 *Moab will wail for Moab* – And yet Isaiah the Jew wailed for Moab too, such was his identity with and grief for the lost; see on 15:5.

16:9 Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer – Jazer was part of Moab, so Isaiah is saying that he wept as the Moabites did, so much did he identify with the tragedy of his enemies' position. See on 15:5; 16:7; 21:3; 24:16.

16:10 *I have made the shouting stop* – Isaiah here recognizes the awesome power of the inspired words he was declaring, and felt identified with God to a very deep extent.

16:12 *He will not prevail* – Prayer is here likened to a struggle, as in Hos. 12:4. It's not a mindless uttering of familiar words and phrases, but real, focused engagement with the mind and heart of God.

weh has spoken, saying, Within three years, as a worker bound by contract would count them, the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude; and the remnant will be very small and feeble.

CHAPTER 17 May 27

Syria Is Punished

The burden of Damascus: Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap. ² The cities of Aroer are forsaken. They will be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. ³ The fortress shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria. They will be as the glory of the children of Israel, says Yahweh of Armies.

Concerning Israel

It will happen in that day that the glory of Jacob will be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh will become lean. ⁵ It will be like when the harvester gathers the wheat, and his arm reaps the grain. Yes, it will be like when one gleanes grain in the valley of Rephaim. ⁶ Yet gleanings will be left there, like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives in the top of

the uppermost bough, four or five in the outermost branches of a fruitful tree, says Yahweh, the God of Israel. ⁷ In that day, a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes shall perceive the Holy One of Israel. ⁸ They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands; neither shall they respect that which their fingers have made, neither the Asherim nor the incense altars. ⁹ In that day their strong cities will be like the forsaken places in the woods and on the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the children of Israel; and it will be a desolation. ¹⁰ For you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not remembered the rock of your strength. Therefore you plant pleasant plants, and set out foreign seedlings. ¹¹ In the day of your planting, you hedge it in; in the morning, you make your seed blossom, but the harvest flees away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. ¹² Ah, the uproar of many peoples, who roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters! ¹³ The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters: but He will rebuke them, and they will flee far off, and will be chased like the chaff of the

17:4 *The glory of Jacob will be made thin* – The context of this section has been a series of prophetic burdens condemning various Gentile nations. And now Isaiah turns to God's people with a message of judgment, as if to make the point that they are no better than the sinful world around them.

17:13 *Chased like the chaff* – This is the language of Dan. 2:35,44 concerning what will happen to all Gentile nations at Christ's return and the establishment of His Kingdom on the ruins of the kingdoms of men. The fearsome awfulness of that day (:14) must never cease to be part of our thinking; with the result that we beseech people to become part of God's true Israel.

mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. ¹⁴ At evening, behold, terror! Before the morning, they are no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, and the lot of those who rob us.

CHAPTER 18 May 27
*Ethiopia Is Punished and
Converted*

Ah, the land of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia; ² that sends ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus on the waters, saying, Go, you swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people awesome from their beginning onward, a nation that measures out and treads down, whose land the rivers divide! ³ All you inhabitants of the world and you dwellers on the land, when a banner is lifted up on the mountains, look! When the trumpet is blown, listen! ⁴ For Yahweh said to me, I will be still, and I will be seen in My dwelling place, like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. ⁵ For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becomes a ripening grape, He will

cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and He will cut down and take away the spreading branches. ⁶ They will be left together for the ravenous birds of the mountains, and for the animals of the earth. The ravenous birds will summer on them, and all the animals of the earth will winter on them. ⁷ In that time, a present will be brought to Yahweh of Armies from a people tall and smooth, even from a people awesome from their beginning onward, a nation that measures out and treads down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of Yahweh of Armies, Mount Zion.

CHAPTER 19 May 28
Egypt Is Punished

The burden of Egypt: Behold, Yahweh rides on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence; and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. ² I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and they will fight each one against his brother, and each one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. ³ The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst; I will de-

18:7 The intention of all God's judgments is that some will repent, drop their pride and come to identify with Him and His people. His judgments aren't therefore the outpouring of the uncontrolled anger of an irritated deity, but they are spiritually constructive in their ultimate intent. We see this too in the smaller experience we have of Divine judgment for our sins in this life.

19:2 God can give a community the spirit of division as a sign of His judgment (also in :14), and so a divided community is one which is displeasing to God. If we seek, create and glorify division, we are effectively making ourselves worthy of God's condemnation.

19:3-13 This passage speaks of how Egyptian wisdom is in fact foolish, and will be declared as such in Egypt's final judgment; and how God will thereby destroy the

stroy its wisdom. They will seek the idols, the charmers, those who have familiar spirits, and the wizards. ⁴ I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; a fierce king will rule over them, says the Lord Yahweh of Armies. ⁵ The waters will fail from the sea, and the river will be wasted and become dry. ⁶ The rivers will become foul; the streams of Egypt will be diminished and dried up, the reeds and flags will wither away. ⁷ The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all the sown fields of the Nile, will become dry, be driven away, and be no more. ⁸ The fishermen will lament, and all those who fish in the Nile will mourn, and those who spread nets on the waters will languish. ⁹ Moreover those who work in combed flax and those who weave white cloth will be confounded. ¹⁰ The pillars will be broken in pieces. All those who work for hire will be grieved in soul. ¹¹ The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish, the counsel of the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh has become stupid. How do you say to Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? ¹² Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you now; and let them know what Yahweh of Armies has purposed concerning

Egypt. ¹³ The princes of Zoan have become fools, the princes of Memphis are deceived. They have caused Egypt to go astray, they who are the cornerstone of her tribes. ¹⁴ Yahweh has mixed a spirit of division in the midst of her; and they have caused Egypt to go astray in all of its works, like a drunken man staggers in his vomit. ¹⁵ Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which head or tail, palm branch or rush, may do.

Egypt and Assyria Will Be Blessed

¹⁶ In that day the Egyptians will be like women, they will tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of Yahweh of Armies which He shakes over them. ¹⁷ The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt. Everyone to whom mention is made of it will be afraid, because of the plans of Yahweh of Armies which He determines against it. ¹⁸ In that day, there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Yahweh of Armies. One will be called The city of destruction. ¹⁹ In that day there will be an altar to Yahweh in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to Yahweh at its border. ²⁰ It will be for a sign and for a witness to Yahweh of Armies in the land of Egypt; for

wisdom of this world, for Egypt is a symbol of the world. Paul alludes here in 1 Cor. 1:19,20, where he speaks of just the same principles; that God will bring down the wisdom of this world, and that worldly wisdom is foolishness with Him (as in Rom. 1:22). What the world will learn only when it's too late, we are to learn now. This is not an appeal to any spirit of anti-intellectualism in itself, but rather the simple teaching that what is worldly wise and smart is foolishness with God; and acts and attitudes of faith which may appear foolish in the eyes of the world, are in fact the true wisdom.

they will cry to Yahweh because of oppressors, and He will send them a saviour and a defender, and He will deliver them. ²¹ Yahweh will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know Yahweh in that day. Yes, they will worship with sacrifice and offering, and will vow a vow to Yahweh, and will perform it. ²² Yahweh will strike Egypt, striking and healing. They will return to Yahweh, and He will be entreated by them, and will heal them. ²³ In that day there will be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴ In that day, Israel will be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; ²⁵ because Yahweh of Armies has blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.

CHAPTER 20 May 29

The Sign of the Naked Prophet

In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it; ² at that time Yahweh spoke by Isaiah the son of

Amoz, saying, Go, and loosen the sackcloth from off your waist, and take your shoes from off your feet. He did so, walking naked and barefoot. ³ Yahweh said, As My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia, ⁴ so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. ⁵ They will be dismayed and confounded, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. ⁶ The inhabitants of this coast land will say in that day, ‘Behold, this is our expectation, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria. And we, how will we escape?’.

CHAPTER 21 May 29

The Fall of Babylon

The burden of the wilderness of the sea. As whirlwinds in the South sweep through, it comes from the wilderness, from an awesome land. ² A grievous vision is declared to me. The treacherous man deals treacherously, and the destroyer destroys. Go up, Elam; attack! I have stopped all

19:21 This prediction that the Egyptians will finally turn to Israel’s God hasn’t yet been fulfilled; it therefore awaits its’ fulfilment around the time of Christ’s return.

20:6 *The inhabitants of this coast land* – The people of Judah. God speaks in a very positive way of how He believes that His people will cease trusting in Egypt after seeing Isaiah’s graphic portrayal of how the Egyptians were to be led captive. Yet as later Isaiah makes clear, His people didn’t ‘get it’; they continued trusting in Egypt rather than in God for salvation from their enemies. Yet God speaks as if they will positively respond. This reflects His hopefulness (as in Mt. 21:37), and this should be our spirit in our witness to others, preaching with a sure hope in response, as the shepherd who goes looking for the lost sheep in the spirit of searching until it is found (Lk. 15:4).

of Media's sighing. ³ Therefore my thighs are filled with anguish, pains have taken hold on me, like the pains of a woman in labour. I am in so much pain that I can't hear; I so am dismayed that I can't see. ⁴ My heart flutters. Horror has frightened me. The evening of my pleasure has been turned into trembling for me. ⁵ They prepare the table, they set the watch; then they eat and drink! But 'Rise up, you princes, oil the shield!'. ⁶ For the Lord said to me, Go, set a watchman. Let him declare what he sees. ⁷ When he sees a troop, horsemen in pairs, a troop of donkeys, a troop of camels, he shall listen diligently with great attentiveness. ⁸ He cried like a lion: Lord, I stand continually on the watchtower in the daytime, and every night I stay at my post. ⁹ Behold, here comes a troop of men, horsemen in pairs. He answered, Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the engraved images of her gods are

broken to the ground. ¹⁰ You are My threshing, and the grain of My floor! That which I have heard from Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, I have declared to you.

A Message about Edom

¹¹ The burden of Dumah. One calls to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? ¹² The watchman said, The morning comes, and also the night. What hour of the night will it come? Turn back again.

A Message about Arabia

¹³ The burden on Arabia. In the forest in Arabia you will lodge, you caravans of Dedanites. ¹⁴ They brought water to him who was thirsty. The inhabitants of the land of Tema met the fugitives with their bread. ¹⁵ For they fled away from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the heat of battle. ¹⁶ For

21:3, 4 Isaiah's emotional grief for those outside of God's people as he spoke of their judgment is really impressive – see on 16:9.

21:4 What would have been pleasure for Isaiah – that the great enemy of His people was to be judged – became awful for him as he realized the tragic human destruction it involved. Strangely, he achieved identity with Belshazzar king of Babylon, who likewise had his evening of pleasure broken up by fear – see on :5. Unconsciously, we too can achieve identity with the objects of our witness if we have a true heart for people as Isaiah did.

21:5 This is exactly the situation of Daniel 5, where Belshazzar has a feast, sees the writing on the wall, and then suddenly there was a cry that the Medes had attacked and taken the city.

21:12 *What hour of the night will it come?... Turn back again* – The exact timing of the fulfilment of God's prophecies is dependent to some extent upon human response. The ending of the night of judgment for these people would be when they turned back, i.e. repented. The morning might come, or the night might continue – it depended upon their response. The same idea is found in Acts 1:7,8; Mk. 13:28-33, where the answer to the question 'When will Jesus return?' is basically: 'Preach to Israel; lead them to repentance. That's when the Lord Jesus will return'.

the Lord said to me, Within a year, as a worker bound by contract would count it, all the glory of Kedar will fail, ¹⁷ and the residue of the number of the archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, will be few; for Yahweh, the God of Israel, has spoken it.

CHAPTER 22 May 30

A Message about Jerusalem

The burden of the valley of vision.

What ails you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops? ² You that are full of shouting, a tumultuous city, a joyous town; your slain are not slain with the sword, neither are they dead in battle. ³ All your rulers fled away together. They were bound by the archers. All who were found by you were bound together. They fled far away. ⁴ Therefore I said, Look away from me. I will weep bitterly. Don't labour to comfort me for the destruction of the daughter of my people. ⁵ For it is a day of confusion and of treading down and of perplexity from the Lord Yahweh of Armies,

in the valley of vision; a breaking down of the walls, and a crying to the mountains. ⁶ Elam carried his quiver, with chariots of men and horsemen; and Kir uncovered the shield. ⁷ It happened that your choicest valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen set themselves in array at the gate. ⁸ He took away the covering of Judah; and you looked in that day to the armour in the house of the forest. ⁹ You saw the breaches of the city of David, that they were many; and you gathered together the waters of the lower pool. ¹⁰ You numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall. ¹¹ You also made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you didn't look to Him who had done this, neither did you have respect for Him who purposed it long ago. ¹² In that day, the Lord Yahweh of Armies called to weeping and to mourning and to baldness and to dressing in sackcloth: ¹³ and behold, joy and gladness, killing cattle and killing sheep, eating flesh and

22:8 *He took away the covering of Judah* – God's judgment makes a person naked (Hos. 2:3; 7:1; Rev. 16:15). Now is the time to see ourselves as we really are before God, rather than have to be stripped of all appearances at the final day of truth.

22:10, 11 This appears to refer to the preparations made by Hezekiah against the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 20:20). Yet God perceived that the hearts of the people who did the work did it thinking that this piece of human ingenuity would save them rather than their faith in God. Hezekiah, whose initiative it was, appears to have acted with faith in God. We see therefore how within a group of people apparently doing the Lord's work, God perceives some may do it in faith in God, seeing the work as merely a means to an end, of His deliverance; whereas others trust in the work itself with no faithful heart.

22:13 *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die* – Quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:32 as the attitude we may as well have if we have no hope of resurrection to eternal life. Exactly because we will *not* die eternally, we are to *not* live merely for today, like the Jews in Isaiah's time, shrugging at the prospect of future judgment. Paul is saying that

drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die. ¹⁴ Yahweh of Armies revealed Himself in my ears, Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you until you die, says the Lord, Yahweh of Armies.

A Message to the Chief Treasurer

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, Go, get yourself to this treasurer, even to Shebna, who is over the house, and say, ¹⁶ ‘What are you doing here? Whom do you have here, that you have dug out a tomb here?’. Cutting himself out a tomb on high, chiselling a habitation for himself in the rock! ¹⁷ Behold, Yahweh will overcome you and hurl you away violently. Yes, He will grasp you firmly. ¹⁸ He will surely wind you around and around, and throw you like a ball into a large country. There you will die, and there the chariots of your glory will be, you shame of your lord’s house. ¹⁹ I will thrust you from your office. You will be pulled down from your station. ²⁰ It will happen in that day that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, ²¹ and I will clothe him with your robe, and strengthen him with your belt. I will commit your government into his hand; and he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. ²² I will lay

the key of the house of David on his shoulder. He will open, and no one will shut. He will shut, and no one will open. ²³ I will fasten him like a nail in a sure place. He will be for a throne of glory to his father’s house. ²⁴ They will hang on him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel, from the cups even to all the pitchers. ²⁵ In that day, says Yahweh of Armies, the nail that was fastened in a sure place will give way. It will be cut down, and fall. The burden that was on it will be cut off, for Yahweh has spoken it.

CHAPTER 23 May 31

A Message about Tyre and Sidon

The burden of Tyre. Howl, you ships of Tarshish! For it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in. From the land of Kittim it is revealed to them. ² Be still, you inhabitants of the coast, you whom the merchants of Sidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. ³ On great waters, the seed of the Shihor, the harvest of the Nile, was her revenue. She was the market of nations. ⁴ Be ashamed, Sidon; for the sea has spoken, the stronghold of the sea, saying, I have not travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I nourished young men, nor brought

he for one *would* live like that if he had no hope of eternity. Our belief in future salvation has profound effect upon our lives today.

22:22 Applied by Jesus to Himself in Rev. 3:7. Eliakim could perhaps have been the Messiah figure of his time, but it seems he failed to live up to the potential, and so the prophecy was rescheduled and reapplied to Jesus. God sets up so many potentials for individuals and for His people as a whole; it’s so tragic for Him and for us all that so much potential is unfulfilled.

up virgins. ⁵ When the report comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish at the report of Tyre. ⁶ Pass over to Tarshish! Wail, you inhabitants of the coast! ⁷ Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days, whose feet carried her far away to travel? ⁸ Who has planned this against Tyre, the giver of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? ⁹ Yahweh of Armies has planned it, to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. ¹⁰ Pass through your land like the Nile, daughter of Tarshish. There is no restraint any more. ¹¹ He has stretched out His hand over the sea, He has shaken the kingdoms. Yahweh has ordered the destruction of Canaan's strongholds. ¹² He said, You shall rejoice no more, you oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon. Arise, pass over to Kittim. Even there you will have no rest. ¹³ Behold, the land of the Chaldeans. This people was

not until the Assyrians founded it for those who dwell in the wilderness. They set up their towers; they overthrew its palaces, they made it a ruin. ¹⁴ Howl, you ships of Tarshish, for your stronghold is laid waste! ¹⁵ It will come to pass in that day that Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king. After the end of seventy years it will be to Tyre like in the song of the prostitute. ¹⁶ Take a harp; go about the city, you prostitute that has been forgotten. Make sweet melody. Sing many songs, that you may be remembered. ¹⁷ It will happen after the end of seventy years that Yahweh will visit Tyre, and she shall return to her wages, and will play the prostitute with all the kingdoms of the world on the surface of the earth. ¹⁸ Her merchandise and her wages will be holiness to Yahweh. It will not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise will be for those who dwell before Yahweh, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

23:9 *To stain the pride of all glory* – All the various prophecies of judgment could have chosen many sinful aspects of the peoples' behaviour as being the reason for the judgments. But repeatedly, pride is the sin which God focuses upon. God is so sensitive to human pride that He even notices it amongst those not in relationship with Him, and takes the trouble to punish it and bring it down. It is *so* important to be humble. God gave Judah all this information about the impending fall of the surrounding nations so that His people would perceive the principles He works according to, and therefore humble themselves lest the same inevitable judgment for pride come upon them. We are intended to reflect upon the people who form the environment God has surrounded us with, and to learn from their rises and falls.

23:15 God's prophesied 70 year silencing of Tyre was perhaps to encourage Judah to believe that the prophecies of their 70 year captivity in Babylon and subsequent revival would likewise be fulfilled (Jer. 25:12; 29:10). God may make situations occur in the unbelieving world around us which parallel our own, in order that we may be encouraged that His word will come true in our lives and that His principles will be upheld in the end.

CHAPTER 24 Jun. 1***Punishment on the Whole Land***

Behold, Yahweh creates the earth empty, creates it waste, turns it upside down, and scatters its inhabitants. ² It will be as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the creditor, so with the debtor; as with the taker of interest, so with the giver of interest. ³ The earth will be utterly emptied and utterly laid waste; for Yahweh has spoken this word. ⁴ The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the proud people of the earth languish. ⁵ The earth also is polluted under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶ Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell therein are found guilty. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth

are burned, and few men left. ⁷ The new wine mourns, the vine languishes. All the merry-hearted sigh, ⁸ the mirth of tambourines ceases, the sound of those who rejoice ends, the joy of the harp ceases. ⁹ They will not drink wine with a song, strong drink will be bitter to those who drink it. ¹⁰ The confused city is broken down, every house is shut up so that no man may come in. ¹¹ There is a crying in the streets because of the wine- all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. ¹² The city is left in desolation, and the gate is struck with destruction. ¹³ For it will be so in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done. ¹⁴ These shall lift up their voice, they will shout for the majesty of Yahweh, they cry aloud from the sea. ¹⁵ Therefore glorify Yahweh in the east, even the name of Yahweh the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea! ¹⁶ From the uttermost part of

24:1 The earth, moon and sun (:23) are clearly spoken of figuratively, to describe the system of things in Judah – see on 1:2. However, often in this chapter we must remember that the Hebrew *eret* translated “earth” can mean both the earth as in the whole planet, and also “the land”, as specifically the land of Israel or the land promised to Abraham.

Empty... waste is an allusion to how the earth was originally empty and waste in Gen. 1:2 (the same Hebrew words are used). The implication is that God was going to make a new creation with Judah out of the emptiness which His judgments would create. Again we see that God even has a creative purpose in the destruction of the wicked and judgment of our sins – hence to make something empty and waste is in fact to *create* something. Yet even this intended new creation of Judah after the 70 years captivity didn’t work out; the concept has been reapplied to how by baptism in Christ, we become a new creation once we have allowed God to make empty and waste our old personality (2 Cor. 5:17).

24:4 *The world languishes... the proud people of the earth languish* – We could probably understand “the world” here and often in the prophets as referring to people, i.e. society, rather than any reference to the physical planet.

the earth have we heard songs of glory to the righteous! But I said, I pine away! I pine away! Woe is me! The treacherous have dealt treacherously, yes, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously. ¹⁷ Fear, the pit and the snare are on you who inhabitant the earth. ¹⁸ It will happen that he who flees from the noise of the fear will fall into the pit; and he who comes up out of the midst of the pit will be taken in the snare; for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble. ¹⁹ The earth is utterly broken. The earth is torn apart, the earth is shaken violently, ²⁰ the earth will stagger like a drunken man, and will sway back and forth like a hammock. Its disobedience will be heavy on it, and it will fall and not rise again. ²¹ It shall happen in that day that Yahweh will punish the army of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. ²² They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited. ²³ Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for Yahweh of Armies will reign on Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before His elders will be glory.

CHAPTER 25 Jun. 2

A Hymn of Praise

Yahweh, You are My God. I will exalt You! I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things, things planned long ago, in complete faithfulness and truth. ² For You have made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city; it will never be built. ³ Therefore a strong people will glorify You, a city of awesome nations will fear You. ⁴ For You have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the dreaded ones is like a storm against the wall. ⁵ As the heat in a dry place will You bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the dreaded ones will be brought low.

Death Removed for Ever

In this mountain Yahweh of Armies will make to all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of choice wines, of fat things full of marrow, of well refined choice wines. ⁷ He will destroy in this mountain the surface of the covering that covers all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He

24:16 Isaiah's sorrow to the extent of wanting to pine away is purposefully juxtaposed alongside the reference to the fact that there would be a righteous remnant out of all the destruction. This is to show how pained he was at the fact that so many would be lost. We noted his extreme compassion for those who left or never knew God's ways in the note on 16:9.

25:6 A reference to the marriage supper of the Lord Jesus being held in Jerusalem, on the temple mount, at His return (Rev. 19:9).

25:8 *He has swallowed up death forever* – Quoted in 1 Cor. 15:54 about how death will be no more after Christ has returned, we have been resurrected and immortalized.

has swallowed up death forever! The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces. He will take the reproach of His people away from off all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken it. ⁹ It shall be said in that day, Behold, this is our God! We have waited for Him, and He will save us! This is Yahweh! We have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation! ¹⁰ For in this mountain the hand of Yahweh will rest.

But Punishment for Moab

Moab will be trodden down in his place, even like straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill. ¹¹ He will spread out his hands in its midst, like one who swims spreads out hands to swim, but his pride will be humbled together with the craft of his hands. ¹² He has brought down the high fortress of your walls, laid them low and brought them to the ground, even to the dust.

CHAPTER 26 Jun. 3

God Gives Victory for His People

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city. God appoints salvation for walls and defences. ² Open the

gates, that the righteous nation may enter: the one which keeps faith. ³ You will keep whoever's mind is steadfast in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. ⁴ Trust in Yahweh forever; for in Yah, Yahweh, is an everlasting Rock. ⁵ For He has brought down those who dwell on high, the lofty city. He lays it low, He lays it low even to the ground, He brings it even to the dust. ⁶ The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and the footsteps of the needy. ⁷ The way of the just is uprightness; You who are upright make the path of the righteous level. ⁸ Yes, in the way of Your judgements, Yahweh, have we waited for You. Your name and Your renown are the desire of our soul. ⁹ With my soul have I desired You in the night. Yes, with my spirit within me will I seek You earnestly; for when Your judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. ¹⁰ Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal wrongfully, and will not perceive Yahweh's majesty. ¹¹ Yahweh, Your hand is lifted up, yet they don't see; but they will see Your zeal for the

The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces – Quoted in Rev. 7:17; 21:4 as being done by God at Christ's return when the righteous are given eternal life.

25:9 These will be our feelings after Christ has returned, and we stand immortalized before His judgment seat. Our faith in God's final, visible intervention on this earth and in our own lives will have finally come to realization.

26:1 *In that day* – See notes on 25:6,8,9. This day is the day of Christ's return and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

26:10 This seems to be saying that it would be pointless to allow wicked people into God's Kingdom because even there they would not wish to be righteous. If we wish above all things to be eternally righteous, then the Kingdom of God will be for us.

people, and be disappointed; yes, fire will consume Your adversaries.

¹² Yahweh, You will ordain peace for us, for You have also worked all our works for us. ¹³ Yahweh our God, other lords besides You have had dominion over us, but by You only will we make mention of Your name.

¹⁴ Their dead shall not live, their deceased shall not rise. Therefore have You visited and destroyed them, and caused all memory of them to perish. ¹⁵ You have increased the nation, O Yahweh, You have increased the nation! You are glorified! You have enlarged all the borders of the land.

¹⁶ Yahweh, in trouble they have come to You; they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was on them. ¹⁷ Like as a woman with child who draws near the time of her delivery and is in pain and cries out in her pangs; so we have been before You, Yahweh. ¹⁸ We have been with child, we have been in pain, we gave birth, it seems, only to wind. We have not worked any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. ¹⁹ Your dead shall

live; my dead body also shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth will cast forth her dead.

Judgement on the Earth

²⁰ Come, My people, enter into your rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for a little moment, until the indignation is past.

²¹ For behold, Yahweh comes forth out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth also will disclose her blood, and will no longer cover her slain.

CHAPTER 27 Jun. 3

Israel Restored

In that day, Yahweh with His hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan, the fleeing serpent, and leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon that is in the sea. ² In that day, sing to her, A pleasant vineyard! ³ I, Yahweh, am its keeper. I will water it every moment. Lest anyone damage it, I will keep it

26:14 The Gentile nations not in saving covenant relationship with God will not be resurrected. Human beings have no inherent ‘immortal soul’; immortality is revealed only to God’s people (2 Tim. 1:10). Those who don’t know the Gospel will not be resurrected to judgment, nor will they be punished after death; they return to dust as the animals (Ps. 49:20). Knowledge is the basis of responsibility to God (Lk. 12:47,48).

26:20, 21 These verses are speaking of the situation around the time of the resurrection at Christ’s return (:19). It seems God’s people will be somehow hidden from the effects of the final judgments which will come upon the earth, in the same way as the Israelites in Egypt were untouched by the plagues which came on the rest of their surrounding world.

27:3 The vineyard owner in this simile is almost obsessive – he waters it continually, and day and night watches its borders. This unusual level of care by God for the vineyard of His people (5:7) is so that the vineyard has no excuse for not bringing forth fruit. God has done all that He can so that we should bring forth fruit (5:4). We cannot

night and day. ⁴ Wrath is not in Me, but if I should find briars and thorns, I would do battle! I would march on them and I would burn them together. ⁵ Or else let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he will make peace with Me. ⁶ In days to come, Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and bud; they will fill the face of the world with fruit. ⁷ Has He struck them as He struck those who struck them? Or are they killed like those who killed them were killed? ⁸ In measure, when You send them away, You contend with them. He has removed them with His rough blast in the day of the east wind. ⁹ Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be forgiven, and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: that he makes all the stones of the altar as chalk stones that are beaten in pieces, so that the Asherim and the incense altars shall rise no more. ¹⁰ For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness. The calf will feed there and there he will lie down and consume its branches. ¹¹ When its boughs are withered, they will be broken off. The women will come and set them on fire, for they are a people of no

understanding. Therefore He who made them will not have compassion on them, and He who formed them will show them no grace. ¹² It will happen in that day, that Yahweh will thresh from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, you children of Israel. ¹³ It will happen in that day that a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and those who were outcasts in the land of Egypt, shall come; and they will worship Yahweh in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 28 Jun. 4

Judgement on Drunkards

Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fertile valley of those who are overcome with wine! ² Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one; like a storm of hail, a destroying storm, and like a storm of mighty waters overflowing, He will cast them down to the earth with His hand. ³ The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden under foot. ⁴ The fading flower of his glorious

therefore excuse our lack of fruitfulness by saying that if we had a better or different situation, we would then be fruitful. God has given us exactly the required environment in order to be fruitful, and the level of His care should never be doubted.

27:9 *This is all the fruit of taking away his sin* – God isn't saying that if Israel destroyed their altars, then He would forgive them. Instead His way of grace is to take away sin and then hope that we will make response to that, in this case, by destroying the altars.

28:1 Here we see again God's persistent hatred of pride; He condemned drunkenness because it made people proud (see too :3).

beauty, which is on the head of the fertile valley, shall be like the first-ripe fig before the summer, which someone picks and eats as soon as he sees it. ⁵ In that day, Yahweh of Armies will become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remains of His people; ⁶ and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgement, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. ⁷ They also reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They are swallowed up by wine, they stagger with strong drink. They err in vision, they stumble in judgement. ⁸ For all tables are completely full of filthy vomit and filthiness. ⁹ Whom will He teach knowledge? To whom will He explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? ¹⁰ For it is precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little,

there a little. ¹¹ But He will speak to this nation with stammering lips and in another language; ¹² to whom He said, This is the resting place. Give rest to the weary; and This is the refreshing; yet they would not hear. ¹³ Therefore the word of Yahweh will be to them precept after precept, precept after precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, fall backward, be broken, be snared, and be taken.

A Message for Jerusalem's Rulers

Therefore hear the word of Yahweh, you scoffers, that rule this people in Jerusalem: ¹⁵ Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we in agreement; when the overflowing scourge passes through, it won't come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and we have hidden ourselves under falsehood'. ¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold,

28:13 *Therefore the word of Yahweh will be to them precept after precept... line on line* – This is declared as a judgment upon Judah, with the result that it would make them fall. Israel throughout their Biblical history always claimed to be believers in Yahweh and to be obedient to His word; their sin was in that they additionally did other things and worshipped other gods which were quite contrary to God's word. The problem was in their attitude to the word of God, which they claimed to study and be aware of. They saw it as merely a series of disjointed, unrelated commands; they didn't perceive the overall spirit behind it. Our Bible reading can be the same, indeed it is often like this for unbelievers who start reading the Bible for the first time. This is why we must pray for God to guide and assist our Bible reading so that we make the connections and join the dots, until we hear the voice of God Himself speaking to us through those lines and precepts.

28:15 *Because you have said* – It's unlikely these people actually openly said these words. But this was how they thought in their hearts, and God reads our quiet thoughts as if we have spoken them out loud. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christian living.

28:16 Quoted in 1 Pet. 2:6-8 about Jesus, who is either a stone to be stumbled over (8:14), or to be built upon as the foundation of our lives. Those who encounter Christ

I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation. He who believes shall not be ashamed. ¹⁷ I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plumb line. The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place. ¹⁸ Your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand. When the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it. ¹⁹ As often as it passes through, it will seize you; for morning by morning it will pass through, by day and by night; and it will be nothing but terror to understand the message. ²⁰ For the bed is too short to stretch out on, and the blanket is too narrow to wrap oneself in. ²¹ For Yahweh will rise up as on Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the valley of Gibeon; that He may do His work, His unusual work, and bring to pass His act, His extraordinary act. ²² Now therefore don't be scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard a decree of destruction from the Lord Yahweh of Armies, upon the whole earth. ²³ Give ear, and hear my voice! Listen, and hear my speech! ²⁴ Does he

who ploughs to sow plough continually? Does he keep turning the soil and breaking the clods? ²⁵ When he has levelled its surface, doesn't he plant the dill, and scatter the cumin seed, and put in the wheat in rows, the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in its place? ²⁶ For his God instructs him in right judgement, and teaches him. ²⁷ For the dill are not threshed with a sharp instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned over the cumin; but the dill is beaten out with a stick, and the cumin with a rod. ²⁸ Bread flour must be ground; so he will not always be threshing it. Although he drives the wheel of his threshing cart over it, his horses don't grind it. ²⁹ This also comes forth from Yahweh of Armies, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.

CHAPTER 29 Jun. 5

The Siege of Jerusalem

Woe to Ariel! Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts come around; ² then I will distress Ariel, and there will be mourning and lamentation. She shall be to Me as an altar hearth. ³ I will encamp against you all around you, and will lay

cannot be passive to Him or unaffected by that encounter; knowledge brings responsibility.

28:24-28 Although the trials and judgments God brings into our lives may appear pointlessly repetitious, they aren't. They last for a limited time and to a specific end.

29:3 *I will encamp against you... and will lay siege against you* – It was understood that each city had its god, who was supposed to protect it from invaders. But here the God of Israel says that He Himself will camp with Jerusalem's enemies, and enable and support their campaign against His own people. This was more radical a concept of God at that time than we can likely realize. Yet it's all very hard for us to under-

siege against you with a mount; I will raise siege works against you. ⁴ You will be brought down, and will speak out of the ground. Your speech will mumble out of the dust. Your voice will be as of one who has a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and your speech will whisper out of the dust. ⁵ But the multitude of your foes will be like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones like chaff that blows away. Yes, it will be in an instant, suddenly. ⁶ She will be visited by Yahweh of Armies with thunder, with earthquake, with great noise, with whirlwind and storm, and with the flame of a devouring fire. ⁷ The multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her stronghold and who distress her, will be like a dream, a vision of the night. ⁸ It will be like when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he eats; but he awakes, and his hunger isn't satisfied; or like when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he drinks; but he awakes, and behold, he is faint, and he is still thirsty. The

multitude of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion will be like that. ⁹ Pause and wonder, take your pleasure and be blind. They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. ¹⁰ For Yahweh has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, O prophets; and He has covered your heads, O seers. ¹¹ All vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is educated, saying, Read this, please; and he says, I can't, for it is sealed: ¹² and the book is delivered to one who is not educated, saying, Read this, please; and he says, I can't read. ¹³ The Lord said, Because this people draws near with their mouth and with their lips to honour Me, but they have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men which has been taught; ¹⁴ therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men will per-

stand that the God of all grace can allow and bring about the most awful suffering in the lives of His children – with the aim of developing us even through our weaknesses so that we shall enter His Kingdom.

29:10 *Yahweh has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep* – Quoted in Rom. 11:8 about what God has done to all Israel, in closing their eyes to perceiving Jesus as their Messiah – in response to the fact that they had already closed their eyes to Him. There were many similarities between the Jews of Isaiah's time and those of Christ's (see on :13).

29:13 These words are quoted in Mt. 15:7,8 and interpreted by Jesus as a specific prophecy of the hypocrites who confronted Him in the first century. But the context of Isaiah 29 clearly requires that they had relevance to the Jews of Isaiah's day. In this we see the uniquely living, constantly relevant nature of God's word. It can speak to different generations in different contexts with perfect and Divinely designed relevance. This is the result of the Bible being written by the inspiration process of God's Spirit; it isn't, therefore, like the black print and white paper of any human book.

ish, and the understanding of their prudent men will be hidden. ¹⁵ Woe to those who deeply hide their counsel from Yahweh, and whose works are in the dark, and who say, Who sees us? and Who knows us? ¹⁶ You turn things upside down! Should the potter be thought to be like clay; that the thing made should say about him who made it, He didn't make me; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, He has no understanding?

¹⁷ Isn't it yet a very little while, and Lebanon will be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be regarded as a forest? ¹⁸ In that day, the deaf will hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity and out of darkness. ¹⁹ The humble also will increase their joy in Yahweh, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. ²⁰ For the ruthless is brought to nothing, and the scoffer ceases, and all those who are alert to do evil are cut off—²¹ who cause a person to be indicted by a word, and lay a snare for the arbiter in the gate, and who deprive the innocent of justice with false testimony. ²² Therefore thus says Yahweh who redeemed Abraham concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall no longer

be ashamed, neither shall his face grow pale. ²³ But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in the midst of him, they will sanctify My name. Yes, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. ²⁴ They also who err in spirit will come to understanding, and those who grumble will receive instruction.

CHAPTER 30 Jun. 6

A Treaty with Egypt

Woe to the rebellious children, says Yahweh, who take counsel, but not from Me; and who make an alliance, but not with My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin, ² who set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked My advice; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt! ³ Therefore the strength of Pharaoh will be your shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. ⁴ For their princes are at Zoan, and their ambassadors have come to Hanes. ⁵ They shall all be ashamed because of a people that can't profit them, that are not a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. ⁶ The burden of the animals of the South. Through the land

30:1 This must have been very hard for Isaiah to tell Judah, because for three years he had walked barefoot amongst his people to try to persuade them how Egypt would go into captivity, and Judah should hope only in God (20:1-4). Our tendency too is to treat God as a kind of extra insurance policy; to turn firstly to human strength, and only to Him if all else fails. His desire is that we should trust totally in Him, and however we might use 'Egypt', it should never be our strength and trust.

30:6 *They carry their rich gifts* – This is a picture of the people of Judah braving wild animals in the desert (Dt. 8:15) as they carried their wealth down into Egypt, reversing their exodus, in order to buy Egyptian support against Assyria. People will go to huge

of trouble and anguish, of the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they carry their rich gifts on the shoulders of young donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to an unprofitable people. ⁷ For Egypt helps in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I called her Rahab who sits still.

A Disobedient People

Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever. ⁹ For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of Yahweh; ¹⁰ who tell the seers, Don't see! and to the prophets, Don't prophesy to us right things. Tell us pleasant things, prophesy deceits, ¹¹ get out of the way, turn aside from the path; cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. ¹² Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on it; ¹³ therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose break-

ing comes suddenly in an instant.

¹⁴ He will break it as a potter's vessel is broken, breaking it in pieces without sparing, so that there won't be found among the broken pieces one piece good enough to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern. ¹⁵ For thus said the Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, You will be saved by returning and rest; your strength will be in quietness and in confidence. You refused, ¹⁶ but you said, No, for we will flee on horses; therefore you will flee; and, We will ride on the swift; therefore those who pursue you will be swift. ¹⁷ One thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five, you will flee until you are left like a beacon on the top of a mountain, and like a banner on a hill.

Yahweh Will be Gracious

Therefore Yahweh will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you, for Yahweh is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for Him. ¹⁹ For the people will dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you

efforts and expense to obtain human strength; when the answer is ultimately in God and not man.

30:9 *Lying children* – Yet when He brought them out of Egypt, God had been certain that “Surely they are My people, children that will *not* lie: so He was their saviour” (63:8). The God who can know the end from the beginning was so in love with His people, as He is with us, that He felt the very best about them. Hence the bitter disappointment when those positive hopes were dashed by their fickleness. God has great hopes for each of us.

30:18 *Yahweh will wait, that He may be gracious to you* – There's similar reasoning in 2 Pet. 3:14,15; the reason why the return of Christ is delayed is so that God may be gracious to even more people than He had otherwise planned. God's delay is often because He is seeking a way to be yet more gracious. Hence “Blessed are all those who wait for Him”.

will weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the voice of your cry; when He hears you, He will answer you. ²⁰ Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers won't be hidden any more, but your eyes will see your teachers; ²¹ and when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk in it. ²² You shall defile the overlaying of your engraved images of silver, and the plating of your molten images of gold. You shall cast them away as an unclean thing. You shall tell it, Go away! ²³ He will give the rain for your seed, with which you will sow the ground; and the bread from the increase of the ground will be rich and plentiful. In that day, your livestock will feed in large pastures; ²⁴ the oxen likewise and the young donkeys that till the ground will eat savoury provender, which has been winnowed with the shovel and with the fork. ²⁵ There shall be brooks and streams of water on every lofty mountain and on every high hill in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. ²⁶ Moreover the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light

of seven days, in the day that Yahweh binds up the fracture of His people, and heals the wound they were struck with.

Yahweh will Punish Assyria

Behold, the name of Yahweh comes from far away, burning with His anger, and in thick rising smoke. His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue is as a devouring fire. ²⁸ His breath is as an overflowing stream that reaches even to the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction; and a bridle that leads to ruin will be in the jaws of the peoples. ²⁹ You will have a song, as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goes with a flute to come to Yahweh's mountain, to Israel's Rock. ³⁰ Yahweh will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and will show the descent of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast, storm, and hailstones. ³¹ For through the voice of Yahweh the Assyrian will be dismayed. He will strike him with His rod. ³² Every stroke of the rod of punishment which Yahweh will lay on him will be with the sound of tambourines and harps. He will fight with them in battles, brandishing weapons. ³³ For his burning

30:26 This could be a poetic way of saying that the meaning of time [as defined by sun and moon] will be changed around the time of Christ's return. This would enable the various predicted events to happen with no problem of chronology.

30:33 This language of fire and sulphur ["brimstone"] is clearly figurative and not literal – it speaks of the anger of God in destroying His enemies. This verse clearly describes the death of the Assyrian invaders, as fulfilled in 37:36. There was no literal place of sulphur with an angry God stirring it up with His breath. Likewise the Lord

place has long been ready. Yes, for the king it is prepared; He has made its pyre deep and large with fire and much wood. Yahweh's breath, like a stream of sulphur, kindles it.

CHAPTER 31 Jun. 7

No Safety in Egypt

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they don't look to the Holy One of Israel, and they don't seek Yahweh! ² Yet He also is wise, and will bring disaster, and will not call back His words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. ³ Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When Yahweh stretches out His hand, both he who helps shall stumble, and he who is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed

together. ⁴ For thus says Yahweh to me, As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey who will not be dismayed if a multitude of shepherds is called together against him, nor will he abase himself for their noise, so Yahweh of Armies will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its mount. ⁵ As birds hovering, so Yahweh of Armies will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it, He will pass over and preserve it. ⁶ Return to Him from whom you have deeply revolted, children of Israel! ⁷ For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—the sin which your own hands have made for you. ⁸ The Assyrian will fall by the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of mankind, shall devour him. He will flee from the sword, and his young men will become subject to forced labour. ⁹ His rock will pass away by reason of terror, and his princes will be afraid of the banner, says Yahweh,

Jesus used the language of Gehenna in a figurative manner – constant fire, brimstone etc. are symbols of total destruction, and shouldn't be forced into a literal reading.

31:3 The implication is that God also has horses and chariots – His invisible Angelic cherubim. Although Judah preferred to believe in the visible horses of Egypt, yet in His amazing grace, God still used His Angelic cherubim to destroy the Assyrians (37:36). This is grace itself.

31:4 *Yahweh of Armies* – God uses this title of Himself in this context to remind Judah that He has armies of Angels at His disposal. Judah were running to Egypt to enlist the help of their human armies; and by doing so were disbelieving that Yahweh really is the Yahweh of Armies of Angels.

31:7 This means that at the time of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time (which is the context of the chapter), the people were still worshipping idols. Yet Hezekiah had supposedly purged Judah of idols. This shows that true faith is sometimes only found in a minority of God's people; they may go along with the guidance of faithful leadership externally, but even good leaders cannot reform the hearts of individuals. It also shows how the Angelic deliverance of Jerusalem was due to the prayers and faith of a very small remnant, centred around Isaiah and Hezekiah.

whose fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 32 Jun. 8

A King will Reign Righteously

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice. ² A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a large rock in a weary land. ³ The eyes of those who see will not be dim, and the ears of those who hear will listen. ⁴ The heart of the rash will understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly. ⁵ The fool will no longer be called noble, nor the scoundrel be highly respected. ⁶ For the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice profanity, and to utter error against Yahweh, to make empty the soul of the hungry and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. ⁷ The

ways of the scoundrel are evil. He devises wicked devices to destroy the humble with lying words, even when the needy speaks right. ⁸ But the noble devises noble things; and he will continue in noble things.

A Warning to Women

⁹ Rise up, you women who are at ease! Hear My voice, you careless daughters, give ear to My speech! ¹⁰ For days beyond a year you will be troubled, you careless women; for the vintage shall fail. The harvest won't come. ¹¹ Tremble, you women who are at ease! Be troubled, you careless ones! Strip yourselves, make yourselves naked and put sackcloth on your waist. ¹² Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. ¹³ Thorns and briers will come up on My people's land; yes, on all the houses of joy in the joyous city. ¹⁴ For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city will be deserted. The hill and the watchtower will be

32:6 Attitudes to the poor amongst Israel were interpreted by God as blasphemy against Him. In our age, all those baptized into the Name manifest God, and our attitude to them is our attitude to God, and will be the basis of our judgment at the last day (Mt. 25:40).

32:10 It seems Isaiah was making this prophecy a year before it would be fulfilled. His request for the women to wear sackcloth (:12) was a call for them to repent – so that the promised judgments might be averted. We note God's granting of full significance and spiritual meaning to women, making an appeal specifically to them – at a time when religion in the surrounding world considered women largely irrelevant in religious decisions, and would never have considered that the repentance of a group of women could have changed the destiny of an entire nation, far beyond whatever their male leaders might decide.

32:14 The threatened judgments against “the city” (also in :19) presumably refers to Jerusalem. It seems that on one hand, it was God's intention to allow the Assyrians to destroy Jerusalem as well as Judah, and yet He saved it for the sake of the faithful minority who were there, based around Isaiah and Hezekiah. God is so sensitive to His people that He is willing to change His stated purpose if He hears powerful prayer and sees genuine spirituality amongst even a minority.

for dens forever, a delight for wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks;

Restored Again

¹⁵ Until the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is considered a forest. ¹⁶ Then justice will dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness will remain in the fruitful field. ¹⁷ The work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. ¹⁸ My people will live in a peaceful habitation, in safe dwellings and in quiet resting places—¹⁹ though for now hail flattens the forest, and the city is levelled completely. ²⁰ Blessed are you who sow beside all waters, who send out the feet of the ox and the donkey.

CHAPTER 33 Jun. 9

The Destruction of the Assyrians Prophesied

Woe to you who destroy, but you weren't destroyed; and who betray, but nobody betrayed you. When you have finished destroying, you will be destroyed; and when you have made an end of betrayal, you will be betrayed. ² Yahweh, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. Be our strength every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. ³ At the noise of the thunder, the peoples have fled. When You lift

Yourself up, the nations are scattered. ⁴ Your spoil will be gathered as the caterpillar gathers. Men will leap on it as locusts leap. ⁵ Yahweh is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. ⁶ There will be stability in your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of Yahweh is your treasure. ⁷ Behold, their valiant ones cry outside; the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly. ⁸ The highways are desolate, the travelling man ceases. The covenant is broken; He has despised the cities. He doesn't respect man. ⁹ The land mourns and languishes, Lebanon is confounded and withers away, Sharon is like a desert, and Bashan and Carmel are stripped bare. ¹⁰ Now I will arise, says Yahweh; Now I will lift Myself up. Now I will be exalted. ¹¹ You will conceive chaff, you will bring forth stubble, your breath is a fire that will devour you. ¹² The peoples will be like the burning of lime, like thorns that are cut down and burned in the fire. ¹³ Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and, you who are near, acknowledge My might. ¹⁴ The sinners in Zion are afraid. Trembling has seized the godless ones. Who among us can live with the devouring fire? Who among us can live with everlasting burning? ¹⁵ He who walks righteously, and speaks blamelessly; he who despises

33:11 *Your breath is a fire that will devour you* – This is a common theme, that the rejected are those who condemn and destroy themselves, often by their own words (“breath”).

33:15 *Shuts his eyes from looking at evil* – Very relevant to us in the age when all manner of evil can be viewed without others knowing. This verse teaches that our hands,

the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing to take a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from looking at evil—¹⁶ he will dwell on high. His place of defence will be the fortress of rocks. His bread will be supplied, his waters will be sure.¹⁷ Your eyes will see the king in His beauty, they will see the land that is distant.¹⁸ Your heart will meditate on the terror. Where is he who counted? Where is he who weighed? Where is he who counted the towers?¹⁹ You will no longer see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that you can't comprehend, with a strange language that you can't understand.²⁰ Look toward Zion, the city of our appointed festivals! Your eyes will see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that won't be removed; her stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of her cords be broken.²¹ But there Yahweh will be with us

in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams, in which no galley with oars will go, neither will any gallant ship pass by there.²² For Yahweh is our judge, Yahweh is our lawgiver, Yahweh is our king; He will save us.²³ Your rigging is untied; they couldn't strengthen the foot of their mast, they failed to spread the sail. Then the prey of a great spoil was divided, the lame took the prey.²⁴ The inhabitant won't say, I am sick because the people who dwell therein will be forgiven their iniquity.

CHAPTER 34 Jun. 10

God's Punishment on the Nations

Come near, you nations, to hear! Listen, you peoples. Let the earth and all it contains hear; the world, and everything that comes from it.² For Yahweh is enraged against all the nations and angry with all their armies. He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over for

eyes and ears really can come under our control. There is the impression given that human behaviour is somehow automatic; and yet we *can* take control of our senses and responses to them.

33:18 This refers to the Assyrian military personnel outside Jerusalem, wisely analyzing the situation as they besieged the city. But Paul alludes to the LXX of this verse in 1 Cor. 1:20, where he says that we too are surrounded by the wise and powerful of this world, but 'Where are they...?' compared to the power of the Gospel of Christ, which declares their wisdom and human strength as nothing. Paul therefore understands each of us as being as it were in essence in the same position as the Jews of Isaiah's time, tempted to rely upon Egypt rather than God, and likely to be awed by the human strength of those things which are against us. And yet we are to see them in the perspective of faith as nothing, as foolish and weak.

33:24 There is a connection between sin and sickness, as made also by Jesus (Mt. 9:5). It doesn't mean that sickness always comes as a result of sin, but rather that because of our fallen state as a result of sin we are generally prone to sickness and death. The ultimate answer to sickness, therefore, is the complete removal of our sin, being counted righteous by God, and therefore being related (by His grace) to eternal life. In our age this is possible through baptism into Christ.

slaughter. ³ Their slain will also be cast out, and the stench of their dead bodies will come up; and the mountains will melt in their blood. ⁴ All of the army of the sky will be dissolved, the sky will be rolled up like a scroll, and all its armies will fade away, as a leaf fades from off a vine or a fig tree. ⁵ For My sword has drunk its fill in the sky. Behold, it will come down on Edom and on the people of My curse for judgement. ⁶ Yahweh's sword is filled with blood, it is covered with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. ⁷ The wild oxen will come down with them and the young bulls with the mighty bulls; and their land will be drunken with blood and their dust made greasy with fat. ⁸ For Yahweh has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. ⁹ Her streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into sulphur, and

her land will become burning pitch; ¹⁰ it won't be quenched night nor day, the smoke will go up forever; from generation to generation, it will lie waste. Nobody will pass through it forever and ever; ¹¹ but the pelican and the porcupine will possess it, the owl and the raven will dwell in it. He will stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plumb line of emptiness. ¹² They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, but none shall be there; and all its princes shall be nothing. ¹³ Thorns will come up in its palaces, nettles and thistles in its fortresses; and it will be a habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches. ¹⁴ The wild animals of the desert will meet with the wolves, and the wild goat will cry to his fellow. Yes, the night creature shall settle there and shall find herself a place of rest. ¹⁵ The arrow snake will make her nest there, and lay, hatch, and gather under her shade. Yes, the kites will be gathered there, every one with her mate.

34:8 In human terms, this seems rather unjust. God had called the nations to attack and destroy Judah because of her sins, and yet now He takes vengeance for Zion (as in 35:4) as if she has been unfairly treated, and those nations require punishment for what they did. The final algorithm of God's justice is far beyond our total comprehension, but perhaps we are to perceive in this the passionate love God has for His sinful people – in that He so loved them that even when they were justly punished, He punished those by whom they were punished with great fury. This was in a sense just because they were also sinners. But whoever touches God's people, even when they are in rebellion against Him, has touched Him at a highly sensitive spot. In these things we see the depth of God's love for us, and how He counts us as His very own, and feels to us that way, even when we are in rebellion against Him.

34:10 *Smoke will go up forever; from generation to generation, it will lie waste* – Eternal fire and smoke is again used figuratively, as a symbol of total, permanent destruction. It can't be literal, for the 'eternal' smoke is paralleled with laying calm and desolate for ever. We need to remember this in considering Christ's use of the image of 'eternal fire' as a symbol for complete destruction, rather than forcing his words into any literal interpretation.

¹⁶ Search in the book of Yahweh, and read: not one of these will be missing; none will lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded, and His Spirit has gathered them. ¹⁷ He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has divided it to them with a measuring line. They shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation they will dwell in it.

CHAPTER 35 Jun. 11

God's Promise for Israel

The wilderness and the dry land will be glad. The desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose. ² It will blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. Lebanon's glory will be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon; they will see Yahweh's glory, the excellence of our God. ³ Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Tell those who have a fearful heart, Be strong, don't be afraid. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, God's retribution. He will come and save you. ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,

and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame man will leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute will sing; for waters will break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. ⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water. Grass with reeds and rushes will be in the habitation of jackals, where they used to lay. ⁸ A highway will be there, a road, and it will be called The Holy Way. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it will be for those who walk in the Way. Wicked fools will not go there, ⁹ no lion will be there, nor will any ravenous animal go up on it. They will not be found there; but the redeemed will walk there. ¹⁰ Yahweh's ransomed ones will return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

CHAPTER 36 Jun. 12

Assyria Invades Judah

Now it happened in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah,

35:4 *Vengeance... retribution* – see on 34:8.

35:10 Whatever possible application this may have had to Hezekiah's time (e.g. the return of those who had fled Zion in fear) and what might have been after the destruction of the Assyrian invaders, or at the return of the exiles from Babylon, it is clearly a prophecy of God's future Kingdom on earth when Christ returns. Our joy will be "everlasting", whereas all joy in this life is tinged by the sense that it shall come to an end, the emotion has to subside, with the prospect of death ever before us. The joy we will then have shall have no fading away from a crescendo back into normality, but will have this 'eternal' aspect to it.

36:1 The Assyrian invasion was in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign. He reigned twenty nine years (2 Kings 14:2). His sickness unto death from which he was miraculously healed gave him another 15 years to live (38:5); his serious illness was therefore in the same year in which Judah was invaded. So often, several things go seriously wrong in our lives all at the same time. The chance of that happening is negligible; clearly such

that Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all of the fortified cities of Judah, and captured them. ² The king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to king Hezekiah with a large army; he came and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool in the fuller's field highway. ³ Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder came out to him. ⁴ Rabshakeh said to them, Now tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this in which you trust?' ⁵ I say that your counsel and strength for the war are only vain words. Now in whom do you trust, that you have rebelled against me? ⁶ Behold, you trust in the staff of this bruised reed, even in Egypt, which if a man leans on it, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. ⁷ But if you tell me, 'We trust in Yahweh our God', isn't that He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar?' ⁸ Now therefore, please make a pledge to my master the king of As-

syria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. ⁹ How then can you turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? ¹⁰ Have I come up now without Yahweh against this land to destroy it? Yahweh said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it'. ¹¹ Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and don't speak to us in the Jews' language in the hearing of the people who are on the wall. ¹² But Rabshakeh said, Has my master sent me only to your master and to you, to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you? ¹³ Then Rabshakeh stood, and called out with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴ Thus says the king, 'Don't let Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you. ¹⁵ Don't let Hezekiah make you trust in Yahweh, saying, Yahweh will surely deliver us. This

negative coincidences are all under God's controlling hand [not that of any cosmic 'Satan' being]. The coincidences would be too great to write off as merely chance. Note also that Hezekiah had lived a good life and acted in faith despite being surrounded by many of weak or weaker faith – and then, double tragedy struck him. Good living is no guarantee of a charmed life now, indeed, given all the Biblical examples of good people like Hezekiah suffering bad things, we should be surprised if we don't receive them.

36:10 The way Rabshakeh uses the term "Yahweh", speaks Hebrew (:11) and is aware of Isaiah's prophecies about Assyria being sent to punish Judah, and the fact that Judah had trusted on Egypt when Yahweh had told them not to (:6), would all suggest that Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew who had gone over to the Assyrian side.

city won't be given into the hand of the king of Assyria'. ¹⁶ Don't listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and each of you eat from his vine, and each one from his fig tree, and each one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; ¹⁷ until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. ¹⁸ Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, Yahweh will deliver us. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria? ¹⁹ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? ²⁰ Who are they among all the gods of these countries that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? ²¹ But they remained silent and said nothing in reply, for the king's commandment was Don't answer him. ²² Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and

Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

CHAPTER 37 Jun. 13

The King Asks Isaiah for Advice

It happened, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into Yahweh's house. ² He sent Eliakim who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. ³ They said to him, Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of rejection; for the children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth. ⁴ It may be Yahweh your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Yahweh your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left'. ⁵ So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. ⁶ Isaiah said to them, Tell your

36:16, 17 This is a parody of Micah's prophecy of what God's future Kingdom on earth would be like (Mic. 4:4). The allusion is so strong that it would seem Rabshakeh knew that prophecy, confirming the suggestion made under :10 that he was an apostate Jew. The kingdoms of this world offer us a fake kingdom of God in this life – if we submit to them and reject the vision of *God's* Kingdom. Going the way of the world may appear to give all that God's Kingdom offers – but the kingdoms of men shall come to an end, all is not what it seems, they will not last eternally as God's Kingdom will; and it is for us to have the wisdom to see that we face a choice between the Kingdom of God, and the kingdoms of men which are a poor imitation of it.

37:1 In times of crisis, our response should be the same – to turn to God, to His house (the ecclesia), to His word and to His faithful people, asking them to pray for us. Maybe there are times when we can literally place a letter or hospital report on a table and pray to God over it, bringing it as it were in a special sense before Him (:14).

master, ‘Thus says Yahweh, Don’t be afraid of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. ⁷ Behold, I will put a spirit in him and he will hear news, and will return to his own land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land’. ⁸ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. ⁹ He heard news concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He has come out to fight against you. When he heard it he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰ Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, ‘Don’t let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem won’t be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. ¹¹ Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? ¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the children of Eden who were in Telassar? ¹³ Where is the king of

Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?’.

Hezekiah’s Prayer

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. Then Hezekiah went up to Yahweh’s house, and spread it before Yahweh. ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh, saying, ¹⁶ Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, who is enthroned among the cherubim, You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth. ¹⁷ Turn Your ear Yahweh and hear; open Your eyes Yahweh and behold; hear all of the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to defy the living God. ¹⁸ Truly Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the countries and their land, ¹⁹ and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. ²⁰ Now therefore, Yahweh our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are Yahweh, even You only.

37:7 *A spirit* – Can refer to an attitude of mind. God is quite capable of giving people mindsets, over and above their own thinking. There are many situations in life where we realize that we simply cannot change another’s mind. But God can.

37:16 *Yahweh of Armies* – Hezekiah uses that title for God in recognition of the fact that God has armies of invisible Angels far mightier than the armies of the Assyrians which surrounded him.

You have made heaven and earth – The Psalms record many other prayers where believers in extremity have been inspired in their faith by the fact that God is creator. As He has created all things that are, it follows that to change one small thing within that creation on the face of one of the smallest planets of the cosmos... is in fact nothing at all difficult for Him. Such inspiration to faith is not present for those who believe the myth that all things evolved without God’s creative input.

37:20 *That all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are Yahweh* – A common

The Fall of Sennacherib

²¹ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, ²² this is the word which Yahweh has spoken concerning him. The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and ridiculed you. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you. ²³ Whom have you defied and blasphemed? Against whom have you exalted your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. ²⁴ By your servants have you defied the Lord and have said, With the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon. I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice fir trees. I will enter into its farthest height, the forest of its fruitful field. ²⁵ I have dug and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet I will dry up all the rivers of Egypt. ²⁶ Have you not heard

how I have done it long ago, and formed it in ancient times? Now I have brought it to pass, that it should be yours to destroy fortified cities, turning them into ruinous heaps. ²⁷ Therefore their inhabitants had little power; they were dismayed and confounded, they were like the grass of the field and like the green herb, like the grass on the housetops, and like a field before its crop has grown. ²⁸ But I know your sitting down, your going out, your coming in, and your raging against Me. ²⁹ Because of your raging against Me, and because your arrogance has come up into My ears, therefore will I put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way by which you came. ³⁰ This shall be the sign to you. You will eat this year that which grows of itself, and in the second year that which springs from the same; and in the third year sow and reap and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. ³¹ The remnant that is escaped of the

reason given by faithful believers when begging God to hear their prayer. It should be most important to us to see His glory worked out through the answer to our requests, rather than merely personal benefit to us. This approach will also influence what we pray for, as well as how we pray for it.

37:22 *The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and ridiculed you* – This “daughter” refers to the faithful remnant in Jerusalem. But God speaks of them as being far more confident and full of faith than they really were; they feared the Assyrians and didn’t exactly laugh at them. But we see here one of many examples of how God is so thrilled with the faith of His children that He counts what faith and spirituality they have as far more than it actually is, so thrilled by it is He.

37:23 *Against whom have you exalted your voice?* – Rabshakeh spoke with an exalted, loud voice to all the Jews guarding Jerusalem (36:13). But God says that effectively, he had been shouting against the most holy God. God in all His holiness was manifest in those spiritually weak members of His people who were then in Jerusalem. His identity with His people is amazing; and it doesn’t end when they become weak or are in double mind about Him, just as it doesn’t in a natural family.

house of Judah will again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

³² For out of Jerusalem a remnant will go forth, and survivors will escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of Yahweh of Armies will perform this'.³³ Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the king of Assyria, 'He will not come to this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither will he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. ³⁴ By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come to this city', says Yahweh. ³⁵ 'For I will defend this city to save it, for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake'.

³⁶ The angel of Yahweh went out and struck one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the camp of the Assyrians. When men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, went away, returned to Nineveh, and stayed there.

³⁸ It happened that as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons struck him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Esar Haddon his son reigned in his place.

CHAPTER 38 Jun. 14

Hezekiah's Illness and Recovery

In those days was Hezekiah sick and near death. Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came to him, and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, 'Set your house in order, for you will die, and not live'. ² Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh, ³ and said, Remember now, Yahweh, I beg You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Your sight. Hezekiah wept bitterly. ⁴ Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah, saying, ⁵ Go, and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says Yahweh the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. ⁶ I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city. ⁷ This shall be the sign to you from Yahweh, that Yahweh will do this thing that He has spoken. ⁸ Behold, I will cause the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down on the sundial of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. ' So the sun returned ten steps on the sundial on which it had gone down. ⁹ The

38:1 *In those days* – His sickness was at the same time as the invasion. See on 36:1.

38:3 Hezekiah simply puts his situation before God, he doesn't actually specifically ask for healing. But God saw the essence of his heart, and read this as a prayer requesting healing and the extension of life. At times, typically during illness, we find it hard to verbalize prayer; and yet God sees to the core of our hearts, and understands what are really our heart's desires, and understands these as requests to Him.

38:5 *I have heard your prayer; I have seen* – Hezekiah had just been begging God to *hear* and *see* the behaviour of the Assyrians (37:17). God teaches us how to pray through some desperate experience, and then gives us another crisis in which we can as it were practice the style and intensity of prayer which we learnt in the previous experience.

writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and had recovered of his sickness. ¹⁰ I said, In the middle of my life I go into the gates of Sheol. I am deprived of the residue of my years. ¹¹ I said, I won't see Yah, Yah in the land of the living. I will see man no more with the inhabitants of the world. ¹² My dwelling is removed, and is carried away from me like a shepherd's tent. I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life. He will cut me off from the loom. From day even to night You will make an end of me. ¹³ I waited patiently until morning. He breaks all my bones like a lion. From now until tonight You will make an end of me. ¹⁴ I am chattering like a swallow or a crane, moaning like a dove. My eyes weaken looking upward. Lord, I am oppressed. Be my salvation. ¹⁵ What will I say? He has both spoken to me, and Himself has done it. I will walk carefully all my years because of that anguished experience of my soul. ¹⁶ Lord, men live by these things; and my spirit finds life in all of them: You restore me, and cause me to live. ¹⁷ Behold, for peace I had great anguish, but You have in love for my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. ¹⁸ For Sheol can't praise You.

Death can't celebrate You. Those who go down into the pit can't hope for Your truth. ¹⁹ The living, the living, he shall praise You, as I do this day. The father shall make known Your truth to the children. ²⁰ Yahweh will save me. Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of Yahweh. ²¹ Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover. ²² Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I will go up to the house of Yahweh?

CHAPTER 39 Jun. 15

Visitors from Babylon

At that time, Merodach Bala-
dan the son of Baladan king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and had recovered. ² Hezekiah was pleased with them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah didn't show them. ³ Then Isaiah the prophet came to king Hezekiah and asked him, What did these men say? Where did they come from to you?

38:19 Hezekiah didn't want to die because he understood that after death he couldn't praise God. His understanding of death was as a state of total unconsciousness, where he would meet with neither God nor man (:11). There was no 'immortal soul' or conscious survival of death in his theology, these were pagan ideas of the time which he clearly rejected – as should we. The devotional point is that life is for praising God; and given the brevity of it, every minute must be harnessed into His praise, rather than frittered away.

Hezekiah said, They have come from a country far from me, even from Babylon. ⁴ Then he asked, What have they seen in your house? Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. ⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Yahweh of Armies: ⁶ ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried to Babylon. Nothing will be left’, says Yahweh. ⁷ ‘They will take away your sons who will issue from you, whom you shall father, and they

will be eunuchs in the king of Babylon’s palace’. ⁸ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, Yahweh’s word which you have spoken is good. He said moreover, For there will be peace and truth in my days.

CHAPTER 40 Jun. 16

A Message of Comfort

Comfort you, comfort My people, says your God. ² Speak comfortably to Jerusalem; and call out to her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received of Yahweh’s hand double for all her sins. ³ The voice of one who calls out, Prepare you the way

39:8 The Hezekiah story has a spiritually sad ending, with Hezekiah appearing selfishly content that he himself won’t suffer too much for his prideful friendship with the world and indeed, with those who were God’s especial enemies. We inevitably wonder whether in spiritual terms it wouldn’t have been better for him to die when God first offered him the chance to, as it were. We need to consider relatively ‘premature’ deaths in this light; maybe they are a case of ‘die young stay pretty’ in spiritual terms. For it is far better to die in youth and rise again to live eternally, than live a ‘long’ human life only to in middle or older age turn away from faith and the hope of the Kingdom.

40:3 Quoted about John the Baptist preaching the Gospel of Christ (Mt. 3:3). Before the final coming of the Lord, there will be a proclamation of this by His people: “Prepare *you* [plural] the way”. As the King’s servants went ahead of him to make the path he had to travel smooth and plain [remember there were no motorways then!], so we go ahead of the returning Lord of all the earth, to prepare the way / road for Him. The fulfilment of this commission by John the Baptist in the first century is therefore a great pattern for our fulfilment of it before the Lord’s *second* coming in our age. And yet *God* prepares His *own* way (43:19; 49:11). The element of unreality here, the ‘new thing’, is that the King Himself prepares His own way or road. The connection with :3 is that in the work of preparing the Lord’s way, in the last great preaching appeal of all time in the lead up to the second coming, the Lord Himself will work with us to make that way plain and clear. We are to “cry” unto Zion that “her iniquity is pardoned” (:2), but we are also to ‘cry’ for her to repent, to be “made straight” (:2-4; 58:1). It’s exactly because we have in prospect been forgiven that we are called to repent. The forgiveness has already been granted; iniquity has been pardoned. We are to ‘cry’ out this fact; and also to ‘cry out’ for repentance. But we have to respond to that. The world’s redemption was achieved through the cross; but we have to appeal to the world to accept it. The same Hebrew word translated ‘cry’ occurs in the same context in 40:26;

of Yahweh in the wilderness! Make a level highway in the desert for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plane. ⁵ The glory of Yahweh shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it. ⁶ The voice of one saying, Cry! Another one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, because Yahweh's breath blows on it; surely the people are like grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever. ⁹ You who tell good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who tell good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with strength— lift it up, don't be afraid. Say to the cities of Judah, Behold, your God! ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord Yahweh will come as a mighty

one and His arm will rule for him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before him. ¹¹ He will feed His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead those who have their young.

God Is Incomparable

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the sky with His span, and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? ¹³ Who has directed the Spirit of Yahweh, or has taught Him as His counsellor? ¹⁴ Who did He take counsel with, and who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding? ¹⁵ Behold, the nations are like a drop in a bucket, and are re-

43:1; 45:3,4; 48:12; 54:6, where we read that it is God Himself who calls every one of Israel back to Him, just as He calls every star by its own personal name. And so in our personal calling of men and women, in our crying out to them in these last days to be prepared for the Lord's coming, we are workers together with God. He is crying out to them, through our feeble, shy, embarrassed, uncertain words of witness. Likewise it is God Himself who makes the crooked places straight in 42:16 and 45:2 – whereas here in :3, it is we the preachers who are to do this.

40:4 In the prospect of Christ's coming and our meeting with Him, those with a too low self esteem are lifted up, and the proud brought down to their level; so that between them, the prepared people of God are the road over which God's glory in Christ shall advance. "Made low" uses the same word as in 2:11, which predicts that in the day of judgment, the proud looks of man shall be *humbled* [s.w. 'made low']".

40:8 *The word of our God* – Interpreted in 1 Pet. 1:24,25 as the Gospel of Christ.

40:10 Applied by Christ to His second coming in Rev. 22:12. The reward is brought to us from Heaven to earth at His return; we don't go to Heaven after death to receive it. Statements about God are fulfilled in Christ, as His Son who has been given by God all authority to act in His Name; but this doesn't make Jesus God Himself in person.

40:15 *The nations are like a drop in a bucket* – This was said in the context of Judah

garded as a speck of dust on a balance. Behold, He lifts up the islands like a very little thing. ¹⁶ Lebanon's forest is not sufficient to burn, nor its animals sufficient for a burnt offering. ¹⁷ All the nations are like nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing, and vanity. ¹⁸ To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? ¹⁹ A workman has cast an image, and the goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts silver chains for it. ²⁰ He who is too impoverished for such an offering chooses a tree that will not rot. He seeks a skilful workman to set up an engraved image for him that will not be moved. ²¹ Haven't you known? Haven't you heard, yet? Haven't you been told from the beginning? Haven't you understood from the foundations of the earth? ²² It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell

in; ²³ who brings princes to nothing; who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. ²⁴ They are planted scarcely, they are sown scarcely, their stock has scarcely taken root in the ground. He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the whirlwind takes them away as stubble. ²⁵ To whom then will you liken Me? Who is My equal? says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, who brings out their army by number. He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power, not one is lacking. ²⁷ Why do you say, Jacob, and speak, Israel, My way is hidden from Yahweh, and the justice due me is disregarded by my God? ²⁸ Haven't you known? Haven't you heard? The everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth, doesn't faint. He isn't weary, His understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the weak, He increases the strength of him who has no might. ³⁰ Even the

being tempted to trust in the nations around them rather than in God. Reflection on the extent of His power as seen in the natural creation (:12-14) is intended to inspire faith in practice.

40:17 *Regarded by Him as less than nothing* – This is not to say that God considers human beings as irrelevant; the significance of the human person is ever before us in the Bible. The context of these statements about the smallness of man is the appeal not to trust in human strength but in God, compared to whose strength humanity is nothing.

40:22 *The circle of the earth* – Although people at the time generally believed the earth was flat, God's word doesn't contradict true scientific fact, even though at times He speaks to people in the unscientific language which they can cope with.

40:27 *The justice due me* – The pain of injustice afflicts people in so many ways; but the answer given here is to look to the future day of God's Kingdom, whilst meanwhile remembering God's amazing knowledge and sensitivity to the nuances of every human situation, better than we ourselves know them. His present knowledge and future revelation of judgment is the answer presented to our search for justice today.

youths faint and get weary, and the young men utterly fall; ³¹ but those who wait for Yahweh will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run, and not be weary, they will walk, and not faint.

CHAPTER 41 Jun. 17

God Reassures Judah

Keepest silent before Me, islands, and let the peoples renew their strength. Let them come near, then let them speak. Let's meet together for judgement. ² Who has raised up one from the east? Who called him to His foot in righteousness? He hands over nations to him, and makes him rule over kings. He gives them like the dust to his sword, like the driven stubble to his bow. ³ He pursues them, and passes by safely, even by a way that he had not gone with his feet. ⁴ Who has worked and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I Yahweh, the first and with the last, I am He. ⁵ The islands have seen and fear. The ends of the earth tremble; they approach, and come. ⁶ Everyone helps his neighbour, they say to their brothers, Be strong! ⁷ So the carpenter encourages the goldsmith. He who smoothes with the hammer encourages him who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, It is good; and

he fastens it with nails, that it might not totter. ⁸ But you, Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend, ⁹ you whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth and called from its corners and said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not cast you away'; ¹⁰ don't you be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. ¹¹ Behold, all those who are incensed against you will be disappointed and confounded. Those who strive with you will be like nothing, and shall perish. ¹² You will seek them, and won't find them, even those who contend with you. Those who war against you will be as nothing, as a non-existent thing. ¹³ For I, Yahweh your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Don't be afraid. I will help you'. ¹⁴ Don't be afraid, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel. I will help you, says Yahweh, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵ Behold, I have made you into a new sharp threshing instrument with teeth. You will thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and will make the hills like chaff. ¹⁶ You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the whirlwind

41:8 The servant of Isaiah's prophecies is "the seed of Abraham", but Gal. 3:16 interprets this seed as a singular person, Jesus. The "servant" is therefore both Israel and Jesus. He is their (our) representative, the One to whom every one of God's people should aspire. Wherein Israel failed to fulfil these servant prophecies, Jesus did. We can now become God's "servant" people, Israel of the Spirit, by baptism into Christ – so that all that is true of Him becomes true of us.

will scatter them. You will rejoice in Yahweh, you will glory in the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁷ The poor and needy seek water, and there is none, their tongue fails for thirst. I Yahweh, will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. ¹⁸ I will open rivers on the bare heights and springs in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. ¹⁹ I will put cedar, acacia, myrtle, and oil trees in the wilderness. I will set fir trees, pine, and box trees together in the desert; ²⁰ that they may see, know, consider, and understand together, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Why Trust in Idols?

²¹ Produce your cause, says Yahweh. Bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob. ²² Let them announce and declare to us what shall happen. Declare the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come. ²³ Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods. Yes, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and

see it together. ²⁴ Behold, you are of nothing, and your work is of nothing. He who chooses you is an abomination. ²⁵ I have raised up one from the north, and he has come; from the rising of the sun, one who calls on My name; and he shall come on rulers as on mortar, and as the potter treads clay. ²⁶ Who has declared it from the beginning, that we may know? And before, that we may say, ‘He is right?’. Surely, there is no one who declares like this. Surely, there is no one who shows, surely, there is no one who hears your words. ²⁷ I am the first to say to Zion, ‘Behold, look at them;’ and I will give one who brings good news to Jerusalem. ²⁸ When I look, there is no man; even among them there is no counsellor who, when I ask of them, can answer a word. ²⁹ Behold, all of them, their works are vanity and nothing. Their molten images are wind and confusion.

CHAPTER 42 Jun. 18

The Lord’s Chosen Servant

Behold, My servant, whom I uphold; My chosen, in whom My soul delights— I have put My Spirit on him. He will bring justice to the nations. ² He will not shout, nor

41:22 *Declare the former things* – Not only is God’s prediction of future events a sign of His supremacy as God, but we must consider too that He is the only ultimate historian; He alone can attach meaning to the events of history, interpreting in a way so unique that we are persuaded that surely, He alone is God. This is why so much of the Bible is in one sense history, and God’s interpretation of it. This of itself ought to persuade us of Him and His word, quite apart from His predictions of future things.

41:25 *He shall come on rulers as on mortar, and as the potter treads clay* – This connects with the prophecy of Dan. 2:44, that Christ’s second coming will be like a stone hitting the feet of clay of human kingdoms.

raise his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. ³ He won't break a bruised reed. He won't quench a dimly burning wick. He will faithfully bring justice. ⁴ He will not fail nor be discouraged until he has set justice in the earth, and the islands will wait for his law. ⁵ Thus says God Yahweh, He who created the heavens and stretched them out, He who spread out the earth and that which comes out of it, He who gives breath to its people and spirit to those who walk in it. ⁶ I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand and will keep you, and make you a covenant for the people, as a light for the nations; ⁷ to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison. ⁸ I am Yahweh; that is My name. I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to engraved images. ⁹ Behold, the former things have happened, and I declare new things. I tell you about them before they come up.

A Song of Praise

¹⁰ Sing to Yahweh a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the islands and their inhabitants. ¹¹ Let the wilderness and its cities raise their voices, with the villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains! ¹² Let them give glory to Yahweh, and declare His praise in the islands. ¹³ Yahweh will go out like a mighty man, He will stir up zeal like a man of war, He will raise a war cry. Yes, He will shout aloud, He will triumph over His enemies.

God's Promise

¹⁴ I have been silent a long time, I have been quiet and restrained Myself; now I will cry out like a travailing woman, I will both gasp and pant. ¹⁵ I will destroy mountains and hills and dry up all their herbs. I will make the rivers islands and will dry up the pools. ¹⁶ I will bring the blind by a way that they don't know, I will

42:3 Quoted about the preaching of Jesus in Mt. 12:18-20. He didn't turn away from human weakness, but rather tried to fan what spiritual fire there was into a greater flame; we should have the same attitude to people. Isaiah prophesied in the context of the Assyrian invasion, at which time Judah were tempted to trust in the "broken reed" of Egypt (2 Kings 18:21). This is the only other time the phrase is used. God was even unwilling to break Egypt, but rather sought even their salvation (19:24).

42:4 *He will not fail nor be discouraged* – This is a prophecy of Jesus. He had so much to discourage Him, and yet it seems He never felt totally discouraged even once – because He looked at the short term ups and downs of His ministry from a Kingdom perspective, knowing that *ultimately* all would work out. We need to look at the down cycles of our own experience the same way.

42:14 God likens Himself here to a woman; characteristics of both male and female are found in Him, in whose image both male and female were created (Gen. 1:27; 5:1,2).

42:16 – see on 40:3.

lead them in paths that they don't know. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. I will do these things, and I will not forsake them.¹⁷ Those who trust in engraved images, who tell molten images, 'You are our gods' will be turned back. They will be utterly disappointed.

Israel's Failure to Learn

¹⁸ Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see. ¹⁹ Who is blind, but My servant? Or who is as deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is as blind as he who is at peace, and as blind as Yahweh's servant? ²⁰ You see many things, but don't observe. His ears are open, but he doesn't listen. ²¹ It pleases Yahweh, for His righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and make it honourable. ²² But this is a robbed and plundered people. All of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prisons. They have become a prey, and no one delivers; and a spoil, and no one says, 'Restore them!'. ²³ Who is there among you who will give ear to this? Who will listen and hear bearing in mind the time to come? ²⁴ Who gave Jacob as plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Didn't Yahweh,

He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, and they disobeyed His law. ²⁵ Therefore He poured the fierceness of His anger on him, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire all around, but he didn't know; and it burned him, but he didn't take it to heart.

CHAPTER 43 Jun. 19

Judah's Saviour

But now thus says Yahweh who created you, Jacob, and He who formed you, Israel: Don't be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are Mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and flame will not scorch you. ³ For I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel your Saviour. I have given Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba in your place. ⁴ Since you have been precious and honoured in My sight and I have loved you; therefore I will give people in your place, and nations instead of your life. ⁵ Don't be afraid; for I am with you. I will bring your seed from the

42:22 *No one says, 'Restore them!'* – Nobody at that time was saying that, but God had prophesied so many times that His people would be restored at the end of 70 years, and Cyrus did indeed make the amazing call to restore Judah then (see Ezra 1). The challenge at Isaiah's time was to view the discouragement of the moment in the context of God's prophetic word – to suffer the apparent silence of God "bearing in mind the time to come" (:23) when one *would* say "Restore them!"

43:4 That God should 'honour' His weak people is amazing. But this is what it means to be loved by God; for the object of love is thereby respected and honoured in the eyes of the lover. And this is how God also sees us today.

east, and gather you from the west.
⁶ I will tell the north, ‘Give them up!’
 and tell the south, ‘Don’t hold them
 back! Bring My sons from far, and
 My daughters from the ends of the
 earth—’⁷ each one who is called by
 My name, and whom I have created
 for My glory, whom I have formed,
 yes, whom I have made’.

Israel, the Lord’s Witness

⁸ Bring out the blind people who have
 eyes, and the deaf who have ears.
⁹ Let all the nations be gathered to-
 gether, and let the peoples be assem-
 bled. Who among them can declare
 this, and show us former things? Let
 them bring their witnesses, that they
 may be justified; or let them hear,
 and say, That is true.¹⁰ You are My
 witnesses, says Yahweh, With My
 servant whom I have chosen; that
 you may know and believe Me, and
 understand that I am He. Before Me
 there was no God formed, neither
 will there be after Me.¹¹ I Myself
 am Yahweh; and besides Me there
 is no saviour.¹² I have declared, I
 have saved, and I have shown; and

there was no strange god among you.
 Therefore you are My witnesses, says
 Yahweh, That I am God.¹³ Yes, since
 the day was I am He; and there is no
 one who can deliver out of My hand.
 I will work, and who can hinder it?
¹⁴ Thus says Yahweh your Redeemer,
 the Holy One of Israel: For your sake
 I have sent to Babylon, and I will
 bring all of them down as fugitives,
 even the Chaldeans, in the ships of
 their rejoicing.¹⁵ I am Yahweh your
 Holy One, the Creator of Israel- your
 King.¹⁶ Thus says Yahweh, who
 makes a way in the sea, and a path
 in the mighty waters; ¹⁷ who brings
 forth the chariot and horse, the army
 and the mighty man (they lie down
 together, they shall not rise; they
 are extinct, they are quenched like a
 wick): ¹⁸ Don’t remember the former
 things, and don’t consider the things
 of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new
 thing. It springs forth now; don’t
 you perceive it? I will even make a
 way in the wilderness, and rivers in
 the desert. ²⁰ The animals of the field
 shall honour Me, the jackals and the
 ostriches; because I give water in the

43:7 *Each one* – Every single Jew in captivity was created potentially for God’s glory. At the end of the 70 years captivity He did indeed command the Persian empire to allow the Jews to return; but the majority chose to stay where they were rather than return to the ruined, hard land of Judah – to glorify God. The frequent emphasis on how “each one” would be gathered shows the colossal significance of the individual human person to God, and how He sees us as individuals rather than merely His people *en masse*.

43:15 *The Creator of Israel – your King* – Because Yahweh God was Israel’s creator, therefore He ought to have been their King. If we really believe His creative authority over us, then He will rule in every aspect of our lives; this is an implication of our belief that God created us and we didn’t create ourselves by fluke chance.

43:17 *They shall not rise* – Another proof that those who don’t know God will die and remain dead. Hence the urgent importance of spreading the knowledge of God to those who have not yet heard.

wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen, ²¹ the people which I formed for Myself, that they might show forth My praise. ²² Yet you have not called on Me, Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, Israel. ²³ You have not brought Me of your sheep for burnt offerings; neither have you honoured Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, nor wearied you with frankincense. ²⁴ You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened Me with your sins. You have wearied Me with your iniquities. ²⁵ I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. ²⁶ Put Me in remembrance, let us plead together. Set forth your case, that you may be justified. ²⁷ Your first father sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. ²⁸ Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel an insult.

CHAPTER 44 Jun. 20

Yet listen now, Jacob My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen.

² This is what Yahweh who made you

and formed you from the womb, who will save you, says: Don't be afraid, Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. ³ For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour My Spirit on your seed, and My blessing on your offspring; ⁴ and they will spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. ⁵ One will say, 'I am Yahweh's' and another will be called by the name of Jacob; and another will write with his hand 'to Yahweh', and honour the name of Israel. ⁶ This is what Yahweh the King of Israel and His Redeemer, Yahweh of Armies, says: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides Me there is no God. ⁷ Who is like Me? Who will call, and will declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I established the ancient people? Let them declare the things that are coming, and that will happen. ⁸ Don't fear, neither be afraid. Haven't I declared it to you long ago, and shown it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is not. I don't know any other Rock.

The Foolishness of Idolatry

⁹ Everyone who makes an engraved image is vain. The things that they delight in will not profit. Their own

43:24 *You have wearied Me with your iniquities* – God speaks here of being burdened by Israel's sins – and yet this is a prelude to the passages which speak of the Lord Jesus bearing our sins on the cross (53:4,11,12). He was wearied by Israel's sins even though God does not "grow weary" (40:28) by nature; in His full entering into His people's situation, in His extreme sensitivity to our behavior, He does allow Himself to grow weary with the sins of those with whom He is in covenant relationship. It was this kind of capacity which God has which was supremely revealed in His 'sharing in' the crucifixion of His Son.

witnesses don't see nor know, that they may be disappointed. ¹⁰ Who has fashioned a god or moulds an image that is profitable for nothing? ¹¹ Behold, all his fellows will be disappointed; and the workmen are mere men. Let them all be gathered together. Let them stand up. They will fear. They will be put to shame together. ¹² The blacksmith takes an axe, works in the coals, fashions it with hammers, and works it with his strong arm. He is hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water, and is faint. ¹³ The carpenter stretches out a line. He marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes. He marks it out with compasses, and shapes it like the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to reside in a house. ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress and the oak, and strengthens for himself one among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir tree, and the rain nourishes it. ¹⁵ Then it will be for a man to burn; and he takes some of it, and warms himself. Yes, he burns it, and bakes bread. Yes, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it an engraved image, and falls down to it. ¹⁶ He burns part of it in the fire. With

part of it, he eats meat. He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. Yes, he warms himself and says, Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire. ¹⁷ The rest of it he makes into a god, even his engraved image. He bows down to it and worships and prays to it and says, Deliver me; for you are my god! ¹⁸ They don't know neither do they consider: for He has shut their eyes that they can't see; and their hearts that they can't understand. ¹⁹ No one thinks neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire. Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals. I have roasted meat and eaten it. Shall I make the rest of it into an abomination? Shall I bow down to a tree trunk? ²⁰ He feeds on ashes. A deceived heart has turned him aside; and he can't deliver his soul, nor say, Isn't there a lie in my right hand?

The Lord, Creator and Saviour

²¹ Remember these things, Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant. I have formed you; you are My servant. Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me. ²² I have blotted out as a thick cloud your iniquities, and, as a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for

44:14-18 The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God. We may go along with the text here, poking fun at the idiocy of idolatry – and yet we all have a tendency to this kind of thing, because every sin is in essence a form of idolatry.

44:22 God appeals for Israel to respond by pointing out that in prospect, He has already forgiven them. This not only inspires our personal repentance, but can be the basis upon which we appeal to others to repent – that for the sake of Christ, God has forgiven them, but they need to claim that and identify with it. Isaiah urged the Jews to return to the land by saying that God had forgiven them, and on this basis He appealed for them to both 'repent' and 'return' to the land. The two terms are related. Thus He showed His grace; forgiveness preceded, not followed, repentance. As Paul put it, the goodness of God leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). And we are asked to show that same

I have redeemed you. ²³ Sing you heavens, for Yahweh has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth! Break out into singing, you mountains, O forest, all of your trees, for Yahweh has redeemed Jacob, and will glorify Himself in Israel. ²⁴ Thus says Yahweh your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: I am Yahweh who makes all things, who alone stretches out the heavens; who spreads out the earth by Myself; ²⁵ who frustrates the signs of the liars, and makes diviners mad; who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish; ²⁶ who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; who says of Jerusalem, 'She will be inhabited;' and of the cities of Judah, 'They will be built', and 'I will raise up its waste places;' ²⁷ who says to the deep, 'Be dry', and 'I will dry up your rivers;' ²⁸ who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure', even say-

ing of Jerusalem, 'She will be built;' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'.

CHAPTER 45 Jun. 21

The Lord Appoints Cyrus

Thus says Yahweh to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him, and strip kings of their armour; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: ² I will go before you, and make the rough places smooth. I will break the doors of brass in pieces, and cut apart the bars of iron. ³ I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that it is I, Yahweh, who call you by your name, even the God of Israel. ⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My chosen, I have called you by your name. I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me. ⁵ I am Yahweh, and there is none else. Besides Me, there is no God. I will

"goodness" of God to others, being "kind [s.w. 'goodness'] one to another... forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). We too are to show this grace of forgiveness-before-repentance; but perhaps in no other area has formalized, institutionalized Christianity failed worse. The Greek word translated "goodness" is rendered "gracious" in 1 Pet. 2:3 – newly converted babes in Christ taste of this gracious goodness, and it leads to repentance.

44:26 *Who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers* – The singular servant is equated with His "messengers", whose "counsel" to others is the word which is Jesus, the true servant. If we are "in Christ" then we are His witnesses, and He is especially with us in our witness for Him.

44:28 The command of Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild their temple at his expense as recorded in Ezra 1 was clearly a result of God working on the hearts of unbelievers to make them do things which otherwise have little sense or human wisdom. The tragedy is that most of the Jews preferred the soft life in Babylon and didn't return.

45:5-7 Of especially significant influence upon Judaism were the Persian views of Zoroastrianism. This was a philosophy which began in Persia about 600 B.C., and

strengthen you, though you have not known Me; ⁶ that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides Me. I am Yahweh, and there is no one else. ⁷ I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create calamity. I am Yahweh, who does all these things. ⁸ Distil, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, that it may bring forth salvation, and let it cause righteousness to spring up with it. I, Yahweh, have created it.

Yahweh's Supremacy

⁹ Woe to him who strives with his Maker— a clay pot among the clay pots of the earth! Shall the clay ask

Him who fashions it, ‘What are you making?’ or your work, ‘He has no hands?’ ¹⁰ Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What have you become the father of?’ or to a mother, ‘To what have you given birth?’ ¹¹ Thus says Yahweh the Maker and Holy One of Israel: You can ask Me about the things that are to come, concerning My sons, and you command Me concerning the work of My hands! ¹² I have made the earth, and created man on it. I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens; and I have commanded all their army. ¹³ I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways. He shall build My city, and he shall let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward, says Yahweh of Armies.

was growing in popularity when Judah went to Babylon / Persia in captivity. This philosophy taught that there was a good god of light (Mazda) and an evil god of darkness (Ahriman). :5–7 is a clear warning to the Jews in captivity not to buy into this— Israel’s God *alone* made the light and the darkness, the good and the calamity or “evil”. The Jews were influenced by the Zoroastrian idea that somehow God Himself would never cause evil in our lives— and therefore, God is to be seen as somehow distanced from all good or evil actions, as these are under the control of the good and evil gods. The fact is, God personally is passionately involved with this world and with our lives; and so it *is* He who brings about the dark and the light, good and evil. “In pre-exilic Hebrew religion, Yahweh made all that was in heaven and earth, both of good and of evil. The Devil did not exist”. During their captivity in Babylon, the Jews shifted towards understanding that there was actually a separate entity responsible for disaster. Hence :5–8 warns them not to adopt the views of Babylon in this area, but to remain firm in their faith that God, their God, the God of Israel, the one and only Yahweh, was the ultimate source of all things, both positive and negative, having no equal or competitor in Heaven. This becomes a frequent theme of Isaiah and other prophets who wrote in the context of Israel in captivity. The Jews of course were monotheists, and these ideas were developed in order to allow them to believe in both one God, and yet also the dualistic, god of evil / god of good idea of the Persians. It was in this period that the Jews adopted the idea of sinful Angels, even though the Old Testament knows nothing of them. They didn’t want to compromise their monotheism by saying there was more than one God; and so they set up the ‘evil god’ as in fact a very powerful, sinful Angel. And this wrong notion was picked up by early Christians equally eager to accommodate the surrounding pagan ideas about evil.

¹⁴ Thus says Yahweh: The labour of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you, and they shall be yours. They will go after you. They shall come over in chains and they will bow down to you. They will make supplication to you: ‘Surely God is in you; and there is none else. There is no other god. ¹⁵ Most certainly You are a God who has hidden Yourself, God of Israel, the Saviour’. ¹⁶ They will be disappointed, yes, confounded, all of them. Those who are makers of idols will go into confusion together. ¹⁷ Israel will be saved by Yahweh with an everlasting salvation. You will not be disappointed nor confounded to ages everlasting. ¹⁸ For thus says Yahweh who created the heavens, the God who formed the earth and made it, who established it and didn’t create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: I am Yahweh; and there is no other. ¹⁹ I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness. I didn’t say to the seed of Jacob, ‘Seek Me in vain’. I, Yahweh, speak righteousness. I declare things that are right. ²⁰ Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near

together, you who have escaped from the nations. Those have no knowledge who carry the wood of their engraved image, and pray to a god that can’t save. ²¹ Declare and present it. Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has shown this from ancient time? Who has declared it of old? Haven’t I, Yahweh? There is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Saviour; There is no one besides Me. ²² Look to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. ²³ I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness and will not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. ²⁴ They will say of Me, ‘There is righteousness and strength only in Yahweh’. Even to Him shall men come; and all those who were incensed against Him shall be disappointed. ²⁵ In Yahweh shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

CHAPTER 46 Jun. 22

The Foolishness of Idols

Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; their idols are on the animals, and on the livestock: the things that

45:18 This verse is proof enough that God won’t allow the world to be destroyed – He has a glorious purpose with it.

45:20–24 These words are quoted in Phil. 2:9–11 in description of the believer’s response to the suffering Saviour. And yet they are quoted again in Rom. 14:10–12 regarding our confession of sin before Christ at judgment day. The connections mean simply this: before the Lord’s cross, we bow our knee and confess our failures, knowing the imputation of His righteousness, in anticipation of how we will bow before Him and give our miserable account at the judgment. And both processes are wonderfully natural. We must allow the power of a true faith in His cross to work out its own way in us. At the judgment, no flesh will glory in himself, but only in the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:29). And even now, we glory in His cross (Gal. 6:14).

you carried about are made a load, a burden to the weary. ² They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves have been carried away into captivity. ³ Listen to Me, house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been carried from their birth, that have been carried from the womb; ⁴ and even to old age I am He, and even to grey hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; yes, I will carry, and will deliver. ⁵ To whom will you liken Me and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be alike? ⁶ Some pour out gold from the bag, and weigh silver in the balance. They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god. They fall down—yes, they worship. ⁷ They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it, and set it in its place, and it stands, from its place it shall

not move: yes, one may cry to it, yet it can not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. ⁸ Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, you transgressors. ⁹ Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me; ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure; ¹¹ calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of My counsel from a far country; yes, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it. ¹² Listen to Me, you stout-hearted, who are far from righteousness: ¹³ I bring near My righteousness, it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not wait; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory.

46:3, 4 God is likening Himself to a woman who carries a child in her womb, then bears it, and then carries it as a baby, but *still* carries it when the child is an old man. The God of all knowledge is aware of a fundamental psychological phenomena in all men; the fear, however passive and buried, of being without their mother; the fear of loneliness, the fear of eternal separation from the woman who bore and carried them. From the president to the happy village grandfather, this sense is there. Perhaps David appreciated this when he referred to a man weeping at his mother's funeral (not his *father's*) as the ultimate cameo of grieving and desolation of soul (Ps. 35:14). And yet God says that He is in some ways the eternal mother, the one who bore and carried us in babyhood, but the One who will yet carry us when we are gray headed and once again unable to walk. Yet He is also the everlasting Father to us, through His Son (9:6). It's a picture of exquisite beauty. Our relationship with God as the One who will *never* leave us is the *only* answer to what philosophers call 'the existential problem'; the awareness that has come to every thoughtful soul, the terror of being so alone as we get older, the dread of being without our human roots, of becoming the one to whom others (e.g. our children) look to as their background and root, whilst we ourselves have no tangible link with *our* past. This horror of existential loneliness can *only* be met by our sure knowledge that we have a very personal relationship in the Kingdom of God with our Heavenly Father, who will never leave us, and will preserve us unto His eternal Kingdom.

CHAPTER 47 Jun. 22***Judgement on Babylon***

Come down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, daughter of the Chaldeans: for you shall no more be called tender and delicate. ² Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove your veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers. ³ Your nakedness shall be uncovered, yes, your shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man. ⁴ Our Redeemer, Yahweh of Armies is His name, is the Holy One of Israel. ⁵ Sit in silence, and go into darkness, daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. ⁶ I was angry with My people, I profaned My inheritance, and gave them into your hand: you showed them no mercy; on the aged you have very heavily laid your yoke. ⁷ You said, 'I shall be a mistress forever;' so that you did not lay these things to your heart, nor did you remember the latter end of it. ⁸ Now therefore hear this, you who are given to pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your

heart, 'I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:' ⁹ but these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come on you, in the multitude of your sorceries, and the great abundance of your enchantments. ¹⁰ For you have trusted in your wickedness; you have said, 'No one sees me'; your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you, and you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is none else besides me'. ¹¹ Therefore evil will come on you; you won't know when it dawns: and mischief will fall on you; you will not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come on you suddenly, which you don't know. ¹² Stand now with your enchantments, and with the multitude of your sorceries in which you have laboured from your youth; if so be you shall be able to profit, if so be you may prevail! ¹³ You are wearied in the multitude of your counsellors: let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save

47:8 *I am and there is none else* – We bear the Name of Yahweh / Jehovah, by reason of our baptism into it. His Name is declared as His character – merciful, truthful, judging sin, patient etc (Ex. 34:5-7). He who will be who He will be, manifesting His characteristics as He does so, must have His way in us too. Babylon and Nineveh were condemned for having the attitude that "I am, and there is none beside me" (Zeph. 2:15). Their self-perception was a parody on the Name and being of Yahweh: He alone can say "I am, and there is none else" (43:11; 44:6; 45:6,21) and seek to be who He is. He alone can seek to articulate the characteristics that make up His Name onto the lives of others, and onto the things that comprise His Kingdom. We are not to be who we are in a fleshly sense; to 'just be yourself'; to 'just do it', as foolish slogans and adverts encourage us. We are here to show forth His mercy, truth, judgment of sin, patient saving of the weak etc., not our own human agenda. We are to be Yahweh manifested to this world, through our participation in His Name in Christ.

you from the things that shall come on you. ¹⁴ Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: it shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before. ¹⁵ Thus shall the things be to you in which you have laboured: those who have trafficked with you from your youth shall wander each one to his place; there shall be none to save you.

CHAPTER 48 Jun. 23

The Lord's Patience with Israel

Hear this, house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth out of the waters of Judah; who swear by the name of Yahweh, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness ² (for they call themselves of the holy city, and rest themselves on the God of Israel; Yahweh of Armies is His name): ³ I have declared the former things from of old; yes, they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they happened. ⁴ Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass, ⁵ therefore I have declared it in advance to you from of old; before it came to pass I showed it to you; lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, and my

engraved image, and my molten image, has commanded them'. ⁶ You have heard it; see all this; and you, will you not declare it? I have shown you new things from this time, even hidden things, which you have not known. ⁷ They are created now, and not from of old; and before this day you didn't hear them; lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them'. ⁸ Yes, you didn't hear; yes, you didn't know; yes, from of old your ear was not opened: for I knew that you dealt very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb. ⁹ For My name's sake will I defer My anger, and for the sake of My praise will I refrain for you, that I not cut you off. ¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For My own sake, for My own sake, will I do it; for how should My name be profaned? I will not give My glory to another. ¹² Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel My called: I am He; I am the first, I also am the last. ¹³ Yes, My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has spread out the heavens: when I call to them, they stand up together. ¹⁴ Assemble yourselves all of you, and hear; who among them has declared these things? He whom Yahweh loves shall perform His will on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the

48:3 *Suddenly I did them, and they happened* – Another of Isaiah's allusions to creation. All that happens in our lives is a creation from God's word of command; even the bad things in our experience have ultimately a creative, positive intent from God.

48:6 *And you, will you not declare it?* – God is the One who 'declared' things in advance (:5), and we in our turn are to declare to the world what He has declared. In our work of witness there is a mutuality between God and us.

Chaldeans. ¹⁵ I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him; I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. ¹⁶ Come near to Me and hear this: 'From the beginning I have not spoken in secret; from the time that it was, there am I'. Now the Lord Yahweh has sent me, with His Spirit.

The Lord's Plan

¹⁷ Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am Yahweh your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way that you should go. ¹⁸ Oh that you had listened to My commandments! then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea: ¹⁹ your seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of your body like its grains: his name would not be cut off nor destroyed from before Me. ²⁰ Go forth from Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth: say, 'Yahweh has redeemed His servant Jacob'.

²¹ They didn't thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock also, and the waters gushed out. ²² There is no peace, says Yahweh, for the wicked.

CHAPTER 49 Jun. 24

Israel, a Light to the Nations

Listen, islands, to me; and listen, you peoples, from far: Yahweh has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has He made mention of my name: ² and He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hidden me: and He has made me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He kept me close: ³ and He said to me, You are My servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified. ⁴ But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely the justice due to me is with Yahweh, and my reward with my God. ⁵ Now says Yahweh who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel be gathered

48:18 The fact God knows all possible futures must make His experience with us His people so tragic. For sorrow is largely related to our awareness of what could have been; and God knows that so much could have been. The promises to Abraham and the coming of the Messianic seed of Abraham could have been fulfilled; but because Israel chose to be wicked, there was no such peace to them (:22). For all their wealth in Babylon, they had no peace with God.

48:20 *Flee from the Chaldeans* – Judah were comfortable and prosperous in Babylon, as the conclusion to the book of Esther shows. Jews were senior in commerce and politics (as witness the book of Daniel). Yet they were to "flee" from this situation because of its huge spiritual danger. Generally they didn't perceive the spiritual danger of the world in which they lived, and most Jews remained in Babylon, to their spiritual destruction.

49:2 The Lord Jesus is described as having a sharp sword going out of His mouth (Rev. 1:16; 2:16; 19:15); this is a prophecy of Him personally.

to Him (for I am honourable in the eyes of Yahweh, and my God has become my strength); ⁶ yes, He says, It is too light a thing that you should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the nations, that you may be My salvation to the end of the earth. ⁷ Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall worship; because of Yahweh who is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.

Judah's Final Return

⁸ Thus says Yahweh, In an acceptable time have I answered you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritage: ⁹ saying to those who are bound, 'Come out!'; to those

who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves!' They shall feed in the ways, and on all bare heights shall be their pasture. ¹⁰ They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun strike them: for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by springs of water He will guide them. ¹¹ I will make all My mountains a way, and My highways shall be exalted. ¹² Behold, these shall come from far; and behold, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. ¹³ Sing, heavens; and be joyful, earth; and break forth into singing, mountains: for Yahweh has comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted. ¹⁴ But Zion said, Yahweh has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me. ¹⁵ Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, these may forget, yet I will not forget you! ¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me. ¹⁷ Your children make

49:8 2 Cor. 6:2 interprets this time of salvation and acceptance as "now". The window of opportunity which there was for Judah to return from exile and inherit the restored Kingdom of God is "now" in that we should likewise be appealing to men and women to quit this world of "Babylon" and journey towards God's Kingdom. The spiritual opportunities which there are "now" are amazing; but there is an urgency to our appeal in that the time of acceptance is "now" and the amazing opportunity must be grasped "now".

49:10 Quoted about how we shall be led by Jesus in the future Kingdom of God on earth (Rev. 7:16,17).

49:16 Judah in captivity must've thought that God had forgotten them and His land as it lay there desolated. We too at times feel the apparent silence of God means that He is somehow there but too far away. But He assures them and us that His silence is only apparent. They were engraven upon His palms, perhaps alluding to the fact that it seems that to this day the Lord Jesus has on His hands the marks from the nails with which He was crucified (Zech. 13:6; Jn. 20:25-27; Rev. 1:7).

haste; your destroyers and those who made you waste shall go forth from you. ¹⁸ Lift up your eyes all around, and see: all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says Yahweh, you shall surely clothe yourself with them all as with an ornament, and dress yourself with them, like a bride. ¹⁹ For, as for your waste and your desolate places, and your land that has been destroyed, surely now you shall be too small for the inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up shall be far away. ²⁰ The children of your bereavement shall yet say in your ears, ‘The place is too small for me; give more space to me that I may dwell!’ ²¹ Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who has conceived these for me, since I have been bereaved of my children, and am solitary, an exile, and wandering back and forth? Who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where were they?’. ²² Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations, and set up My banner to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

²³ Kings shall be your nursing fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers: they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of your feet; and you shall know that I am Yahweh; and those who wait for Me shall not be disappointed. ²⁴ Can prey be taken from a warrior? Or can prisoners of a tyrant be rescued? ²⁵ But thus says Yahweh, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children. ²⁶ I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

CHAPTER 50 Jun. 25

Reasons and Rewards

Thus says Yahweh, Where is the bill of your mother’s divorce, for which I have put her away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities were you sold, and for

49:24 Despite having enabled their exit from Babylon, they complained: “Vindication remains far removed from us and deliverance does not reach us” (59:9). This was an awful spurning of the great salvation enabled for them. They remonstrated against God’s message of deliverance from captivity: “Can prey be taken from a warrior? Or can prisoners of a tyrant be rescued?” (:24). They thought their salvation was too hard even for God. They made the same mistake as all who reason that their situation or personality is too far gone for God to redeem. For the ‘salvation’ of the exiles in Babylon is alluded to in the New Testament as a prototype of our salvation in Christ. The good news of *potential* deliverance from Babylon is quoted as the good news of salvation from sin (Is. 52:7-10 = Mk. 1:15; Mt. 10:7,8; Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15; Is. 61:1,2 = Lk. 4:16-21).

50:1 God was angry with their sins, but kept no record of them – hence He could

your transgressions was your mother put away. ² Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it can't redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst. ³ I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. ⁴ The Lord Yahweh has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him who is weary: He wakens me morning by morning, He wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. ⁵ The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. ⁶ I gave my back to the strikers, and my cheeks to those who plucked off the hair; I didn't hide my face from shame and spitting. ⁷ For the Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore I have not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be disappointed. ⁸ He is near who justifies me; who will bring charges against me? Let us stand up together: who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹ Behold, the Lord Yahweh will help me; who is

he who shall condemn me? Behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up. ¹⁰ Who is among you who fears Yahweh, who obeys the voice of His servant? He who walks in darkness, and has no light, let him trust in the name of Yahweh, and rely on his God. ¹¹ Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who adorn yourselves with torches around yourselves; walk in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that you have kindled. You shall have this of My hand; you shall lie down in sorrow.

CHAPTER 51 Jun. 26

The Lord Comforts Jerusalem

Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek Yahweh: look to the rock you were cut from, and to the hold of the pit you were dug from. ² Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many. ³ For Yahweh has comforted Zion; He has comforted all her waste places, and has made her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Yahweh; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. ⁴ Listen to Me, My people; and

comfort Judah that there was actually no documentary evidence for their divorce and therefore she could return to Him.

50:6, 7 *I gave... I didn't hide my face... set my face like a flint* – The body language of Jesus as He endured His sufferings is worth trying to imagine. His spirit of self-sacrifice and willing suffering with and for us would've shone through it. Lk. 9:51,53 notes how He set His face to go to Jerusalem and die there, His determination and conscious self-dedication were visible in how His face was set. We are asked to carry His cross with the same devotion.

give ear to Me, My nation: for a law shall go forth from Me, and I will establish My justice for a light of the peoples. ⁵ My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth, and My arms shall judge the peoples; the islands shall wait for Me, and on My arm shall they trust. ⁶ Lift up your eyes to the skies, and look on the land beneath; for the skies shall vanish away like smoke, and the land shall wax old like a garment; and those who dwell therein shall die in the same way: but My salvation shall be eternal, and My righteousness shall not be abolished. ⁷ Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law; don't fear the reproach of men, neither be dismayed at their insults. ⁸ For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but My righteousness shall be forever, and My salvation to all generations. ⁹ Awake, awake, put on strength, arm of Yahweh; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Isn't it You who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the monster? ¹⁰ Isn't it You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep;

who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?

¹¹ The ransomed of Yahweh shall return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy shall be on their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy; sorrow and weeping shall flee away. ¹² I, even I, am He who comforts you: who are you, that you are afraid of man who shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass; ¹³ and have forgotten Yahweh your Maker, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and fear continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he makes ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor? ¹⁴ The captive exile shall speedily be freed; and he shall not die and go down into the pit, neither shall his bread fail. ¹⁵ For I am Yahweh your God, who stirs up the sea, so that its waves roar: Yahweh of Armies is His name. ¹⁶ I have put My words in your mouth, and have covered you in the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and tell Zion, 'You are My people'. ¹⁷ Awake, awake, stand up, Jerusalem, that has

51:8 God's salvation is paralleled with His righteousness; He saves people by counting them as if they are righteous on account of their relationship with Him. In our times our baptism into Christ means that His righteousness is counted to us, and on this basis we shall be saved.

51:14 This sounds as if they were all willing and eager to leave that spiritually dreadful place. But the reality was that Judah didn't hasten to be loosed, they preferred the Babylon life, and didn't perceive it for the spiritual pit that was killing them which it was. Most of them chose to remain there. So this passage is therefore a prophecy, a command, about how God *wanted* Judah to respond.

51:17 God 'stirred up' the spirit of Cyrus and also of the Jews who returned (Ezra 1:1,5). Isaiah uses the same Hebrew term to describe how Israel's saviour would

drunk at the hand of Yahweh the cup of His wrath; you have drunken the bowl of the cup of staggering, and drained it. ¹⁸ There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth; neither is there any who takes her by the hand among all the sons whom she has brought up. ¹⁹ These two things have happened to you; who will bemoan you? Desolation and destruction, and the famine and the sword; how shall I comfort you? ²⁰ Your sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of Yahweh, the rebuke of your God. ²¹ Therefore hear now this, you afflicted and drunken, but not with wine: ²² Thus says your Lord Yahweh, and your God who pleads the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of staggering, even the bowl of the cup of My wrath; you shall no more drink it again: ²³ and I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, who have said to your soul, ‘Bow down, that we may walk over you;’ and you have laid your back as

the ground, and as the street, to those who walk over.

CHAPTER 52 Jun. 27

Jerusalem is Rescued

Awake, awake, put on your strength, Zion; put on your beautiful garments, Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. ² Shake yourself from the dust! Arise, sit up, Jerusalem! Release yourself from the bonds of your neck, captive daughter of Zion! ³ For thus says Yahweh, You were sold for nothing; and you shall be redeemed without money. ⁴ For thus says the Lord Yahweh, My people went down at the first into Egypt to live there: and the Assyrian has oppressed them without cause. ⁵ Now therefore, what do I do here, says Yahweh, seeing that My people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them mock, says Yahweh, and My name continually all the day is blasphemed. ⁶ Therefore My people shall know My name. Therefore they shall know in that

be “raised up” – 41:2,25; 45:13. Isaiah pleads with Zion, i.e. the faithful, to indeed be stirred up – 51:17; 52:1 appeal to Zion to “Awake!” – the same word translated “stirred up”. But Isaiah tragically concluded that there were so few who would ‘stir up themselves’ (64:7). God had given them the potential to be ‘stirred up’ in their hearts and minds to leave Babylon and return – but they wouldn’t respond. And today, the same happens. God is willing to change hearts, to stir up materialistic and complacent spirits – but because we’re not robots, we have to respond.

51:22 To be given a cup of wine to drink from the Lord is a double symbol; of condemnation, as it is here; or of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16). When we take the cup of the Lord at the breaking of bread service, we are drinking either to our eternal blessing or condemnation – hence the need for self-examination, so that we drink to our blessing and not our condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29).

52:2 The Jews didn’t perceive the soft life of Babylon as chains around their necks, and so they didn’t loose themselves and leave.

day that I am He who speaks; behold, it is I. ⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns! ⁸ The voice of your watchmen! They lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when Yahweh brings Zion back. ⁹ Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for Yahweh has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Yahweh has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing! Go out of the midst of her! Cleanse yourselves, you who bear the temple vessels of Yahweh. ¹² For you shall

not go out in haste, neither shall you go by flight: for Yahweh will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your vanguard.

The Suffering Servant

¹³ Behold, My servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. ¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you (his appearance was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), ¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

CHAPTER 53 Jun. 28

Who has believed our message? To whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed? ² For he grew

52:7 *The feet of him* – A prophecy of Christ’s preaching of the Gospel. But it is quoted in Rom. 10:15 with a significant change of pronoun – “the feet of *them*”. We who are baptized into Christ are His witnesses; His preaching is ours and *vice versa*. We will experience His especial identity with us in our efforts to preach the Gospel.

52:7-10 See on 49:24.

52:13 From here to the end of chapter 53 we have the ‘Servant song’ which speaks most clearly of the death and work of Christ for us. Many phrases in it are applied to Jesus in the New Testament (Mt. 8:17; 20:28; Mk. 15:28; Jn. 1:29; 12:38; Rom. 4:25; 10:16; 1 Cor. 15:3; Phil. 2:4-8; Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 2:22,24).

52:14 There was something especially awful about the physical appearance of Christ on the cross, a reflection of the huge mental struggle there was within His holy mind as He finally overcame sin in all its forms.

53:1 *Who has believed our message?* was fulfilled both in the final, friendless rejection of the crucifixion, and also in the failure of Israel to really believe as a result of the Lord’s miracles done during His life (Jn. 12:38). “He has borne our sickness, and carried our suffering” is how :4 described the cross; but these words are quoted in Mt. 8:16,17 about Christ’s healing of people. The miracles therefore were performed in the spirit of the cross – personally identifying with the sick and healing them through that identification. His whole life was a being acquainted with disease (Heb. “grief”) (:3); and yet we read in this same context that He was put to grief in His death (:10). The grief of His death was an extension of the grief of His life. “He bore the sin of

up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no good looks or majesty; when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised, and rejected by men; a man of suffering, and acquainted with disease. He was despised as one from whom men hide their face; and we didn't respect him. ⁴ Surely he has borne our sickness, and carried our suffering; yet we considered him plagued, struck by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; each one has turned to his own way; and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he didn't open his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he didn't open his mouth. ⁸ He was taken away by oppression

and judgement; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living and stricken for the disobedience of My people? ⁹ They made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was Yahweh's will to bruise him; He has caused him to suffer. When You make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. He shall prolong his days, and the will of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light and be satisfied. My righteous servant will justify many by the knowledge of himself; and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

many" (:12) is applied by Jn. 1:29 to how during His ministry, Jesus bore the sin of the world. All this shows that the cross wasn't an unusual, one time act of supreme devotion; the spirit of it was lived out in Christ's daily life. We who are to carry His cross must see it the same way.

53:2 *As a root out of dry ground* – There was nothing around Jesus in His environment which encouraged spirituality. He grew as we do, as a tender green plant in a desert.

53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray* – We tend to sin as a result of group mentality; and yet this influences us individually to each turn to our own personal, unique way of sinning.

53:7 *As a sheep that before its shearers is mute* – A sheep is dumb in this situation from total fear. Jesus was human and in His time of dying went through all the usual human emotions in the face of death.

53:9 A detailed prophecy of how Jesus died with the wicked but was buried in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea.

53:10 *He shall see his seed* – Did Jesus have a vision of us the ones He would redeem, which inspired Him at the end, at the very time He was making an offering for sin?

CHAPTER 54 Jun. 29***God's Promise of Everlasting Peace***

Sing, barren, you who didn't bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says Yahweh. ² Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations; don't spare: lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. ³ For you shall spread out on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. ⁴ Don't be afraid; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be confounded; for you shall not be disappointed: for you shall forget the shame of your youth; and the reproach of your widowhood you shall remember no more. ⁵ For your Maker is your husband; Yahweh of Armies is His name: and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall He be called. ⁶ For Yahweh has called you as a wife forsaken and grieved in

spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, says your God. ⁷ For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. ⁸ In overflowing wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting loving kindness will I have mercy on you, says Yahweh your Redeemer. ⁹ For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. ¹⁰ For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but My loving kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall My covenant of peace be removed, says Yahweh who has mercy on you. ¹¹ You afflicted, tossed with storms, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in beautiful colours, and lay your foundations with sapphires. ¹² I will make your pinacles of rubies, and your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. ¹³ All your children shall be taught of Yahweh; and great shall be the peace of your chil-

54:4 *Your widowhood* – The implication is that God as their husband (:5) had died – and somehow returned to life to remarry them. This doesn't mean that Jesus is God, for God by nature cannot die; rather does it speak of the intensity to which God was manifest in Christ and went through the pain of death as it were because of what Israel's unfaithfulness and rejection felt like to Him.

54:6 In this language God as it were takes false guilt over His divorce with Israel; such is His gushing love for His unfaithful people who now return to Him.

54:7 God clearly has emotions of a kind which are not unrelated to the emotions we experience, as beings made in His image. But those emotions involve a time factor in order to be emotions. We read of the anger of God “for a moment” (:7,8; Ps. 30:5), and of His wrath coming and going, leaving Him “calm” and no longer angry (Ez. 16:42). When we sin, we provoke God to anger – i.e. at a point in time, God sees our sin, and becomes angry. This is attested many times in Scripture. But it's meaningless if God is totally outside of our time and emotions.

dren. ¹⁴ In righteousness you shall be established: you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not be afraid; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. ¹⁵ Behold, they may gather together, but not by Me: whoever shall gather together against you shall fall because of you. ¹⁶ Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and brings forth a weapon for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. ¹⁷ No weapon that is formed against you will prevail; and you will condemn every tongue that rises against you in judgement. This is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh, and their righteousness which is of Me, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 55 Jun. 30

God's Offer of Mercy

Come, everyone who thirsts, to the waters! Come, he who has no money, buy, and eat! Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which doesn't satisfy? Listen diligently to Me, and eat you that which is good,

and let your soul delight itself in fatness. ³ Turn your ear, and come to Me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. ⁴ Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples. ⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you don't know; and a nation that didn't know you shall run to you, because of Yahweh your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you. ⁶ Seek Yahweh while He may be found; call you on Him while He is near: ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Yahweh, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says Yahweh. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ For as the rain comes down and the snow from the sky and doesn't return there but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and

54:17 *Their righteousness which is of Me* – Again we meet the New Testament idea of imputed righteousness, for Isaiah makes clear enough elsewhere that Israel had no righteousness of their own. We too have God's righteousness imputed to us by being in Christ.

55:1 Whilst we don't have to actually pay money for God's blessings, we are expected to go through the feelings of having paid, given something, in response to what He has already given us so as to take them to ourselves.

55:3 *The sure mercies of David* result in the wicked man forsaking his way (:3,7). The description of the promises to David as "sure mercies" (1 Chron. 17:13) may perhaps be with a reference to his sin with Bathsheba; his forgiveness in that incident is typical of that which we all receive (Rom. 4:6-8). The very existence of the "mercies of / to David" therefore inspire us in forsaking sinful thoughts and wicked ways (:7).

gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing I sent it to do. ¹² For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands. ¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Yahweh for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

CHAPTER 56 Jul. 1

Faithful Gentiles Will Be Accepted

Thus says Yahweh, Keep justice, and do righteousness; for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. ² Blessed is the man who does this, and the

son of man who holds it fast; who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. ³ Neither let the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh speak, saying, Yahweh will surely separate me from His people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. ⁴ For thus says Yahweh, To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and hold fast My covenant: ⁵ to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. ⁶ Also the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh, to minister to Him and to love the name of Yahweh, to be His servants, each one who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and holds fast covenant; ⁷ even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt

55:11 The parallel between the seed and the convert is such as to suggest that the word of God will produce converts in some sense; it will not return void (:11). The apparent dearth of response to some preaching therefore poses a challenging question. Are we preaching the word of God alone, or our own ideas? Does God withhold blessing for some reason unknown to us? Or is this only part of a wider picture, in which somehow the word *does* return void due to man's rejection? Thus the word of God was 'made void' by the Pharisees (Mk. 7:13 RV – a conscious allusion to 55:11). One possible explanation is that "the word" which is sent forth and prospers, achieving all God's intention, is in fact Messiah. The same word is used about the 'prospering' of the Servant in His work: 48:15; 53:10 cp. Ps. 45:4. Another is to accept the LXX reading of this passage: "...until whatsoever I have willed shall have been accomplished". Here at least is the implication that *something* happens and is achieved when we preach God's word. The same idiom occurs in Ez. 9:11 Heb., where we read that "the man clothed with linen" – representing Ezekiel or his representative Angel – "returned the word, saying, I have done as You have commanded me". The word 'returned' in the sense that someone, somewhere, was obedient to it even if others weren't.

56:7 *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples* – Quoted by Jesus in Mt 21:13 as a demand for God's house *now* to not be a forum for personal financial

offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. ⁸ The Lord Yahweh who gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet will I gather others to him, besides his own who are gathered. ⁹ All you animals of the field, come to devour, all you animals in the forest. ¹⁰ His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they can't bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. ¹¹ Yes, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds who can't understand: they have each turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter. ¹² Come, say they, I will get wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, great beyond measure.

CHAPTER 57 Jul. 1

Idol Worship Again Condemned

The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the coming evil. ² He enters into peace; they rest in their beds, each one who walks in his uprightness. ³ But draw near here, you sons of the

sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the prostitute. ⁴ Against whom do you sport yourselves? Against whom do you make a wide mouth, and stick out your tongue? Aren't you children of disobedience, a seed of falsehood, ⁵ you who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every green tree; who kill the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? ⁶ Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they are your lot; you have even poured a drink offering to them. You have offered an offering; but shall I be appeased for these things? ⁷ On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed; there also you went up to offer sacrifice. ⁸ Behind the doors and the posts you have set up your memorial: for you have uncovered to someone besides Me, and have gone up; you have enlarged your bed, and made you a covenant with them: you loved their bed wherever you saw it. ⁹ You went to the king with oil and increased your perfumes, and sent your ambassadors far off, and debased yourself even to Sheol. ¹⁰ You were wearied with the length of your way; yet you didn't say, 'It is in vain'. You found a reviving of your strength; therefore you weren't faint. ¹¹ Of whom have you

gain. If we are living the Kingdom life now, then whatever is said of the future Kingdom must in essence be the rule of our lives today.

56:11 *Each turned to their own way* – This phrase connects with 53:6, which says that although we have *each* done this, Christ's death was for us, to save us from that situation. The group in view in 56:11 were obsessed with money and personal pleasure, whilst claiming faith in God. Those types may seem the hardest to convert; but we are each in essence the same, and the connection with 53:6 shows that the cross is powerful enough to shake even them, even us, from such complacency.

57:11 One thing that works against truthfulness is the neuroses that come from fear,

been afraid and in fear, that you lie, and have not remembered Me, nor laid it to your heart? Haven't I held peace even of long time, and you don't fear Me? ¹² I will declare your righteousness; and as for your works, they shall not profit you. ¹³ When you cry, let those who you have gathered deliver you; but the wind shall take them, a breath shall carry them all away: but he who takes refuge in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain.

A Promise of Help and Healing

¹⁴ He will say, Cast up, cast up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of My people.

¹⁵ For thus says the high and lofty

One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a broken and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. ¹⁶ For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry; for the spirit would faint before Me, and the souls who I have made. ¹⁷ For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and struck him; I hid Myself and was angry; and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. ¹⁸ I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. ¹⁹ I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace, to him who is far off and to him who is near, says

the fearful tensions that arise between our real self and the false self. Fear and truth are opposed. This isn't merely psychobabble. Consider God's words about this here: "Of whom have you been afraid and in fear, that you lie, and have not remembered Me?". The life of brave faith, the life that is lived in the overcoming of fears, the fearless breaking out of our comfort zones... this is the true life, the life in which we have no need to lie nor believe in lies. But of course it's hard, because we think that the truth, the reality, is what we see around us; whereas faith is believing in what is not seen. Yet actually what is *not* seen is the reality, and what *is* seen is very often a lie. And the true life is a life of faith in those things which are not yet visibly seen.

57:14 *Stumbling block* – The ultimate rock of stumbling for the Jewish people is accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (Rom. 9:32,33; 1 Pet. 2:8). The preparation of the highway for Christ's return involves Israel accepting Jesus as Christ. This is why we should preach to Israel in the last days, for the sooner they accept Christ, the quicker He will return.

57:15 *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a broken and humble spirit* – This purposeful juxtaposition brings out the great paradox – that the God who is so high above humanity dwells together with the very lowest and most broken of humanity. Humility and broken spiritedness are of the highest value to God. The "high and holy place" of God's dwelling contrasts with the "high and lofty mountain" where the humanly wise of Israel offered sacrifice to idols (:7). The ultimately humble man was the Lord Jesus. God doesn't live in physical houses built by people, but in the humble heart of a man; and supremely, within the person of Christ. If we are in Him, God dwells in us.

57:19 *Peace, to him who is far off and to him who is near* – Eph. 2:13,14 alludes here, interpreting the "peace" as peace with God, offered to both Jews ("him who is near")

Yahweh; and I will heal them. ²⁰ But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it can't rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. ²¹ There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.

CHAPTER 58 Jul. 2

Genuine Behaviour

Cry aloud, don't spare, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their disobedience, and to the house of Jacob their sins. ² Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways: as a nation that did righteousness, and didn't forsake the ordinance of their God, they ask of Me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. ³ 'Why have we fasted', they

say, 'and You don't see? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge?'. Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and oppress all your labourers. ⁴ Behold, you fast for strife and contention, and to strike with the fist of wickedness: you don't fast this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high. ⁵ Is such the fast that I have chosen? The day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to Yahweh? ⁶ Isn't this the fast that I have chosen: to release the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you

and the Gentiles "far off". Acts 2:39 also has this passage in mind, when Peter offers the Spirit gift of salvation to those who are "far off".

58:2 Again we see that Judah weren't atheists, nor did they formally reject Yahweh – rather the opposite. But they ignored His commandments in practice, and those they kept they used as a means for spiritual pride. In all this we have a highly relevant message to ourselves.

58:3 *In the day of your fast you find pleasure* – Sacrifice to God must be sacrifice, contrite repentance means just that, rather than using these concepts as a channel for our own self-fulfilment.

58:5 *Bow down his head as a rush* – To quickly spring back again to pride. Our talk of humility mustn't be just a temporary, tokenistic acceptance of it as a nice idea.

58:6 Consider how Jesus brings together passages from Isaiah in His opening declaration in Lk. 4:18: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach [proclaim] [Heb. 'call out to a man'] the acceptable year of the Lord"*. This combines allusions to 61:1 (Lev. 25:10); 58:6 LXX and 61:2. Is. 58 has many Day of Atonement allusions – the year of Jubilee began on this feast. We are as the High Priest declaring the reality of forgiveness to the crowd. Hence Lk. 24:47 asks us to proclaim a Jubilee of atonement. The Greek for "preach" in Lk. 24:47 and for "preach / proclaim the acceptable year" in Lk. 4:19 are the same, and the word is used in the LXX for proclaiming the Jubilee. The LXX word used for 'jubilee' means remission, release, forgiveness, and it is the word used to describe our preaching / proclaiming forgiveness in Lk. 24:47. It could be that we are to see the cross as the day of atonement, and from then on the Jubilee should be proclaimed

break every yoke? ⁷ Isn't it to distribute your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor who are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you not hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of Yahweh shall be your vanguard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and Yahweh will answer; you shall cry and He will say, 'Here I am'. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly; ¹⁰ and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then your light shall rise in darkness, and your obscurity be as the noon-day; ¹¹ and Yahweh will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in dry places, and make strong your bones; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters don't fail. ¹² Those who shall be of you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up

the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. ¹³ If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of Yahweh honourable; and shall honour it, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: ¹⁴ then you shall delight yourself in Yahweh; and I will make you to ride on the high places of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it.

CHAPTER 59 Ju1. 3

Evil Again Condemned

Behold, Yahweh's hand is not shortened that it can't save; neither His ear heavy, that it can't hear: ² but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. ³ For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your

in the lives of those who accept it. It's as if we are running round telling people that their mortgages have been cancelled, hire purchase payments written off... and yet we are treated as telling them something unreal, when it is in fact so real and pertinent to them.

58:6-13 This seems to be a reference to an insincerely kept day of atonement in Ezra or Nehemiah's time. The Jewish nobles were oppressing the poor and thereby keeping the feast with no meaning. If they had properly kept the feast, *then* the promised Kingdom conditions would have burst forth to the world around them. But they were too caught up with their own self-benefit to be bothered to show true care for their brethren. If they had, *then* the glory of Yahweh would have entered the temple, just as Ezekiel 43 had prophesied would happen, if the Kingdom was rebuilt as commanded.

59:1, 2 If we feel that God is somehow limited, we must ask whether it is in fact our sins which are limiting His action; because He Himself is totally unlimited in His possibilities.

lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness. ⁴ None sues in righteousness, and none pleads in truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. ⁵ They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he who eats of their eggs dies; and that which is crushed breaks out into a viper. ⁶ Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. ⁷ Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their paths. ⁸ The way of peace they don't know; there is no justice in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whoever goes therein does not know peace.

The People Confess

Vindication remains far removed from us and deliverance does not reach us: we look for light, but behold, darkness; for brightness, but we walk in obscurity. ¹⁰ We grope for the wall like the blind; yes, we grope as those who have no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the twilight; among those who are lusty we

are as dead men. ¹¹ We roar all like bears, and moan bitterly like doves: we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. ¹² For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: ¹³ transgressing and denying Yahweh, and turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. ¹⁴ Justice is turned away backward, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and uprightness can't enter. ¹⁵ Yes, truth is lacking; and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Yahweh saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. ¹⁶ He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His own arm brought salvation to Him; and His righteousness, it upheld Him. ¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a mantle. ¹⁸ According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay

59:7, 8 These verses are quoted in Rom. 3:17 about all of us. We aren't to look at Judah at this time and shake our heads in disgust at them; the essence of their failures is to be found in each one of us.

59:9 See on 49:24.

59:13 *Conceiving and uttering from the heart* – Sin is conceived within the human heart, not placed there by some cosmic Satan being (Mk. 7:15-23; James 1:13-15). Our own heart is the arena of our spiritual battles; we are responsible for our sins, because they begin within our own minds.

recompense. ¹⁹ So shall they fear the name of Yahweh from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; for He will come as a rushing stream, which the breath of Yahweh drives. ²⁰ A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from disobedience in Jacob, says Yahweh. ²¹ As for Me, this is My covenant with them, says Yahweh. My Spirit which is on you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says Yahweh, from henceforth and forever.

CHAPTER 60 Jul. 4

The Future Glory of Israel

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh is risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the land, and gross darkness the peoples; but Yahweh will arise on you, and His glory shall be seen on you. ³ Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the

brightness of your rising. ⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather themselves together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant, and your heart shall thrill and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶ The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of Yahweh. ⁷ All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on My altar; and I will glorify the house of My glory. ⁸ Who are these who fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? ⁹ Surely the islands shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and

59:20 The Redeemer is interpreted as Christ in Rom. 11:26. We could understand this verse as meaning that Christ shall come to Zion when there are in her those who have turned away from their transgression – which in the context of Israel is their rejection of Jesus as Christ. This would suggest a repentance of some Jews is required before Christ's return; and this should motivate our preaching to them.

59:21 *My Spirit... My words* – There is a parallel of God's words and His Spirit (notably in Jn. 6:63). The Bible is written by inspiration of God, and is therefore the work and vehicle of His Spirit. One way in which the Spirit works in our lives today is therefore through God's word the Bible.

60:5 The sea is used as a symbol for the nations – this is common in the Bible.

60:6 *They shall bring gold and frankincense* – What was potentially possible for Judah at the time of the restoration, or perhaps at the time of Hezekiah, didn't come true because of their disobedience. But this doesn't mean the prophecy was falsified – it was reapplied to Jesus, the true “servant of the Lord”, and this was fulfilled when the wise men brought Him these presents at His birth. God will not be defeated by human failure, but somehow His word comes true.

their gold with them, for the name of Yahweh your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. ¹⁰ Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you: for in My wrath I struck you, but in My grace have I had mercy on you. ¹¹ Your gates also shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, and their kings led captive. ¹² For that nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. ¹³ The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the fir tree, the pine, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. ¹⁴ The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending to you; and all those who despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The city

of Yahweh, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵ Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man passed through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. ¹⁶ You shall also drink the milk of the nations, and shall nurse from royal breasts; and you shall know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. ¹⁷ For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron. I will also make your officers peace, and righteousness your ruler. ¹⁸ Violence shall no more be heard in your land, desolation nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. ¹⁹ The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light to you: but Yahweh will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. ²⁰ Your

60:11 The reality was that the walls were built from a motive not of glorifying Zion in fulfillment of prophecy, but for defence *against* the Gentiles. But the gates had to be shut to keep the Gentiles out (Neh. 13:19), lest they yet further corrupted the Jews who were eager to trade with them on the Sabbath rather than convert them to the God of Israel. Instead of bringing their goods through the gates to lay before Yahweh, they brought in their goods to sell to His people in trade. But returned Judah didn't act as a nation of priests, the food the Gentiles brought in to Zion was to be sold for profit to the Jews. They failed to be a missionary nation, and rather were mere trading / economic partners on an equal footing [cp. the church today?].

60:13 But Haggai lamented that instead, Judah dwelt in their own “beautifully ceilinged houses”, they used the exotic trees of the land for their own homes, whilst the house of Yahweh lay desolate. The prophecy of :14 started to come true after Haman's demise; but Judah didn't do their part in fulfilling the rest of that prophecy, which speaks of a rebuilt Zion. Note that the language of wood from Lebanon being used to build the temple is alluding to what happened when the first temple was planned and built under David and Solomon. The future Kingdom of God on earth will be a restoration of the Kingdom of God as it historically was on earth previously (Acts 1:6; see on Ez. 21:25-27).

sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. ²¹ Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. ²² The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation; I, Yahweh, will hasten it in its time.

CHAPTER 61 Jul. 5

The Time of the Lord's Grace

The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is on me; because Yahweh has anointed me to preach good news to the humble. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the time of Yahweh's grace, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to appoint to those who mourn in Zion, to give to them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh,

that He may be glorified.⁴ They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

⁵ Gentiles shall stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners shall be your plough men and your vine dressers.

⁶ But you shall be named the priests of Yahweh; men will call you the ministers of our God: you will eat the wealth of the nations, and you will boast in their glory. ⁷ Instead of your shame you shall have double; and instead of dishonour they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be to them.

⁸ For I, Yahweh, love justice, I hate robbery with iniquity; and I will give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹ Their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Yahweh has blessed. ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,

61:1, 2 See on 49:24; 58:6. This prophecy was fulfilled in the preaching of Jesus (Lk. 4:17-21). It could have come true at the return of the exiles from Babylon, when they could have rebuilt Jerusalem to Kingdom specifications (:4). But they became obsessed with building their own houses and trying to build up their own kingdom rather than God's, and so the prophecy was rescheduled and given a more spiritual fulfilment in the preaching of Jesus to people like us who are held captive by sin and human weakness.

61:6 Again we see God's intention that all Israel should have graduated to become priests (Ex. 19:5,6); this became true in the new Israel, the ecclesia, where we are all to have the spirit of priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

61:8 Entry into covenant relationship with God requires first of all that we recognize our sinfulness, as was the case with Israel.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Yahweh will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

CHAPTER 62 JUL. 6

Righteousness in Jerusalem

For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. ² The nations shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of Yahweh shall name. ³ You shall also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall your land any more be termed Desolate: but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for Yahweh delights in you, and your land shall be mar-

ried. ⁵ For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons shall marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you. ⁶ I have set watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: you who call on Yahweh, take no rest, ⁷ and give Him no rest, until He establishes and until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. ⁸ Yahweh has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength, Surely I will no more give your grain to be food for your enemies; and foreigners shall not drink your new wine, for which you have laboured: ⁹ but those who have garnered it shall eat it, and praise Yahweh; and those who have gathered it shall drink it in the courts of My sanctuary. ¹⁰ Go through, go through the gates! Prepare the way of the people! Cast up, cast up the highway! Gather out the stones! Lift up a banner for the peoples. ¹¹ Behold, Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your salvation comes. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him'. ¹² They shall call them The holy peo-

62:1 Although God may appear inactive, there is a restlessness in Him, willing all things towards their appointed end – the establishment of His Kingdom on earth based around Jerusalem. This restlessness of God is inspired by His people continually begging Him to intervene on earth, to reveal Himself and establish His Kingdom (:6,7).

62:6 *I have set watchmen on your walls* – These watchmen refer to us who pray continually to God to establish His Kingdom (:7), but God has as it were set us up to pray like this. There are times when we feel we have been moved by God to pray about things; in this phenomenon we perceive God's grace, that it's not all simply up to us, but God to some extent works in our spirituality and inspires us to pray as we should, as if He wants as it were an excuse to act.

62:11 Applied by Jesus to His second coming in Rev. 22:12.

ple, The redeemed of Yahweh: and you shall be called Sought out, A city not forsaken.

CHAPTER 63 JUL 7

Punishment upon the Nations

Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This one who is glorious in his clothing, marching in the greatness of his strength? It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save. ² Why are you red in your clothing, and your garments like him who treads in the wine vat? ³ I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the peoples there was no man with Me: yes, I trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I have stained all My clothing. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. ⁵ I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold:

therefore My own arm brought salvation to Me; and My wrath, it upheld Me. ⁶ I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.

The Lord's Mercy on Israel

⁷ I will make mention of the loving kindnesses of Yahweh and the praises of Yahweh, according to all that Yahweh has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His grace. ⁸ For He said, Surely, they are My people, children who will not deal falsely: so He was their Saviour. ⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity he redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old. ¹⁰ But they rebelled and grieved His holy spirit: therefore He

63:3 Here and in :5 we have a window into the loneliness of Jesus on the cross, where His clothing was made red with His own blood.

63:8 Israel did deal falsely with God, but His hope – an almost blind hope which was born of the extent of His love for them – was that they would not deal falsely with Him. This positive hopefulness of God for His people should be seen in us too.

63:10 *His holy Spirit* – God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7), and the reference here and in :11 is to the Angel who went with Israel on their wilderness journey as the special manifestation of Yahweh, the “Angel of His presence” (:9). The New Testament promises of “the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit” are full of allusion to this part of Isaiah 63. The Comforter would teach (Jn. 14:26), guide, be a judge and prophesy (Jn. 16:8,13); the Angel guided Israel through the wilderness, taught them God’s ways, judged Egypt and the Canaanites, gave prophecies, and represented God to Israel as the Comforter represented Jesus to His people. As the church began a new Exodus and was constituted God’s Kingdom in prospect as Israel were at Sinai, it was fitting that it should also have an Angel leading them, representing God to them. As Israel were led by a special Angel through the wilderness, whom Isaiah 63 associates with God’s Holy Spirit, so the new Israel were led by a Holy Spirit

was turned to be their enemy, and He Himself fought against them. ¹¹ Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people, saying, Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His holy spirit in their midst? ¹² Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses? Who divided the waters before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? ¹³ Who led them through the depths, as a horse in the wilderness, so that they didn't stumble? ¹⁴ As the cattle that go down into the valley, the spirit of Yahweh caused them to rest; so You led Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.

A Prayer for Mercy

¹⁵ Look down from heaven, and see from the habitation of Your holiness and of Your glory: where are Your zeal and Your mighty acts? The yearning of Your heart and Your compassion is restrained toward me. ¹⁶ For You are our Father, though Abraham doesn't know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us: You, Yah-

weh, are our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is Your name. ¹⁷ O Yahweh, why do You make us to err from Your ways, and harden our heart from Your fear? Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes of Your inheritance. ¹⁸ Your holy people possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary. ¹⁹ We have become as they over whom You never bear rule, as those who were not called by Your name.

CHAPTER 64 Ju1. 8

A Prayer for Revival

Oh that You would tear the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might quake at Your presence, ² as when fire kindles the brushwood, and the fire causes the waters to boil; to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence! ³ When You did awesome things which we didn't look for, You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence. ⁴ For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen a God

Angel, the Comforter, who was sent to the church by Jesus after His assuming of all power over the Angels on His ascension. The Jewish fathers resisted the Angel of the presence which went with them; and so the Jews of the first century did just the same (Acts 7:51). The Holy Spirit is the power of God, not a person, but it is sometimes personified; one reason for that may be that it worked in the first century through this Comforter Angel of the Lord's presence.

63:16 *Israel does not acknowledge us* – We have here the heart cry of the righteous remnant, rejected by the majority of God's people and feeling God too is somehow distant from them. This has been a common experience amongst the righteous over history.

64:4 This is quoted in 1 Cor. 2:9; the things prepared for those who wait for God are the things of redemption and forgiveness in Christ. But Paul interprets "him who waits for Him" as "them that love Him". To love God is in one sense to wait in patient faith

besides You, what God has prepared for him who waits for Him. ⁵ You meet him who rejoices and works righteousness, those who remember You in Your ways. Behold, You were angry, and we sinned. We have been in sin for a long time; and shall we be saved? ⁶ For we have all become as one who is unclean, and all our righteousness is as a polluted garment: and we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷ There is none who calls on Your name, who stirs up himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have consumed us by means of our iniquities. ⁸ But now, Yahweh, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hand. ⁹ Don't be furious, Yahweh, neither remember iniquity for-

ever: see, look, we beg You, we are all Your people. ¹⁰ Your holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹ Our holy and our beautiful house where our fathers praised You is burnt with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste. ¹² Will You refrain Yourself for these things, Yahweh? Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?

CHAPTER 65 Jul. 9

God Punishes the Nations

I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I' to a nation that was not called by My name. ² I have spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not

for Him to act and send His Son to establish His Kingdom. But the waiting game is harder than it seems, because we expect immediate response from God, whereas the intention of His apparent inaction is to focus us instead upon the return of Christ and the coming of His Kingdom as the ultimate resolution of all things. 64:4 says that only God alone knows these things He has prepared for us in Christ. But Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:10 that they are also known by us, through God's Spirit. So through our association with the one Spirit, the one Name of Yahweh, what is true of God Himself on a personal level becomes true of us. Such is the wonder of the way in which His fullness dwells in us.

64:7 See on 51:17. The destruction of the wicked is "by means of [their] iniquities"; sin is its own judgment.

65:1 God's experience with the Jews in exile was tragic. He set them up with the possibility to return to Judah, to establish there a Messianic-style Kingdom, giving them the commands in Ez. 40-48 for a glorious temple; but most of them preferred the soft life in Babylon, and those who did return proved small minded, selfish and disinterested in the vision of God's glory. In this context, Isaiah ends his restoration prophecies on a tragic note from God: "I was ready to be sought... I was ready to be found" by the unspiritual exiles in Babylon. But Israel would not. He pictures Himself standing there crying "Here am I, here am I!" – to be rejected by a people more interested in climbing the endless economic and social ladder in Babylon and Persia, and caught up in finding petty religious fault with their brethren (:5).

good, after their own thoughts; ³ a people who provoke Me to My face continually, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense on bricks; ⁴ who sit among the graves and lodge in the secret places; who eat pig's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; ⁵ who say, 'Stand by yourself, don't come near to me, for I am holier than you'. These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day. ⁶ Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yes, I will recompense into their bosom, ⁷ your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, says Yahweh, who have burned incense on the mountains, and blasphemed Me on the hills; therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom. ⁸ Thus says Yahweh, As the new wine is found in the cluster and one says, 'Don't destroy it, for a blessing is in it:' so will I do for My servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains; and My chosen shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there. ¹⁰ Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down in, for My people who have sought Me. ¹¹ But you who forsake Yahweh, who forget My holy mountain, who prepare a table for Fortune, and who fill up mixed

wine to Destiny; ¹² I will destine you to the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, you didn't answer; when I spoke, you didn't listen; but you did that which was evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I didn't delight. ¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but you shall be disappointed; ¹⁴ behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit. ¹⁵ You shall leave your name for a curse to My chosen; and the Lord Yahweh will kill you; and He will call His servants by another name: ¹⁶ so that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My eyes.

A New Creation

¹⁷ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. ¹⁸ But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem,

65:17 *New heavens and a new earth* – The close of Isaiah's prophecy is related to how it opens in 1:2; and there, the heavens and earth are figurative for the system of things which was in Judah (see note there). This verse is quoted in 2 Pet. 3:13 as having had a fulfilment in the destruction of the Jewish system in AD70; yet then the literal Heaven and earth weren't destroyed.

and joy in My people; and there shall be heard in her no more the voice of weeping and the voice of crying.

²⁰ There shall be no more there an infant of days, nor an old man who has not filled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, and the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them themselves; and they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of My people, and My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for calamity; for they are the seed of the blessed of Yahweh, and their offspring with them. ²⁴ It shall happen that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and

dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 66 Jul. 10

The Lord Loves This Man

Thus says Yahweh, Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: what kind of house will you build to Me? And what place shall be My rest? ² For all these things has My hand made, and so all these things came to be, says Yahweh: but to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a broken spirit, and who trembles at My word. ³ He who kills an ox is as he who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, as he who breaks a dog's neck; he who offers an offering, as he who offers pig's blood; he who burns frankincense, as he who blesses an idol. Yes, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations: ⁴ I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears

65:24 *Before they call, I will answer* – This is found in the context of a prophecy about the future Kingdom of God on earth. But Jesus applies this phrase to our experience in prayer now, when He says that God knows our needs before we ask Him in prayer (Mt. 6:8). Answered prayer is a foretaste of the Kingdom life. The essence of how we will eternally live in the Kingdom can be experienced in our spiritual life today. In this sense Jesus said that we “have eternal life”, in the sense that we can begin to live now the type of life we will eternally live.

66:2 The Jews did tremble at the word at the beginning of the rebuilding (Ezra 10:9). But it was a momentary thing; they came to see the building of the walls as more important than keeping a trembling spirit. Works eclipsed spirituality. Yet Isaiah had taught that the trembling at the word was more essentially important than building temples. But Judah paid no attention in the long term. Perhaps God was saying that His plan for the glorious rebuilding of the temple at the time of the return from exile in Babylon wasn't going to work out, and instead He was going to focus on dwelling with humble, broken individuals who loved His word.

66:3, 4 God does not just disregard those who turn away from Him. He deceives them, and leads them into a downward spiral of moral and doctrinal declension. The idea of

on them; because when I called, no one answered; when I spoke, they didn't listen; but they did that which was evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I didn't delight. ⁵ Hear the word of Yahweh, you who tremble at His word: Your brothers who hate you, who cast you out for My name's sake, have said, 'Let Yahweh be glorified, that we may see your joy;' but it is those who shall be disappointed. ⁶ A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Yahweh that renders recompense to His enemies.

Rejoice with Jerusalem

⁷ Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she delivered a son. ⁸ Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. ⁹ Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? says Yahweh: shall I who cause to bring forth shut the womb? says your God. ¹⁰ Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her: rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn over her; ¹¹ that you may nurse and be satisfied at the comforting breasts; that you may drink deeply,

and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. ¹² For thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream: and you will be nursed. You will be carried on her side, and will be dandled on her knees. ¹³ As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ You will see it, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like the tender grass: and the hand of Yahweh shall be known toward His servants; He will have indignation against His enemies. ¹⁵ For behold, Yahweh will come with fire, and His chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render His anger with fierceness, and His rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶ For by fire and by His sword will Yahweh plead judgement on all flesh; and the slain of Yahweh shall be many. ¹⁷ Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go to the gardens, behind one in the midst, eating pig's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, they shall come to an end together, says Yahweh. ¹⁸ For I know their works and their thoughts: the time comes, that I will gather all nations and languages; and they shall come, and shall see My glory. ¹⁹ I will set a sign among

"the God of Truth" deceiving people may seem strange at first. But consider how He chose Israel's delusions by making their idols answer them; see too 1 Kings 22:20-22; Ez. 3:20; 14:9; 2 Thess. 2:9-11.

66:16 Plead judgement – The Hebrew word translated "judgment" here is also translated "plead". God's judgments aren't the anger of an irritated deity, rather are they constructive, designed to plead with those who observe them to repent.

66:19 Paul's desire to go to Spain (Rom. 15:24) indicates a commitment to taking

them, and I will send such as escape of them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the islands afar off, who have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the nations. ²⁰ They shall bring all your brothers out of all the nations for an offering to Yahweh, on horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, says Yahweh, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh. ²¹ Of

them also will I take for priests and for Levites, says Yahweh. ²² For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me, says Yahweh, so your seed and your name shall remain. ²³ It shall happen, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, says Yahweh. ²⁴ They shall go forth, and look on the dead bodies of the men who have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they will be loathsome to all mankind.

the Gospel to the very ends of the world he then knew. He may well have been motivated in this by wishing to fulfill in spirit this Kingdom prophecy of :18,19, which describes how Tarshish (which he would have understood as Spain) and other places which “have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory” will be witnessed to by those who *have* seen His glory and have “escaped” from God’s just condemnation by grace. Paul sees this as referring to himself. For he speaks in Rom. 15:19 of his ambition to take the Gospel to Spain; and in that same context, of how he will bring the Gentile brethren’s offering up to Jerusalem. This is precisely the context of Is. 66 – the offerings of the Gentiles are to be brought up to Jerusalem, as a result of how the Lord’s glory will be spoken of to all nations. So Paul read Isaiah 66 and did something about his Old Testament Bible study; he dedicated his life to taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he encouraged them to send their offerings to Jerusalem. He was no mere theologian. His study and exposition of Old Testament Scripture led to a life lived out in practice, to hardship, risk of life, persecution, loneliness, even rejection by his brethren. It is also significant that :19 speaks of nations which occur in the list of nations we have in Genesis 10, in the context of the effect of Babel. It is as if Paul sees the spreading of the Gospel as an undoing of the curse of Babel and the establishment of the Kingdom conditions described in Is. 66. By his preaching of God’s Kingdom and the reign of Christ, he brought about a foretaste of the future Kingdom in the lives of his converts. And we can do likewise.

JEREMIAH

CHAPTER 1 Jer. 1:11

God Calls Jeremiah

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: ² to whom the word of Yahweh came in the days of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³ It came also in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. ⁴ Now the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁵ Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. ⁶ Then I said, Ah, Lord Yahweh! Behold, I don't know how to speak; for I am a child. ⁷ But Yahweh said to me, Don't say, 'I am a child;' for to whoever I shall send you, you shall go, and whatever I shall command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Don't be afraid because of them; for I am with you to deliver you, says Yahweh. ⁹ Then Yahweh put forth His hand, and touched my mouth; and Yahweh said to me, Be-

hold, I have put My words in your mouth. ¹⁰ Behold, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

Two Visions

¹¹ Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? I said, I see a branch of an almond tree. ¹² Then Yahweh said to me, You have seen well; for I watch over My word to perform it.

¹³ The word of Yahweh came to me the second time saying, What do you see? I said, I see a boiling cauldron; and it is tipping away from the north.

¹⁴ Then Yahweh said to me, Out of the north evil will break out on all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵ For, behold, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, says Yahweh; and they shall come, and they shall each set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls all around, and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶ I will utter My judgements against them touching all their wickedness, in that they have forsaken Me and have burned

1:5 Jeremiah is spoken of as having existed before birth. This wasn't literally the case, but because God is outside time as we know it, He can speak of things which don't exist as if they do, so total is His knowledge of the future (Rom. 4:17). All the believers and also Jesus are spoken of with this language (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20), but it doesn't mean that He nor we personally pre-existed.

1:6 So many called to preach God's word feel unworthy or unqualified to do so; but God delights to work through those who feel this way.

1:10 This reflects the power which there is in God's word, which we also can speak forth to this world.

incense to other gods and worshipped the works of their own hands. ¹⁷ You therefore put your belt on your waist, arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Don't be dismayed at them, lest I dismay you before them. ¹⁸ For, behold, I have made you this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against its princes, against its priests, and against the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you; but they will not prevail against you; for I am with you, says Yahweh, to deliver you.

CHAPTER 2 Ju1. 12

Israel's Unfaithfulness

The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, 'Thus says Yahweh, I remember the kindness

of your youth, the love at the time of your marriage; how you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. ³ Israel was holiness to Yahweh, the first fruits of His increase. All who devour him shall be held guilty. Evil shall come on them', says Yahweh. ⁴ Hear the word of Yahweh O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel! ⁵ Thus says Yahweh, What unrighteousness have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? ⁶ Neither did they say, 'Where is Yahweh who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land that none passed through, and where no man lived?'. ⁷ I brought

1:17 *Don't be dismayed at them, lest I dismay you* – This appears to be the basis of Christ's warning to His preachers, that if we are ashamed of His words in this generation, He will be ashamed of us in the last day and we will walk before all men with the shame of the rejected (Lk. 9:26; Rev. 16:15). We are to therefore see Jeremiah as in some sense representative of us in our witness to the world.

1:18 The prophets required this psychological strengthening to do their work; because seeing the world from God's perspective, perceiving the tragedy of a humanity who refuse to accept His salvation, realizing the depth of His pain – is all too much. And God will strengthen us too, to be His witnesses in a similar world.

2:5 *Walked after vanity, and are become vain* – We become like what we worship (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). The prophets emphasize that the idols are empty and vain. Whilst we may not be tempted to worship pieces of stone or wood, we are surrounded by the vain things of the modern world which can become our gods; sport, endless surfing the internet, frivolous obsession with tickling our taste buds, these and so much else are mere vanity. And as we worship them, we become vain and empty too, with no real substance to our personality. Whilst the richness and depth of Yahweh is thereby ignored by us. See on 2:11.

2:6 The wilderness is described as an awful place, just as Moses likewise spoke of it when reflecting on the journeys of Israel in Deuteronomy. Israel crossing the Red Sea represents our baptism into Christ (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and their wilderness journey afterwards equates with our lives now as we walk toward the promised land of God's

you into a plentiful land, to eat its fruit and its goodness; but when you entered, you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination.

⁸ The priests didn't say, 'Where is Yahweh?' and those who handle the law didn't come to know Me. The rulers also transgressed against Me, the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that do not profit.

⁹ Therefore I will yet contend with you, says Yahweh, and I will contend with your children's children. ¹⁰ For pass over to the islands of Kittim, and see; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently; and see if there has been such a thing. ¹¹ Has a nation changed its gods, which really are no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

¹² Be astonished, you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid. Be very desolate, says Yahweh. ¹³ For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the spring of

living waters, and cut them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Results of Israel's Unfaithfulness

¹⁴ Is Israel a servant? Is he a native-born slave? Why has he become a prey? ¹⁵ The young lions have roared at him and yelled, they have desolated his land. His cities are burned up without inhabitant. ¹⁶ The children also of Memphis and Tahpanhes have broken the crown of your head. ¹⁷ Haven't you procured this to yourself, in that you have forsaken Yahweh your God, when He led you by the way? ¹⁸ Now what have you to do in the way to Egypt, to drink the waters of the Shihor? Or what have you to do in the way to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River? ¹⁹ Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter,

Kingdom. The world is a terrifying place spiritually; in spiritual terms it isn't the nice safe place it can appear.

2:8 *Those who handle the law didn't come to know Me* – We can be faithful Bible readers, familiar with the text, and yet not know God in the sense of having a personal relationship with Him; rather like the rejected of the last day who will call Jesus "Lord" and have been associated with Him in their lives, but who never knew Him (Mt. 7:22,23; 25:12; Lk. 13:25).

2:11 Israel never officially changed their gods; they never rejected Yahweh nor were they atheists. But worshipping any other god *in addition* to the one true God as they did is effectively doing this. See on 2:5.

2:19 God has a wonderful way of not turning away in disgust from sinful people, but rather working through their sin to try to bring them to repentance. The traditional understanding of Satan is unable to explain this; for if a personal, sinful entity called 'satan' makes people sin, then how come that sin actually results in some becoming righteous? Sin comes from within (James 1:13-15), it is solely our fault that we sin; but God in His grace often works through human failure in order to bring sinners to Himself. Our real 'satan' or adversary is ourselves, and not any external, cosmic being.

that you have forsaken Yahweh your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord, Yahweh of Armies. ²⁰ For of old time I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds; and you said, 'I will not serve;' for on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed yourself, playing the prostitute. ²¹ Yet I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed. How then have you turned into the degenerate branches of a foreign vine to Me? ²² For though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord Yahweh. ²³ How can you say, 'I am not defiled. I have not gone after the Baals'? See your way in the valley. Know what you have done. You are a swift dromedary traversing her ways; ²⁴ a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind in her desire. When she is in heat, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves. In her month, they will find her. ²⁵ Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, 'It is in vain.

No, for I have loved strangers, and I will go after them'. ²⁶ As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets; ²⁷ who tell wood, 'You are my father,' and a stone, 'You have brought me forth'; for they have turned their back to Me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, 'Arise, and save us'. ²⁸ But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble: for according to the number of your cities are your gods, Judah.

Israel Rebels against God

²⁹ Why will you contend with Me? You all have transgressed against Me, says Yahweh. ³⁰ I have struck your children in vain. They received no correction. Your own sword has devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. ³¹ Generation, consider the word of Yahweh. Have I been a wilderness to Israel? Or a land of thick darkness? Why do My people

2:26 Worshipping other gods is likened here to stealing. Not giving God our entire worship is in fact robbing Him; even though the analogy seems extreme at first sight, if we really accept that we are created by Him and are His, then to not give Him all of ourselves is to rob Him (Mal. 3:8). Significantly, the people are mentioned as punishing innocent people for the crime of stealing when they hadn't committed it (:34). Those who robbed God knew subconsciously what they were doing; and so unconsciously, they transferred their guilt onto others, falsely accusing them of the very kind of sin *they* had committed, and then strictly condemning and punishing those innocent people for it, exercising the judgment against themselves which was their due upon others, onto whom they had transferred their guilt. This is why people gossip, malign, falsely accuse and judge harshly. If we face up to our sins in the first place and accept God's forgiveness, then we will show grace to others rather than act in this way.

2:30 It's tragic that people can suffer so much, as Israel have throughout their history, and yet not respond to it as God intended.

say, ‘We have broken loose. We will come to You no more?’. ³² Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me for days without number. ³³ How well you prepare your way to seek love! Therefore you have taught even the wicked women your ways. ³⁴ Also the blood of the souls of the innocent poor is found in your skirts, even though you did not catch them in the act of burglary. ³⁵ Yet you said, ‘I am innocent. Surely His anger has turned away from me’. Behold, I will judge you, because you say, ‘I have not sinned’. ³⁶ Why do you go about so much, ever changing your way? You will be shamed by Egypt, just as you were shamed by Assyria. ³⁷ From there also you shall go forth, with your hands on your head; for Yahweh has rejected those in whom you trust, and you shall not prosper with them.

CHAPTER 3 Jer. 1. 13

Israel and Judah Likened to an Unfaithful Wife

They say, ‘If a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and become another man’s, should he

return to her again?’. Wouldn’t that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the prostitute with many lovers; yet return again to Me, says Yahweh. ² Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see! Where have you not been lain with? You have sat for them by the ways, as an Arabian in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your prostitution and with your wickedness. ³ Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; yet you have a prostitute’s forehead, you refused to be ashamed. ⁴ Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?’. ⁵ ‘Will He retain His anger forever? Will He keep it to the end?’ Behold, you have spoken and have done evil things, and have had your way. ⁶ Moreover, Yahweh said to me in the days of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the prostitute. ⁷ I said after she had done all these things, ‘She will return to Me;’ but she didn’t return; and her treacherous sister Judah saw

3:1 God’s own law had forbidden a man to do this, calling it an abomination (Dt. 24:4). And yet God was willing to do so. Thus He demonstrates that His grace and love for His people goes even beyond the limits of His own word, and may even in a way contradict it; such is the greatness of His grace. He isn’t indifferently waiting for us to return to Him; He is willing to debase Himself and commit what He considers abomination in order to be back together with us. In similar vein, God speaks as if His expectation that Israel would return to Him had been as it were proved wrong (:7). Again, He speaks as if His foreknowledge was as it were limited compared to the power of the hopefulness of His love and grace; for we are made after God’s image, and true love has the quality of desperate hopefulness against our better knowledge. Such is God’s passion for us His people.

it. ⁸ I saw, when, for the very reason of committing adultery that I had put away and given a bill of divorce to backsliding Israel, then treacherous Judah her sister didn't fear; but likewise went and played the prostitute. ⁹ It happened through the lightness of her prostitution, that the land was polluted, and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks. ¹⁰ Yet for all this her treacherous sister, Judah, has not returned to Me with her whole heart, but only in pretence, says Yahweh.

God Wants Israel to Return to Him

¹¹ Yahweh said to me, Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. ¹² Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, 'Return, you backsliding Israel', says Yahweh; 'I will not look in anger on you; for I am merciful', says Yahweh. 'I will not keep anger forever. ¹³ Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against Yahweh your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed My voice', says Yahweh.

¹⁴ Return, backsliding children, says Yahweh; for I am a husband to you. I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. ¹⁶ It shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says Yahweh, they shall say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of Yahweh!' neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they miss it; neither shall it be made any more. ¹⁷ At that time they shall call Jerusalem 'The throne of Yahweh;' and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of Yahweh, to Jerusalem. Neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. ¹⁸ In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance to your fathers. ¹⁹ But I thought how I would set you among My children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the armies of the nations; and I thought

3:14 *I am a husband to you* – Although divorced from Israel (:8), God still considered Himself her husband. These contradictory feelings within God are expressed in His word, in that some passages protest His eternal love and relationship with Israel whatever, whilst others declare them no longer His people.

3:19, 20 Although God presents Himself to us as having a memory which functions not unlike our memories, who are made in His image, there is with God the capacity for total recall of history; and hence His pain is far greater than ours, not least because He knows, with all the power of infinite analysis of possibilities, 'what might have been'. And it is the 'what might have been' syndrome which is one of the greatest sources of our emotional pain. His pain and hurt is therefore and thereby so much greater than ours. Hence the pain, the pain which comes from understanding and the

you would call Me My Father, and would not turn away from following Me'. ²⁰ Surely as a wife faithlessly departs from her husband, so you have dealt treacherously with Me, house of Israel, says Yahweh. ²¹ A voice is heard on the bare heights, the weeping and the petitions of the children of Israel; because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten Yahweh their God. ²² Return, you backsliding children, I will heal your backsliding. Behold, we have come to You; for You are Yahweh our God. ²³ Truly in vain is help from the hills, the tumult on the mountains. Truly the salvation of Israel is in Yahweh our God. ²⁴ But the shameful thing has devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. ²⁵ Let us lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us; for we have sinned against Yahweh our God, we

and our fathers, from our youth even to this day. We have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God.

CHAPTER 4 Jul. 14

Repentance Needed

If you will return, Israel, says Yahweh, if you will return to Me, and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight; then you shall not be removed; ² and you shall swear, 'As Yahweh lives', in truth, in justice, and in righteousness. The nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory. ³ For thus says Yahweh to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and don't sow among thorns. ⁴ Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest My wrath go forth like fire, and burn so that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

potential of total recall, behind these words which reflect how Israel *could have been* sons which made Him proud. Because of His capacity to imagine, to see possible futures, God feels rejected both by His children and by His wife at the same time. It's as if He could see the potentially happy future which they could've had stretching out before Him. Yet now He has chosen *us* as His wife and children; and we are to do our uttermost to be His faithful woman, loyal children.

3:22-25 This was God's fantasy about Israel, how one day they would say such words of repentance and return to Him. True love includes fantasy, imagining the object of our love speaking or acting in the way we dream of. And God's passionate love for His people is no different. True repentance is such a thrill to God; it fulfils what He has dreamt of for us. Hence all the Angels rejoice when one sinner repents.

4:3 *Break up your fallow ground* – Like us, they were to realize their spiritual potential in order to bring forth fruit to God.

4:4 The wrath of God can be turned away or 'quenched' by the actions of those He is angry with (see too Num. 25:4; Dt. 13:15-17; Ezra 10:14; Jonah 3:7,10; 2 Chron. 12:7; Jer. 21:12). And yet that wrath can also be turned away by the prayers of a third party (see 18:20; Ps. 106:23; Job 42:7). This means that in some cases, our prayers for others can be counted as if they have repented. We can gain our brother for God's

Judah to be Invaded

⁵ Declare in Judah and publish in Jerusalem; say, 'Blow the trumpet in the land!' Cry aloud and say, 'Assemble yourselves! Let us go into the fortified cities!' ⁶ Set up a standard towards Zion. Flee for safety! Don't wait; for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. ⁷ A lion is gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations; he is on his way, he is gone forth from his place, to make your land desolate, that your cities be laid waste, without inhabitant. ⁸ For this clothe yourself with sackcloth, lament and wail; for the fierce anger of Yahweh hasn't turned back from us. ⁹ It shall happen at that day, says Yahweh, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. ¹⁰ Then I said, Ah, Lord Yahweh! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem in saying, 'You shall have peace;' whereas the sword reaches to the heart. ¹¹ At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness towards the daughter

of My people, not to winnow, nor to cleanse; ¹² a full wind for these things shall come from Me. Now I will also utter judgements against them. ¹³ Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us! For we are ruined. ¹⁴ Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you? ¹⁵ For a voice declares from Dan, and publishes evil from the hills of Ephraim: ¹⁶ Tell the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, 'Watchers come from a far country and lift up their voice against the cities of Judah. ¹⁷ As keepers of a field, they are against her all around, because she has been rebellious against Me', says Yahweh. ¹⁸ Your way and your doings have brought these things to you. This is your wickedness; for it is bitter, for it reaches to your heart.

Jeremiah's Vision of Destruction

¹⁹ My anguish, my anguish! I am pained at my very heart; my heart is disquieted in me; I can't hold my peace; because you have heard, O

Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7).

4:13 Clouds, chariots and whirlwind are associated with Yahweh's appearances in theophanies and as the cherubim. Yet here this language is applied to the Babylonian invaders – for they were manifesting God. Their chariots were as it were the wheels on earth of the Angel cherubim above who were directing them. At times unbelievers can be used by God as His form of manifestation, as we will experience in our lives too.

4:19 Jeremiah interjects here. He didn't just output the words God had given him like a printer or piece of computer hardware. He saw the reality of it all, that it would really all come to pass. We too must be moved by the reality of the message we teach about the future; it is all very well telling others of a time of trouble coming upon this earth, but we should feel deeply for the human tragedy of it, to the point of being al-

my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. ²⁰ Destruction on destruction is cried; for the whole land is laid waste: suddenly are my tents destroyed, and my curtains in a moment. ²¹ How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? ²² For my people are foolish, they don't know me. They are foolish children, and they have no understanding. They are skilful in doing evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. ²³ I saw the land and, behold, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. ²⁴ I saw the mountains, and behold, they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. ²⁵ I saw, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the sky had fled. ²⁶ I saw, and behold, the fruitful field was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of Yahweh, before His fierce anger. ²⁷ For thus says Yahweh, The whole land shall be a desolation; yet will I not make a full end. ²⁸ For this the land will mourn, and the heavens above be black; because I have spoken it,

I have purposed it, and I have not relented, neither will I go back from it. ²⁹ Every city flees for the noise of the horsemen and archers; they go into the thickets and climb up on the rocks: every city is forsaken, not a man dwells therein. ³⁰ You, when you are made desolate, what will you do? Though you clothe yourself with scarlet, though you deck you with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain do you make yourself beautiful; your lovers despise you, they seek your life. ³¹ For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, the anguish as of her who brings forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, who gasps for breath, who spreads her hands saying, Woe is me now! For my soul faints before the murderers.

CHAPTER 5 Jul. 15

The Sins of Jerusalem

Run back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places of it, if you can find a man,

most broken down because of it. The message we give cannot pass through our hands or lips without eliciting response from us.

4:20 Jeremiah felt that the future things he was prophesying had already come to pass; he shared God's perspective (Rom. 4:17), as we should, that the Biblically predicted future is effectively now – so certain is God's word of fulfilment.

4:31 *The anguish* – Jeremiah felt “anguish” right then (:19) because he identified with the future “anguish” of the people about whom he prophesied. We also should identify with the audience we preach to; the tragedy of their situation should touch us deeply and be the basis of our passionate, persuasive appeal to them.

5:1 All of Jerusalem would have been forgiven if there was even one that truly executed justice. This is the colossal significance to God of the individual. Abraham ceased at 10 people when interceding for Sodom, but if he had gone down to asking for the city to be spared for just one righteous person, likely he would've been heard. See on 26:13.

if there are any who does justice, who seeks truth; and I will pardon her. ² Though they say, 'As Yahweh lives;' surely they swear falsely. ³ O Yahweh, don't Your eyes look on truth? You have stricken them, but they were not grieved. You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock. They have refused to return. ⁴ Then I said, Surely these are poor. They are foolish; for they don't know the way of Yahweh, nor the law of their God. ⁵ I will go to the great men, and

will speak to them; for they know the way of Yahweh, and the law of their God. But these with one accord have broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. ⁶ Therefore a lion out of the forest shall kill them, a wolf of the evenings shall destroy them, a leopard shall watch against their cities; everyone who goes out there shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backsliding is increased. ⁷ How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken Me, and sworn by what are no gods. When I had fed them to the

Who does justice – The Hebrew Bible very often demands “justice” from individuals within Israel and almost considers this to be the epitome of righteousness. We may consider that because we’re not judges nor part of the judicial apparatus of society, therefore this doesn’t apply to us. But daily if not hourly, we’re confronted with situations which demand our correct response, our fairness, our application of Divine principle when dealing with others, often to our own cost; and in our own minds, we do have to judge, not in the sense of condemning but in forming opinions. Thus “justice” is required from each of us, daily.

5:5 We see here Jeremiah’s naivety, assuming that the leaders of God’s people must surely be spiritual people. The disciples were the same, initially. We too easily tend to confuse status or seniority amongst God’s people with spirituality, and so often this assumption is wrong.

5:7 *When I had fed them to the full* – So often God’s kind material blessings to His people led them into unfaithfulness to Him (Dt. 32:15). It’s not surprising, therefore, that the requests of the new Israel for material blessing are so often unanswered; for God seeks relationship with us above all, and earnestly desires our eternal good.

How can I pardon you? – This opens a window on the self-questioning which is associated with God – e.g. “What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?” (Hos. 6:4; 11:8; see too Jer. 9:7,9). These aren’t purely rhetorical questions – they reflect the actual and real self-questioning of Almighty God, reflective as it is of the turbulence of emotion which is part and parcel of being in a relationship which has gone painfully wrong. There even seems at times a difficulty on God’s part to understand why the people He had loved could hate Him so much (2:14,31; 8:5,19; 30:6; Is. 5:4; 50:2). “What more could I have done for my vineyard... why did it yield wild grapes?” (Is. 5:1-7). This is so much the anguished cry of bewildered middle age parents as they reflect upon a wayward child. This Divine struggle to understand reflects the extraordinary depth of His love for them; and it warns us in chilling terms as to the pain we can cause God if we spurn His amazing love. 8:4-7 records God reflecting that even the stork ‘returns’ predictably; but His people have inexplicably not returned to Him. This reveals a

full, they committed adultery, and assembled themselves in troops at the prostitutes' houses. ⁸ They were as fed horses roaming at large: everyone neighed after his neighbour's wife. ⁹ Shouldn't I punish them for these things? says Yahweh; and shouldn't My soul be avenged on such a nation as this? ¹⁰ Go up on her walls, and destroy; but don't make a full end. Take away her branches; for they are not Yahweh's. ¹¹ For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against Me, says Yahweh. ¹² They have denied Yahweh and said, It is not He; neither shall evil come on us; neither shall we see sword nor famine. ¹³ The prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them. ¹⁴ Therefore thus says Yahweh, the God of Armies, Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

Israel to be Invaded

¹⁵ Behold, I will bring a nation on you from far, house of Israel, says Yahweh. It is a mighty nation. It is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you don't know, nor under-

stand what they say. ¹⁶ Their quiver is an open tomb, they are all mighty men. ¹⁷ They shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and your daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds. They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees. They shall beat down your fortified cities in which you trust with the sword. ¹⁸ But even in those days, says Yahweh, I will not make a full end with you. ¹⁹ It will happen, when you say, 'Why has Yahweh our God done all these things to us?' Then you shall say to them, 'Just like you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours'. ²⁰ Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah saying, ²¹ 'Hear now this, foolish people, and without understanding; who have eyes, and don't see; who have ears, and don't hear: ²² Don't you fear Me?' says Yahweh 'Won't you tremble at My presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it can't pass it? and though its waves toss themselves, yet they can't prevail; though they roar, yet they can't pass over it'. ²³ But this people has a revolting and

powerful thing – that our rejection of God's love is inexplicable even to God Himself. And yet humanity persists in this utter madness. For all our education, business sense, scientific knowledge – we are revealed as inexplicably foolish in rejecting God's love and not 'returning' [repenting] to Him.

5:11 *It is not He* – A denial of the meaning of 'Yahweh' – I am that I am. Yet they weren't atheists. But by denying the reality of judgment to come and the constant, insistent presence of God in our lives and His continual claim upon every part of our lives, they were denying the essence of God – He is, who He is, and shall be who He shall be in our lives.

a rebellious heart; they have revolted and gone. ²⁴ Neither do they say in their heart, ‘Let us now fear Yahweh our God who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season; who preserves to us the appointed weeks of the harvest’. ²⁵ Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good from you. ²⁶ For among My people are found wicked men. They watch, as fowlers lie in wait. They set a trap. They catch men. ²⁷ As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit. Therefore they became great and grew rich. ²⁸ They have grown fat. They shine; yes, they excel in deeds of wickedness. They don’t plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless, that they may prosper; and they don’t judge the right of the needy. ²⁹ Shall I not punish for these things? says Yahweh. Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this? ³⁰ An astonishing and horrible thing has happened in the land. ³¹ The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own authority; and My people love to have it so. What will you do in the end of it?

CHAPTER 6 Jul. 16

A Warning for the People

Flee for safety, you children of Benjamin, out of the midst of Jerusalem, blow the trumpet in Tekoa and raise up a signal on Beth Hachcherem; for evil looks forth from the north, and a great destruction. ² The comely and delicate one, the daughter of Zion, will I cut off. ³ Shepherds with their flocks shall come to her; they shall pitch their tents against her all around; they shall feed each one in his place. ⁴ Prepare war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe to us! For the day declines, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. ⁵ Arise, and let us go up by night, and let us destroy her palaces. ⁶ For Yahweh of Armies said, Cut down trees, and cast up a mound against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. ⁷ As a well casts forth its waters, so she casts forth her wickedness: violence and destruction is heard in her; before Me continually is grief and woundedness. ⁸ Be instructed, Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from

6:8 Here and in Ez. 23:18, God’s soul “departed” from His people – but the same word is translated to hang / crucify (Num. 25:4; 2 Sam. 21:6,9,13). It’s as if God was crucified in His pain for Israel. And in the death of His Son He went through that pain. And so never, ever, ever... can we nor Israel complain that our pain is greater than God’s. Never. The pain of God at Israel’s sin leads Him to exclaim (almost in the language of piercing and crucifixion): “Before Me continually is grief and woundedness” (Jer. 6:7). We can wound God by our sin, so sensitive is He to us. In the end, we read that God’s “soul” departed from them, because He “rejected” them (:30). This is the same language used about Saul – God rejected him, and so His spirit departed from him (1 Sam. 15:23; 16:14). The implication was that God’s very soul / spirit is “with” us, and therefore He can be so terribly wounded by us in His heart by the rebellions of those in covenant relationship with Him. For His heart / soul / spirit is *so* close to us His beloved people.

you; lest I make you a desolation, a land not inhabited. ⁹ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel like a vine. Turn again your hand as a grape gatherer into the baskets.

¹⁰ To whom shall I speak and testify, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they can't listen. Behold, the word of Yahweh has become a reproach to them. They have no delight in it. ¹¹ Therefore I am full of the wrath of Yahweh. I am weary with holding in. Pour it out on the youths in the street, and on the assembly of young men together; for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him who is full of days. ¹² Their houses shall be turned to others, their fields and their wives together; for I will stretch out My hand on the inhabitants of the land, says Yahweh. ¹³ For from their least even to their greatest, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. ¹⁴ They have healed also the hurt of My people superficially, saying, 'Peace, peace!'

when there is no peace. ¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, says Yahweh. ¹⁶ Thus says Yahweh, Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, 'Where is the good way?' and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it'.

¹⁷ I set watchmen over you saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'. But they said, 'We will not listen!'.

¹⁸ Therefore hear, you nations, and know, congregation, what is among them. ¹⁹ Hear, earth! Behold, I will bring evil on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not listened to My words; and as for My law, they have rejected it.

²⁰ To what purpose comes there to Me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to Me. ²¹ Therefore thus says Yahweh,

6:11 We may assume that it is the leaders of a corrupt society, the opinion formers, who should be punished. But God seems to emphasize here that it's the apparently innocent members of society also who shall be punished – the children and the wives of the men who were the decision makers. The modern liberal mindset struggles with this kind of thing. But the picture is all the same of God holding an entire society culpable to judgment, as He did in punishing Egypt. It's not that the individual doesn't matter to God, nor that the righteous must perish with the wicked; but rather than the apparently insignificant individuals have more significance than we may imagine. Passive support of a corrupt regime is sinful and culpable for judgment; for holocausts happen when good people do nothing. There is in this sense no such person as the innocent bystander.

6:20 Israel weren't atheists, and they still sacrificed to Yahweh; but Jeremiah makes it clear that external religion and mere intellectual assent isn't enough. Effectively they had rejected Him for other gods.

Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people. The fathers and the sons together shall stumble against them. The neighbour and his friend shall perish.

Invasion from the North

²² Thus says Yahweh, Behold, a people comes from the north country. A great nation shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth. ²³ They take hold of bow and spear. They are cruel, and have no mercy. Their voice roars like the sea, and they ride on horses, each one set in array, as a man to the battle, against you, daughter of Zion. ²⁴ We have heard its report; our hands become feeble: anguish has taken hold of us, pains as of a woman in labour. ²⁵ Don't go forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and terror are on every side. ²⁶ Daughter of My people, clothe yourself with sackcloth, and wallow in ashes! Mourn, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; for the destroyer shall suddenly come upon us. ²⁷ I have made you a tester of met-

als and a fortress among My people; that you may know and try their way. ²⁸ They are all grievous rebels, going about with slanders; they are brass and iron: they all of them deal corruptly. ²⁹ The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed of the fire: in vain do they go on refining; for the wicked are not plucked away. ³⁰ Men will call them rejected silver, because Yahweh has rejected them.

CHAPTER 7 Jul. 17

Jeremiah Preaches at the Temple Gate

The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, ² Stand in the gate of Yahweh's house and proclaim there this word and say, 'Hear the word of Yahweh, all you of Judah, who enter in at these gates to worship Yahweh. ³ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. ⁴ Don't trust in lying words by saying, Yahweh's temple, Yahweh's temple, Yahweh's temple, are these. ⁵ For if you thoroughly amend your

6:21 *I will lay stumbling blocks* – There is a downward as well as an upward spiral in spiritual life; God at times deceives people so that they believe a lie, because they don't love truth (2 Thess. 2:11). Note that it is a serious sin for *us* to be stumbling blocks to others; but God can morally do what we can't. What *He* does at times, e.g. slaying the wicked, doesn't always mean that *we* can do the same.

6:23 *Against you, daughter of Zion* – Yahweh was Israel's God, and Zion, the temple built on Mount Zion, was His dwelling place. The pagan gods were intended to keep their temples and people safe from invaders; but the true God was quite different. He sent enemies against His own house to destroy it. The people of Judah would've had the same struggle to understand Him as those today who expect only good from their God.

6:26, 27 Jeremiah was so merged with God that it's hard to work out to whom the pronouns ["He", "My"] refer – to God or Jeremiah. "Come upon us" may reflect how even in punishing His people for their sin, God was united with them.

ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbour; ⁶ if you don't oppress the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, and don't shed innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: ⁷ then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore. ⁸ Behold, you trust in lying words, that can't profit. ⁹ Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, burn incense to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰ and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are saved; so that you may do all these abominations? ¹¹ Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says

Yahweh. ¹² But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I caused My name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. ¹³ Now, because you have done all these works, says Yahweh, and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you didn't hear; and I called you, but you didn't answer: ¹⁴ therefore thus will I do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. ¹⁵ I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

The People's Disobedience

¹⁶ Therefore don't pray for this people, neither lift up a cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.

7:10 The false 'once saved always saved' mentality leads to this kind of moral slackness. Only by enduring to the end will we be saved (Mt. 10:22).

7:13 *Rising up early* – Before the days of alarm clocks, rising before dawn required a great conscious mental effort. The words of the prophets weren't effortlessly given by God and mindlessly relayed by them. They involved real conscious expenditure of effort by both God and the prophets.

7:16 *Don't pray for this people* – Only once Israel had passed a certain level of sinfulness was Jeremiah told to cease prayer for them. Until that point, God seems to have been willing to read Jeremiah's prayer for them as their prayer (his "cry" was seen as theirs). And Ez. 14:14,18 imply the same – Noah, Daniel and Job could have delivered Israel up to a certain point, but they were *so* hardened in sin at Ezekiel's time that even those men wouldn't have saved a nation which, for a lower level of sin as it were, they could otherwise have saved. Jeremiah did however pray for his people even after this command; He knew God well enough to know that He is open to reason. At times, God reveals His intentions regarding Israel, but then the prophets make a case against this and are heard. This seems to be almost a pattern with God – to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfilment, be open to the persuasion of His people to change or amend those plans (Am. 3:7). It's as if He reveals His plans to the prophets *so that* they can then comment upon them in prayer. But in this case, God tells Jeremiah *not* to pray to Him to change His stated plans against Israel (cp. 11:14; 14:11; 15:1), as He

¹⁷ Don't you see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁸ The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of the sky, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. ¹⁹ Do they provoke Me to anger? says Yahweh. Don't they provoke themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? ²⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, My anger and My wrath shall be poured out on this place, on man, and on animal, and on the trees of the field, and on the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched. ²¹ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat meat. ²² For I didn't speak to your fathers, nor command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: ²³ but this thing I commanded them, saying, Listen to My voice, and I will be Your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you. ²⁴ But they didn't listen nor turn their ear, but

walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. ²⁵ Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: ²⁶ yet they didn't listen to Me, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff: they did worse than their fathers. ²⁷ You shall speak all these words to them; but they will not listen to you: you shall also call to them; but they will not answer you. ²⁸ You shall tell them, This is the nation that has not listened to the voice of Yahweh their God, nor received instruction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

The Sinful Deeds of the People of Judah

²⁹ Cut off your hair and throw it away, and take up a lamentation on the bare heights; for Yahweh has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath. ³⁰ For the children of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight, says Yahweh: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to defile

had asked Moses to 'leave Me alone' and not try to persuade Him to change His mind (Ex. 32:10). He didn't want, in these cases, His stated plans to be interrupted by the appeals of His people to change them. Interestingly, in both these examples, Moses and Jeremiah know God well enough, the relationship was intimate enough, for them to *still* speak with Him – and change His mind. Those who've prayed to God in cases of terminal illness [and countless other situations] will have sensed this 'battle', this 'struggle' almost, between God and His friends, His covenant people, and the element of 'persuasion' which there is going on *both* ways in the dialogue between God and ourselves. The simple fact that God really can change – there are over 40 references to His 'relenting' in Scripture – is vital to understand; for this is the basis of the prayer that changes things, that as it were wrestles with God.

it. ³¹ They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I didn't command, nor did it come into My mind. ³² Therefore behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter: for they shall bury in Topheth, until there is no place to bury. ³³ The dead bodies of this people shall be food for the birds of the sky and for the animals of the earth; and none shall frighten them away. ³⁴ Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land shall become a waste.

CHAPTER 8 Jul. 18

At that time, says Yahweh, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and

the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves; ² and they shall spread them before the sun, the moon and all the army of the sky which they have loved, and which they have served, and after which they have walked, and which they have sought, and which they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried, they shall be for dung on the surface of the earth. ³ Death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue that remain of this evil family, that remain in all the places where I have driven them, says Yahweh of Armies.

False Wisdom

⁴ Moreover you shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh: Shall men fall, and not rise up again? Shall one turn the wrong way, and not return? ⁵ Why then is this people of Jerusalem sliding back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. ⁶ I listened and heard, but they didn't speak aright: no man repents him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Each one turns

8:4 *Shall one turn the wrong way, and not return?* – We all know how when we miss the way in finding an unfamiliar address, there's a tendency to keep on going along the wrong road – because turning back is so psychologically difficult. Pride often stops us turning back; we were so convinced we were right, and what will people think as they see us retracing our steps... And this is the image that God uses here – to appeal to Israel, and ourselves, not to foolishly 'backslide', keep on turning away from Him – just because that's the course we're set upon and we lack humility. Pride is the greatest barrier to repentance; pride is indeed the essence of sin.

8:4-7 See on 5:7.

8:5 The Hebrew word for "sliding back" is that translated "return". The image is of a man on a muddy slope; he slides back either into sin, or into the way of the Lord. We must 'slide' one way or the other; every micro decision which makes up the stream of daily life is confirmed by God one way or the other. We are never passive in our spiritual path; we are either sliding back, or returning nearer to the Lord.

to his course, as a horse that rushes headlong in the battle. ⁷ Yes, the stork in the sky knows her appointed times; and the turtle-dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but My people don't know Yahweh's law.

⁸ How do you say, We are wise, and the law of Yahweh is with us? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has worked falsely. ⁹ The wise men are disappointed, they are dismayed and taken: behold, they have rejected the word of Yahweh; and what kind of wisdom is in them? ¹⁰ Therefore will I give their wives to others, and their fields to those who shall possess them: for each one from the least even to the greatest is given to covetousness; from the prophet even to the priest each one deals falsely.

¹¹ They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. ¹² Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among those who fall; in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says Yahweh. ¹³ I will utterly consume them, says Yahweh: no grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf

shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. ¹⁴ Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the fortified cities, and let us be silent there; for Yahweh our God has put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against Yahweh. ¹⁵ We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of healing, and behold, dismay! ¹⁶ The snorting of his horses is heard from Dan: at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones the whole land trembles; for they have come, and have devoured the land and all that is in it; the city and those who dwell therein. ¹⁷ For, behold, I will send serpents, adders, among you, which will not be charmed; and they shall bite you, says Yahweh.

Jeremiah Mourns for His People

¹⁸ Oh that I could comfort myself against sorrow! My heart is faint within me. ¹⁹ Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a land that is very far off: Isn't Yahweh in Zion? Isn't her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their engraved images, and with foreign vanities? ²⁰ The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. ²¹ For the hurt

8:7 *But My people don't know Yahweh's law* – In the context, God is amazed that Israel won't return – because usually there is a pattern of repentance in people, and even the birds return from where they migrated to. We expect to read 'But My people don't return to Me'; instead we read that they don't know Yahweh's law. The impact of God's word, our sensitive Bible reading, should be that we return / repent.

8:11 Peace often refers to peace with God. One of the worst sins we can commit is to tell others that their sin is not sin and that they can have peace with God about it.

8:21, 22 These could be Jeremiah's words, or Yahweh's; Jeremiah's worldview

of the daughter of my people am I hurt: I mourn; dismay has taken hold on me. ²² Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then isn't the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

CHAPTER 9 Ju1. 19

Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a spring of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! ² Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

God's Reply to Jeremiah

³ They bend their tongue, as their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth: for they proceed from evil to

evil, and they don't know Me, says Yahweh. ⁴ Beware everyone of his neighbour, and don't trust in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will go about with slanders. ⁵ They will deceive each one his neighbour and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity. ⁶ Your habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me, says Yahweh. ⁷ Therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how should I deal with the daughter of My people? ⁸ Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceit: one speaks peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he lays wait for him. ⁹ Shall I not visit them for these things, says Yahweh; shall not My soul be

merged very intensely with God's, just as ours should. They felt for Judah even when Judah were suffering "hurt" for their sins, just as parents share the hurt of the punishment they may give their child.

9:1, 2 Jeremiah's feelings here are contradictory. On the one hand, he so loved the wayward children of God that he wished he could find more tears to weep for them; on the other, he wished to go right away from them and live in total isolation, like a lonely shepherd who has a booth in which he sleeps in the desert. All God's true servants will have had these contradictory feelings; Jeremiah sets the example of ultimately sticking with God's people, indeed at the end of the book we find him going down to Egypt with them, despite God warning them not to – when he could have had a respectable retirement in the wealth of Babylon. But we can too easily assume that these are the thoughts of Jeremiah. The references to "my people" in the passage point us toward God as the person expressing these feelings. And then in :3 we have the speaker defined as God. So these were also *God's* thoughts. He wished He had human tear ducts to weep with... this was how He felt for them.

9:7 Jeremiah was told to "know and try" Israel's way, just as God said that He did (Jer. 6:27 cp. 9:7; 17:10). Our 'judging' of others, as well as ourselves, must be according to God's judgments of them.

9:9 *Such a nation as this* – Our world's devaluing and misunderstanding of sin has likely affected all of us. We see the rich abusing the poor, manipulation of all sorts going on, petty injustices, hypocrisy in the ecclesia, falsehood, cheating in business,

avenged on such a nation as this?

¹⁰ For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none passes through; neither can men hear the voice of the livestock; both the birds of the sky and the animals are fled, they are gone. ¹¹ I will make Jerusalem heaps, a dwelling place of jackals; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant. ¹² Who is the wise man, that may understand this? Who is he to whom the mouth of Yahweh has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land perished and burned up like a wilderness, so that none passes through? ¹³ Yahweh says, Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, neither walked therein, ¹⁴ but have walked after the stub-

bornness of their own heart, and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them; ¹⁵ therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. ¹⁶ I will scatter them also among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.

The Wailing Women Summoned

¹⁷ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, Consider, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for the skilful women, that they may come: ¹⁸ and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. ¹⁹ For a voice of wailing is

white lies, unkindness to ones' brethren... and we shrug and think that it's just normal, part of life as it is. And yet for the prophets, these things were a catastrophe. Saying one thing to someone whilst feeling differently about them in the heart was the reason for God passionately wishing to take vengeance "on a nation such as this" – note that the whole nation are counted as guilty, in that society just shrugged at hypocritical words. What to us are the daily minor sins and injustices of life are to God issues of cosmic proportion. Nobody in our current society would consider what you *think* to be a criminal act; and nobody did in early Israel, either. But time and again, Jeremiah passionately calls down judgment for "evil thoughts" and "evil hearts" (3:17; 4:14; 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 14:14; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17).

9:18 *A wailing for us* – As God had lamented that the destroyer would come "upon us" (6:22,26). The "us" is God and Israel. The tragedy is awful, beyond words. All commentary is bathos. His love is wondrous. God delicately speaks as if He is married to Israel, and that even in their sufferings, He would suffer with them, as a husband suffers with his wife. "The destroyer will come upon us" even sounds as if God let Himself in a way be 'destroyed' in Israel's destruction; for each of us dies a little in the death of those we love. The idea of God being destroyed in the destruction of His people may be the basis of the descriptions of Zion as being left widowed (Lam. 1:1; Is. 54:1-8). We ask the question – if she was a widow, who died? Her husband, God, was as it were dead. The very idea of the death of God is awful and obnoxious. But this was and is the depth of God's feelings at His peoples' destruction. This is the almost

heard out of Zion, How are we ruined! We are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because they have cast down our dwellings. ²⁰ Yet hear the word of Yahweh, you women, and let your ear receive the word of His mouth; and teach your daughters wailing, and each one her neighbour lamentation. ²¹ For death has come up into our windows, it is entered into our palaces; to cut off the children from outside, and the young men from the streets. ²² Speak, Thus says Yahweh, The dead bodies of men shall fall as dung on the open field, and as the handful after the harvester; and none shall gather them. ²³ Thus says Yahweh, Don't let the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, don't let the rich man glory in his riches; ²⁴ but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows Me, that I am Yahweh who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says Yahweh. ²⁵ Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will punish all those who are circumcised along with the uncircumcised: ²⁶ Egypt, Judah, Edom and the children of Ammon, Moab and all that have the corners of their hair cut off, who dwell in the wilderness; for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.

CHAPTER 10 Jul. 20

Hear the word which Yahweh speaks to you, house of Israel! ² Thus says Yahweh, Don't learn the way of the nations, and don't be dismayed at the signs of the sky; for the nations are dismayed at them. ³ For the customs of the peoples are vanity; for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the axe. ⁴ They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it not move. ⁵ They are like a palm tree, of turned work, and don't speak: they must be carried, because they can't walk. Don't be afraid of them; for they can't do evil, neither is it in them to do good.

Jeremiah's Praise of God

⁶ There is none like You, Yahweh; You are great, and Your name is great in might. ⁷ Who should not fear You, King of the nations? For it is appropriate for You; because among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their royal estate, there is none like You. ⁸ But they are together primitive and foolish: the instruction of idols! It is but a stock. ⁹ There is silver beaten into plates which is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the artificer and of the hands of the goldsmith; blue and purple for their clothing; they are all the work of skilful men. ¹⁰ But Yahweh is the true God; He is the living

unbelievable extent of God's pain and hurt for His people. Truly did it hurt God more than His children knew to punish them.

10:2 *The signs of the sky* – A reference to astrology. Our lives are totally in God's hands.

God and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth trembles, and the nations are not able to withstand His indignation. ¹¹ You shall say this to them: The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens. ¹² He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding has He stretched out the heavens: ¹³ when He utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures. ¹⁴ Every man has become primitive and without knowledge; every goldsmith is disappointed by his engraved image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. ¹⁵ They are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. ¹⁶ The portion of Jacob is not like these; for He is the former of all things; and Israel is the tribe of His inheritance: Yahweh of Armies is His name.

Coming Destruction

¹⁷ Gather up your wares out of the land, you who live under siege.

¹⁸ For thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the

land at this time, and will distress them, that they may feel it. ¹⁹ Woe is me because of my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it. ²⁰ My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth from me, and they are no more: there is none to spread my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. ²¹ For the shepherds are become primitive, and have not inquired of Yahweh: therefore they have not prospered, and all their flocks are scattered. ²² The voice of proclamation, behold, it comes, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah a desolation, a dwelling place of jackals. ²³ Yahweh, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. ²⁴ Yahweh, correct me, but in measure: not in Your anger, lest you bring me to nothing. ²⁵ Pour out Your wrath on the nations that don't know You, and on the families that don't call on Your name: for they have devoured Jacob, yes, they have devoured him and consumed him, and have laid waste his habitation.

CHAPTER 11 Jul. 21

The Covenant of God

The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, ² Hear the

10:19, 20 This interjection by Jeremiah could equally be from God; both of them identified with the hurt and pain of those who were to be punished. We can understand why God says He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked – He finds it simply so painful (Ez. 18:32; 33:11). This alone is reason to reject the unBiblical myth of God allowing eternal punishment of the wicked in ‘hell’.

10:23 Wisdom must come from outside a person, from God's word. There is no natural spiritual wisdom within human beings.

words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; ³ and say to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Cursed is the man who doesn't hear the words of this covenant, ⁴ which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace saying, Obey My voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so you shall be My people, and I will be your God; ⁵ that I may establish the oath which I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then answered I and said, Amen, Yahweh. ⁶ Yahweh said to me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem saying, Hear the words of this covenant, and do them. ⁷ For I earnestly protested to your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even to this day, rising early and protesting saying, Obey My voice. ⁸ Yet they didn't obey, nor turn their ear, but walked each one in the stubbornness of their

evil heart: therefore I brought on them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they didn't do them. ⁹ Yahweh said to me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear My words; and they are gone after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers. ¹¹ Therefore thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will bring evil on them, which they shall not be able to escape; and they shall cry to Me, but I will not listen to them. ¹² Then shall the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem go and cry to the gods to which they offer incense: but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble. ¹³ For according to the number of your cities are your gods, Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have you set up altars to the shameful thing, even altars to burn incense to Baal. ¹⁴ Therefore don't

11:2 At times of Israel's apostasy, God reconfirmed Israel's covenant relationship with Him. Note how God calls them "My beloved" even whilst listing their sins and His future rejection of them (:15). His grace is so counter-instinctive. The height of the demand, the extent of the implication of being in covenant with God ought to preclude the possibility of worshipping anything else. The covenant we have entered has constant and binding claims upon our loyalty (Dt. 29:14-18). By reminding them of the nature of their covenant relationship at a time of their moral weakness, they were being led to realize that the life of sin was not for them. And so there should be a like awareness in us when at least weekly we are reminded of our covenant bond in the communion service, celebrating the blood of the covenant made with us.

11:13 Each street of Jerusalem was named after an idol, just as was the case in Babylon – and thus Jerusalem shared Babylon's judgment. Zion lost her children and also her husband whilst still a young woman (Is. 49:21; 54:6), just as Babylon would (Is. 47:9). If we act like Babylon, we will share her judgments (Rev. 18:4).

pray for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry to Me because of their trouble. ¹⁵ What has My beloved to do in My house, since she has worked lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from you? When you do evil, then you rejoice. ¹⁶ Yahweh called your name, A green olive tree, beautiful with goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken. ¹⁷ For Yahweh of Armies, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you, because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have worked for themselves in

provoking Me to anger by offering incense to Baal. ¹⁸ Yahweh gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it: then You showed me their evil deeds.

A Plot to Kill Jeremiah

¹⁹ But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter; and I didn't know that they had devised devices against me saying, Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered. ²⁰ But, Yahweh of Armies, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, I shall see Your vengeance on them; for to You have I opened up my cause. ²¹ Therefore

11:17 *In provoking Me to anger* – This is Yahweh speaking, but earlier in the verse it's Jeremiah speaking. So often in the prophets, the pronouns change quickly. One moment we have God speaking, the next, the prophet is responding in agreement, appealing to his people, or echoing the message in his own words. So in Is. 1:2,3 we have the direct words of God, ending with "They have rebelled against me... my people does not understand". And then in Is. 1:4 we have Isaiah echoing back those thoughts of God: "They have forsaken the Lord". Prophecies begin with God speaking in the third person, and end with Him speaking in the first person; and *vice versa*. In all these examples, we see God merging with His prophet, and *vice versa* (Am. 3:1; Is. 1:2-4; 3:1,4; Is. 5:1,2 cp. 3-6; 7; 10:12; 11:3,9; 22:17,19,20; 53:10,12; Is. 61:6,8; Jer. 4:1,2,21,22; 8:13,14; 11:17; 9:1,2; 23:9,11; Nah. 1:12,13). However, there was more than an echo going on between God and the prophet. There was a kind of dialectic in the Divine-human encounter. God is influenced by man, as well as man by God. This same mutuality between God and man is possible for us too (Rev. 19:10).

11:18 *You showed me their evil deeds* – Ezekiel was likewise shown "what the house of Israel is doing in the dark" (Ez. 8:12). To pass through human life with this level of sensitivity to the amount of sin around them must've been so hard, as it is for us. Psychologically and nervously, the stress would've been awful. Hence the prophets had to be psychologically strengthened by God to endure living that sensitively in this crass and unfeeling world – hence God made Ezekiel and Jeremiah as a wall and "iron pillar" to Israel, hardened their faces, so that they wouldn't be "dismayed at [the] looks" of those who watched them with anger and consternation (1:18; 15:20; Ez. 2:4-6; 3:8,9,27). This psychological strengthening was not aimed at making them insensitive, but rather in strengthening them to live sensitively to sin in a sinful world without cracking up. And He will do the same for us, too; for the spirit of the prophets is what our testimony to Jesus is all about (Rev. 19:10).

thus says Yahweh concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life saying, You shall not prophesy in the name of Yahweh, that you not die by our hand; ²² therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; ²³ and there shall be no remnant to them: for I will bring evil on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.

CHAPTER 12 Jul. 22

Jeremiah Reasons With God

You are righteous, Yahweh, when I contend with You; yet I would reason the cause with You: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are all they at ease who deal very treacherously? ² You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; they grow, yes, they bring forth fruit: You are near in their mouth, and far from their heart. ³ But You, Yahweh, know me; You see me, and try my heart towards You: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. ⁴ How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of the whole country wither? for the wickedness of those who dwell therein, the animals are consumed,

and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our latter end. ⁵ If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? and though in a land of peace you are secure, yet how will you do in the swelling of the Jordan? ⁶ For even your brothers, and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; even they have cried aloud after you: don't believe them, though they speak beautiful words to you.

God Rejects His People

⁷ I have forsaken My house, I have cast off My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. ⁸ My heritage has become to Me as a lion in the forest: she has uttered her voice against Me; therefore I have hated her. ⁹ Is My heritage to Me as a speckled bird of prey? Are the birds of prey against her all around? Go, assemble all the animals of the field, bring them to devour. ¹⁰ Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard, they have trodden My portion under foot, they have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. ¹¹ They have made it a desolation; it mourns to Me, being desolate; the

12:1 Any doubts we have about the justice and ethics of God's ways must begin with the acceptance that God is right; therefore the difficulties we have with these things are a result of our limitations rather than any ultimate fault with Him.

12:7 *I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies* – This is how difficult it was for God to punish His beloved people. He doesn't do it from spite nor from the pleasure of retribution. The way God calls Judah His "beloved" (also 11:15; Is. 5:1) at the time of punishing her is reflected by the way in which Jesus calls Judas "friend" in the very moment of betrayal (Mt. 26:50). In wrath He remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).

whole land is made desolate, because no man lays it to heart. ¹² Destroyers have come on all the bare heights in the wilderness; for the sword of Yahweh devours from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh has peace. ¹³ They have sown wheat, and have reaped thorns; they have put themselves to pain, and profit nothing: and you shall be ashamed of your fruits, because of the fierce anger of Yahweh.

God's Promise to Other Nations

¹⁴ Thus says Yahweh against all My evil neighbours, who touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit: behold, I will pluck them up from off their land, and will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. ¹⁵ It shall happen, after that I have plucked them up, I will return and have compassion on them; and I will bring them again, every man to his inheritance, and every man to his land. ¹⁶ It shall happen, if they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, As Yahweh lives; even as they taught My people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built up in the midst of My people. ¹⁷ But if

they will not hear, then will I pluck up that nation, plucking up and destroying it, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 13 Jul. 23

Jeremiah's Linen Belt

Thus said Yahweh to me, Go, and buy yourself a linen belt, and put it on your waist, and don't put it in water. ² So I bought a belt according to the word of Yahweh, and put it on my waist. ³ The word of Yahweh came to me the second time saying, ⁴ Take the belt that you have bought, which is on your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a cleft of the rock. ⁵ So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as Yahweh commanded me. ⁶ It happened after many days that Yahweh said to me, Arise, go to the Euphrates and take the belt from there, which I commanded you to hide there. ⁷ Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and took the belt from the place where I had hidden it; and behold, the belt was ruined, it was unfit for use. ⁸ Then the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁹ Thus says Yahweh, In this way I will ruin the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ This evil people, who refuse

12:14-17 Here we have another potential prophecy – Judah could have completely returned from captivity in Babylon, and their captors could have accepted Israel's God and returned with them to a blessed life in a restored kingdom. But neither the Jews nor Babylonians / Persians really wanted it.

13:7 The whole point of Judah's exile in Babylon was to make them "ruined, unfit for use" like the cloth which Jeremiah buried by Euphrates (Jer. 13:7). And yet the second half of Isaiah is full of expressions of God's desire to use Israel after their experience in Babylon as His witness to the nations. Israel's preparation for their mission was through being made "unfit for use". And so God prepares His missionaries and ambassadors today likewise.

to hear My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their heart, and are gone after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall even be as this belt, which is profitable for nothing. ¹¹ For as the belt clings to the waist of a man, so have I caused to cling to Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, says Yahweh; that they may be to Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Wine Jars

¹² Therefore you shall speak to them this word: Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall tell you, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? ¹³ Then you shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings who sit on David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. ¹⁴ I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, says Yahweh: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have compassion, that I should not destroy them.

13:15-17 For all the issues over which the prophets could have condemned people, pride was high on their list. "I hate the pride of Jacob", Amos cried out in dismay (Am. 6:8). Jeremiah wept in secret, his eyes running with tears, "for your pride". Do we weep privately, just to ourselves, because people don't respond to our message? Only those who have a heart that bleeds will do so. We can't have an indifferent, take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

13:22, 26 The metaphors used to describe the anger of God with Israel as His wife are pretty awful. Her children to be slain with thirst, she was to be stripped naked by her husband (Hosea 2), gang raped by her lovers, having her nose cut off and left a battered, bleeding mess in the scrubland (Ez. 16,23), and here, she is to have her skirt pulled up over her head and her nakedness revealed. Did it all have to end in such

The Pride and Shame of Jerusalem

¹⁵ Hear, and give ear; don't be proud; for Yahweh has spoken. ¹⁶ Give glory to Yahweh your God, before He causes darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while you look for light, He turns it into the shadow of death, and makes it gross darkness. ¹⁷ But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret for your pride; and my eye shall weep bitterly, and run down with tears, because Yahweh's flock is taken captive. ¹⁸ Say to the king and to the queen mother, Humble yourselves, sit down; for your headdresses have come down, even the crown of your glory. ¹⁹ The cities of the South are shut up, and there is none to open them: Judah is carried away captive, all of it; it is wholly carried away captive. ²⁰ Lift up your eyes, and see those who come from the north: where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock? ²¹ What will you say, when He shall punish you? You have provoked them to be captains and rulers over you. Shall not sorrows take hold of you, as of a woman in travail? ²² If you say in your heart, Why are these things come on me? For the greatness of your iniquity

are your skirts lifted up, and your private parts suffer violence. ²³ Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. ²⁴ Therefore will I scatter them, as the stubble that passes away, by the wind of the wilderness. ²⁵ This is your lot, the portion measured to you from Me, says Yahweh; because you have forgotten Me, and trusted in falsehood. ²⁶ Therefore will I also lift your skirts up above your face, and your shame shall appear. ²⁷ I have seen your abominations, even your adulteries, and your neighing,

the lewdness of your prostitution, on the hills in the field. Woe to you, Jerusalem! You will not be made clean; how long shall it yet be?

CHAPTER 14 Jul. 24

The Drought

The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought. ² Judah mourns, and its gates languish, they sit in black on the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. ³ Their nobles send their little ones to the waters: they come to the cisterns, and find no water; they return with their vessels empty; they

brutality and vulgarity? Today, sex and violence are what attract attention. From lyrics of songs to advertising and movies, that's clear enough. And the prophets are using the same tactics to arrest Israel's attention, all the more so because nudity and sex were things simply not up for public discussion. There's an anxiety which any talk about sex seems to arouse in us, and it was the prophets' intention to make us likewise get on the edge of our seats, anxious, rapt, sensitive for the next word... realizing that really and truly, this is what human sin does to God. The outrageous sex talk was to bring out how outrageous and obscene are our sins and unfaithfulness to the covenant we cut with God in baptism. God paints Himself as acting with the anger of a very angry husband, whose anger is rooted in the profoundness of His love for His wife. There is a dark side to intimacy. It's why families, lovers, both spiritual and natural, experience the heights of both love and frustration / anger with each other. With a love like God's, it's inevitable that there is a strong element of jealousy and potential hurt over us. It has to be so. And yet the story of the prophets never ends with the angry judgment – amazingly, given this level of anger and judgment / retribution, there is always the passionate appeal for Israel to return, to recover love, romance and intimacy in the relationship. But the shocking sexual language and imagery of the prophets was in order to help Israel see that this was how far they had outraged God. It was and is a rhetoric that cannot be forgotten, shrugged off, re-interpreted. The rhetoric pushes relentlessly for a response in our consciences. Just as for a woman to have her skirt ripped above her head and her nakedness displayed was ultimately humiliating for her, so Israel had humiliated God by their sin (13:25-27); their actions were just as shocking and obscene. And yet we so minimize sin. Just a bit of injustice, a little touch of selfishness, a moment of hypocrisy... but all this is obscene treatment of our God. We all know the downward spiral into sin... how once we start, we can't stop. But when Israel were like this, they are likened to a female camel in insatiable heat (2:23-25; 5:7-9). We'd just rather not read that, or retranslate the words to make it seem somehow different. But we're dealing with serious matters here. Sin is serious to God.

are disappointed and confounded, and cover their heads. ⁴ Because of the ground which is cracked, because no rain has been in the land, the ploughmen are disappointed, they cover their heads. ⁵ Yes, the hind also in the field calves and forsakes her young, because there is no grass. ⁶ The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights, they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail, because there is no greenery to eat. ⁷ Though our iniquities testify against us, work for Your name's sake, Yahweh; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against You. ⁸ You hope of Israel, its Saviour in the time of trouble, why should You be as a foreigner in the land, and as a wayfaring man who turns aside to stay for a night? ⁹ Why should You be like a scared man, as a mighty man who can't save? Yet You, Yahweh, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name; don't leave us. ¹⁰ Thus says Yahweh to this people, Even so have they loved to wander; they have not refrained their feet: therefore Yahweh does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

Lying Prophets

¹¹ Yahweh said to me, Don't pray for this people for their good. ¹² When

they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and meal offering, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, by the famine and by the plague. ¹³ Then I said, Ah, Lord Yahweh! Behold, the prophets tell them, You shall not see the sword, neither shall you have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. ¹⁴ Then Yahweh said to me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name; I didn't send them, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke I to them: they prophesy to you a lying vision and divination, a thing of nothing and the deceit of their own heart. ¹⁵ Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name and I didn't send them, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. ¹⁶ The people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them—they, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness on them. ¹⁷ You shall say this word to them, Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease; for the virgin daughter of

14:8, 9 God is presented as a tragic figure here, desolated by the loss of His people, left as a mighty man that cannot save, as a wayfaring man wandering through His own deserted land; as Israel wandered amongst the nations (:10), so God as it were wanders too, so identified with them is He. This is how difficult it is for God to punish His people; for He so suffers in their suffering. It is in a sense therefore 'easier' for Him to forgive and save us.

14:17 *The virgin daughter of my people* – Yet Israel are elsewhere in Jeremiah described as a sexually addicted prostitute, and the rape hinted at here is understood in

my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous wound.

¹⁸ If I go forth into the field, then, behold, the slain with the sword! If I enter into the city, then, behold, those who are sick with famine! For both the prophet and the priest go about in the land, and have no knowledge.

¹⁹ Have You utterly rejected Judah? Has Your soul loathed Zion? Why have You struck us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of healing, and behold, dismay! ²⁰ We acknowledge, Yahweh, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against You.

²¹ Do not abhor us, for Your name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of Your glory: remember, don't break Your covenant with us. ²² Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain? or can the sky give showers? Aren't You He, Yahweh our God? Therefore we will wait for You; for You have made all these things.

CHAPTER 15 Jul. 25

The People Will be Punished

Then Yahweh said to me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before

Me, yet My mind would not be towards this people: cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth. ² It shall happen, when they tell you, Where shall we go forth? Then you shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh: Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for captivity, to captivity. ³ I will appoint over them four kinds, says Yahweh: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, the birds of the sky and the animals of the land, to devour and to destroy. ⁴ I will cause them to be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the land because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. ⁵ For who will have pity on you, Jerusalem? Or who will bemoan you? Or who will turn aside to ask of your welfare? ⁶ You have rejected Me, says Yahweh, you have gone backward: therefore have I stretched out My hand against you and destroyed you; I am weary with relenting. ⁷ I have winnowed them with a fan in the gates of the land; I have bereaved them of children, I have destroyed My people; they didn't return from

13:22,26 as the deserved punishment she received from the Babylonians. We have here a reflection of God's own divided mind about His sinful people; on one hand loving them and seeing them as innocent, on the other, recognizing their sin and who they really were.

14:20 *We have sinned* – Again we see Jeremiah's identity with His people, not considering himself somehow uninvolved with their failures.

15:1 The implication is that when an individual or group of God's people have a modicum of spirituality, then one individual like Moses is able to make Him feel positively toward them. The power of third party intercession for others means that we should constantly be in prayer for our brethren. But 'the power of one' works the other way, too; for :4 speaks as if all Judah suffered because of the *sins* of one man.

their ways. ⁸ Their widows are increased to Me above the sand of the seas; I have brought on them against the mother of the young men a destroyer at noonday: I have caused anguish and terrors to fall on her suddenly. ⁹ She who has borne seven languishes; she has given up the spirit; her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she has been disappointed and confounded: and their residue will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, says Yahweh.

Jeremiah Complains to God

¹⁰ Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole land! I have not lent, neither have men lent to me; yet everyone of them curses me. ¹¹ Yahweh said, Most certainly I will strengthen you for good; most

certainly I will cause the enemy to make supplication to you in the time of evil and in the time of affliction. ¹² Can one break iron, even iron from the north, and brass? ¹³ Your substance and your treasures will I give for a spoil without price, and that for all your sins, even in all your borders. ¹⁴ I will make them to pass with your enemies into a land which you don't know; for a fire is kindled in My anger, which shall burn on you. ¹⁵ Yahweh, you know; remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; don't take me away in Your long suffering: know that for Your sake I have suffered reproach. ¹⁶ Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your words were to me the joy and the delight of my heart: for I am called by Your name, Yahweh, God of Armies. ¹⁷ I didn't sit in the

15:15 Jeremiah asks for vengeance on his persecutors, and in :18 accuses God of deceiving him. God's response is to ask him to repent of this, so that he can resume his prophetic work: "If you [Jeremiah] return, then I will restore you, and you shall stand before Me [prophetic language]. If you utter what is precious, and not what is base, you shall be as My mouth" (:19). Perhaps Jeremiah had this incident in mind when he commented: "The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against His word" (Lam. 1:18). This indicates that at least in Jeremiah's case, he was not irresistibly carried along by the Spirit in some kind of ecstasy, having no option but to speak God's word. His speaking of God's word required that he shared the essentially loving and gracious spirit / disposition of his God. This incident is also another example of how God's preachers so often don't want to do the work; God tends to use those who are weak and feel inadequate to share His word with others, not the fluent and self-assured.

15:16 Jeremiah had found God's word and eaten it, and as a result, "I am called by Your name" – the language of a woman marrying and taking her husband's name (Is. 4:1). The word of God was his "joy [and] delight" – two words used four times elsewhere in Jeremiah, and always in the context of the joy of a wedding (7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11). Jeremiah saw his prophetic task as actually a marriage to God, an in-breathing of His word and being, to the point that he could say that he personally was "full of the wrath / passion of God" (6:11). No wonder these prophets felt alone amongst men. They had a relationship with God which others couldn't enter into, which totally affected their lives and beings. The preacher / testifier of Jesus knows something of this spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

assembly of those who make merry, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of Your hand; for You have filled me with indignation. ¹⁸ Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will You indeed be to me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?

God Replies

¹⁹ Therefore thus says Yahweh, If you return, then I will restore you, and you shall stand before Me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is base, you shall be as My mouth: they shall return to you, but you shall not return to them. ²⁰ I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall; and they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you to save you and to deliver you, says Yahweh. ²¹ I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you out of the hand of the terrible.

CHAPTER 16 Jul. 26

How Jeremiah Is to Live His Life

The word of Yahweh came also to me saying, ² You shall not take

a wife, neither shall you have sons or daughters in this place. ³ For thus says Yahweh concerning the sons and concerning the daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them, and concerning their fathers who became their father in this land: ⁴ They shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground; and they shall be consumed by the sword and by famine; and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the sky, and for the animals of the earth. ⁵ For thus says Yahweh, Don't enter into the house of mourning, neither go to lament, neither bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people, says Yahweh, even loving kindness and tender mercies. ⁶ Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them; ⁷ neither shall men break bread for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of

15:17 Jeremiah "sat alone". Not only was the prophets' perspective on human sinfulness so very different to that of their audience. They preached a message which was counter-cultural and attacked the very bases of the assumptions which lay at the core of individual and social life in Israel. They appeared to back Israel's enemies. They and their message were therefore rejected.

15:19 Jeremiah often makes a play upon the Hebrew word *shub* – it can mean to turn away (from God), and also to 'turn back' or repent (e.g. 3:1,7,10,12,14,19,22; 4:1). If Jeremiah and Judah turned in repentance, then God would return / restore them to their land; if they turned away from Him, He would turn them out into the Gentile world. Our lives are a twisting and turning, either to or away from God; and God is waiting to confirm us in those twists and turns.

16:7 The communion meal is in one sense designed to be for our comfort as we mourn the death of Jesus.

consolation to drink for their father or for their mother.⁸ You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and to drink.⁹ For thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.¹⁰ It shall happen, when you shall show this people all these words and they shall tell you, Why has Yahweh pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against Yahweh our God?

Exile and Return

¹¹ Then you shall tell them, Because your fathers have forsaken Me, says Yahweh, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken Me, and have not kept My law;¹² and you have done evil more than your fathers; for behold, you walk each one after the stubbornness of his evil heart, so that you don't listen to Me:¹³ therefore will

I cast you forth out of this land into the land that you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, where I will not show you favour; and there you shall serve other gods day and night.¹⁴ Therefore behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that it shall no more be said, As Yahweh lives, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;¹⁵ but, As Yahweh lives, who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries where He had driven them. I will bring them again into their land that I gave to their fathers.¹⁶ Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says Yahweh, and they shall fish them up; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and from every hill and out of the clefts of the rocks.¹⁷ For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, neither is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.¹⁸ First I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they have polluted My land with the carcasses of their detestable things, and have filled

16:13 The passion and love of God leads Him time and again to apparently contradict Himself. He says that He will cast Judah out of their land, they would go to Babylon and serve other gods there, “where I will not show you favour”. But actually Esther and her people were shown favour there (s.w. Esther 4:8; 8:5). God was gracious [s.w. ‘to show favour’] to those in exile (Is. 30:18,9; Am. 5:15; Mal. 1:9). But Jeremiah goes on to state that God would not ever hide His eyes / face from the iniquity they had committed, i.e. the reason why they were in captivity (:17). But actually He did do just that – He hid His eyes from the sin of Judah and the sin of the exiles (Is. 65:16); the hiding of His face from them was in fact not permanent but for a brief moment (Is. 54:8). God then outlines a plan – He will recompense their sin double, and this would lead them back to Him (:18). But this was to be an unrepeatable, once-for-all program that would “cause them to know My hand... and they shall now that My name is Yahweh” (:21).

My inheritance with their abominations. ¹⁹ Yahweh, my strength, my stronghold and my refuge in the day of affliction, to You shall the nations come from the ends of the land and shall say, Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, vanity and things in which there is no profit. ²⁰ Shall a man make to himself gods, which yet are no gods? ²¹ Therefore behold, I will cause them to know, this once will I cause them to know My hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is Yahweh.

CHAPTER 17 Jul. 27

Punishment for Judah

The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of your altars; ² while their children remember their altars and their Asherim by the green trees on the high hills. ³ My mountain in the field, I will give your substance and all your treasures for a spoil, and your high places, because of sin, throughout all your borders. ⁴ You, even of yourself, shall discontinue from your inheritance that I gave you; and I will cause

you to serve your enemies in the land which you don't know: for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever. ⁵ Thus says Yahweh: Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from Yahweh. ⁶ For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited. ⁷ Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, and whose trust Yahweh is. ⁸ For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, who spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. ⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it? ¹⁰ I, Yahweh, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his works, according to the fruit of his doings. ¹¹ As the partridge that sits on eggs which she has not laid, so is he who gets riches, and not by right; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool.

16:18 *I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double* – But God punished Israel less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). He surely said this :18 in anger, and later relented. He is revealed as an emotional, passionate God.

17:1 The simple interpretation of this would be that sin has permanent consequences upon our heart or mind.

17:9 In the context, this is a description of the state of Judah's heart at Jeremiah's time (18:12). Our hearts are indeed deceitful, but God judges us according to what is in our heart (:10). It's not the case that we are born with a sinful heart and so we will inevitably be condemned for having one. The Lord Jesus was of our human nature and yet He never sinned; whatever we say about human nature we say about Him.

17:10 God searches our heart in order to judge our works; because how we think is how we act – in the end.

Jeremiah Prays to God

¹² A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. ¹³ Yahweh, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be disappointed. Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken Yahweh, the spring of living waters. ¹⁴ Heal me, O Yahweh, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are my praise. ¹⁵ Behold, they tell me, Where is the word of Yahweh? let it come now. ¹⁶ As for me, I have not hurried from being a shepherd after you; neither have I desired the woeful day; you know: that which came out of my lips was before Your face. ¹⁷ Don't be a terror to me: You are my refuge in the day of evil. ¹⁸ Let them be disappointed who persecute me, but let not me be disappointed; let them be dismayed, but don't let me be dismayed; bring on them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

Observance of the Sabbath

¹⁹ Thus said Yahweh to me: Go, and stand in the gate of the children of the people through which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; ²⁰ and tell them, Hear the word of Yahweh, you kings of Judah,

and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: ²¹ Thus says Yahweh, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; ²² neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do any work: but make the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers. ²³ But they didn't listen neither turn their ear, but made their neck stiff that they might not hear and might not receive instruction. ²⁴ It shall happen, if you diligently listen to Me, says Yahweh, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but to make the Sabbath day holy, to do no work therein; ²⁵ then shall there enter in by the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever. ²⁶ They shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places around Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the lowland, and from the hill country, and from the South, bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, meal offerings and frankincense, and bringing sacrifices of thanksgiving to the house of Yah-

17:13 The first half of the verse is Jeremiah praying to God; God responds in the second half of the verse; and the prayer resumes in :14. Prayer isn't simply requests, it involves meditation, reflections and thinking of God's response.

17:25 If Judah had been obedient, it's possible that God's Kingdom as it was in the form of Israel could have developed into His full Kingdom on earth. He has set up all kinds of potential situations throughout history, which tragically have been unfulfilled because of human weakness.

weh. ²⁷ But if you will not listen to Me to make the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

CHAPTER 18 Jul. 28

Jeremiah Goes to the Potter's House

The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, ² Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words. ³ Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he was making a work on the wheels. ⁴ When the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made of it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. ⁵ Then the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁶ House of Israel, can't I

do with you as this potter? Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel. ⁷ At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation or kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; ⁸ if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them. ⁹ At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation or kingdom, to build and to plant it; ¹⁰ if they do that which is evil in My sight, that they not obey My voice, then I will repent of the good, with which I said I would benefit them. ¹¹ Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return you now each one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. ¹² But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and

17:27 This eternal fire is paralleled with God's eternal wrath (:4). The punishment for the wicked is eternal death (Rom. 6:23); not conscious existence in fire. Fire consumes back to dust. The eternity of God's anger will be in the sense that sinners will be punished by eternal death; but death is unconsciousness.

18:4-8 The clay clearly represents people, made as we are from dust. God's purpose is in some sense open-ended, in that He has intentions for us which can be ruined by how we poorly respond to the potter's hand. This doesn't mean that God's words of judgment or promise are unreliable; but rather that His sensitivity to human behaviour is such that He will change His intention in accordance with their response to His statement of those intentions. God's statement that He would destroy Nineveh in 40 days is maybe the clearest example; He added no conditions, just stated this would happen. And yet they repented; and He changed and didn't fulfil His specific word of judgment.

18:8 Due to Moses' prayer, "the Lord repented of the evil which He had said He would do unto His people" (Ex. 32:14 RV). Yet these are the very words of 18:8 – if a *nation* repents, then God will repent. But in this case, God accepted the singular prayer of Moses as if it were the prayer of the whole community. We can influence God positively for others' blessing.

we will do everyone after the stubbornness of his evil heart. ¹³ Therefore thus says Yahweh: Ask now among the nations, who has heard such things; the virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing. ¹⁴ Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? Shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up? ¹⁵ For My people have forgotten Me, they have burned incense to false gods; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in byways, in a way not built up; ¹⁶ to make their land an astonishment and a perpetual hissing; everyone who passes thereby shall be astonished and shake his head. ¹⁷ I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity. ¹⁸ Then they said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Jeremiah Prays about His Enemies

¹⁹ Give heed to me, Yahweh, and listen to the voice of those who contend with me. ²⁰ Shall evil be recompensed for good? For they have dug a pit for my soul. Remember how I stood before You to speak good for them, to turn away Your wrath from

them. ²¹ Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and give them over to the power of the sword; and let their wives become childless and widows; and let their men be slain of death, and their young men struck of the sword in battle. ²² Let a cry be heard from their houses, when You shall bring a troop suddenly on them; for they have dug a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. ²³ Yet, Yahweh, You know all their counsel against me to kill me; don't forgive their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from Your sight; but let them be overthrown before You; may You deal with them in the time of Your anger.

CHAPTER 19 Jul. 29

Jeremiah Breaks a Bottle

Thus said Yahweh, Go and buy a potter's earthen bottle, and take some of the elders of the people and of the elders of the priests; ² and go forth to the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell you; ³ and say, Hear the word of Yahweh, kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil on this place, which whoever hears, his ears shall tingle. ⁴ Because they have forsaken Me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it to other gods that they didn't know,

18:20 Jeremiah said that God's wrath was his wrath, "I am full of the wrath of God" (6:11), and yet he stood before God "to turn away Your wrath from them". Jeremiah like us was as it were a bridge between God and man; as a prophet he saw the world through the eyes of God, and yet he was himself a man.

they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents, ⁵ and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt offerings to Baal; which I didn't command, nor spoke it, neither came it into My mind: ⁶ therefore, behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter. ⁷ I will nullify the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life: and their dead bodies will I give to be food for the birds of the sky, and for the animals of the earth. ⁸ I will make this city an astonishment, and a hissing; everyone who passes thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues. ⁹ I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters; and they shall eat each one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies, and those who seek their life, shall distress them. ¹⁰ Then you shall break the bottle in the sight

of the men who go with you, ¹¹ and shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, that can't be made whole again; and they shall bury in Topheth, until there is no place to bury. ¹² Thus will I do to this place, says Yahweh, and to its inhabitants, even making this city as Topheth: ¹³ and the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah, which are defiled, shall be as the place of Topheth, even all the houses on whose roofs they have burned incense to all the army of the sky, and have poured out drink offerings to other gods.

Jeremiah Warns the People

¹⁴ Then came Jeremiah from Topheth, where Yahweh had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of Yahweh's house and said to all the people: ¹⁵ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring on this city and on all its towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have made their neck stiff, that they may not hear My words.

19:9 This verse in the LXX seems to be alluded to by Paul when he says that we today can bite and devour one another in gossip and slander (Gal. 5:15). By doing so, we will be living out our condemnation, acting as if we are Judah under Divine judgment at the hands of the Babylonians.

19:11 The world will be broken to shivers, "as the vessels of a potter" (Rev. 2:26). But this is in fact quoting Jeremiah's words concerning the breaking of the individual believer who is rejected at the last day (cp. 18:4-6). The point of the quotation is surely that those Christ rejects will share the world's condemnation.

19:15 *I will bring on this city and on all its towns all the evil that I have pronounced* – This may appear to be stating the obvious, until we appreciate that God pronounced the evil whilst being fully open to changing His mind about it – see on 18:4-8. God is therefore saying here that the time of His openness to persuasion against His intention

CHAPTER 20 Jul. 30***Pashhur Puts Jeremiah in Stocks***

Now Pashhur the son of Immer the priest, who was chief officer in the house of Yahweh, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.

² Then Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin, which was in the house of Yahweh.

³ It happened on the next day, that Pashhur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then Jeremiah said to him, Yahweh has not called your name Pashhur, but Magor-missabib.

⁴ For thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself, and to all your friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall see it; and I will give all Judah into the hand of the

king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall kill them with the sword. ⁵ Moreover I will give all the riches of this city, and all its gains, and all the precious things of it, yes, all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies; and they shall make them a prey, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. ⁶ You, Pashhur, and all who dwell in your house shall go into captivity; and you shall come to Babylon, and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you, and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely.

Jeremiah Complains to God

⁷ Yahweh, you have seduced me, and I was seduced; You are stronger than me, and I am overcome: I am

to destroy them is now closing. Every moment we live, we live within the frames of amazing possibilities in terms of dialogue with our gracious, open-ended God.

20:6 Publically, Jeremiah appears bold and undeflected by opposition and persecution. But :7-10 show how internally, he was so sensitive to it all. When we feel the same, we can remember Jeremiah.

20:7 Despite the unity of spirit between God and Jeremiah, the prophets weren't always forced to say the words. Jeremiah didn't want to say them at times, the weariness of it all got on top of him; and yet he felt unable to walk away, just as God felt with Israel. But there were times when he outright rebelled. Here Jeremiah complains: "Yahweh, You have seduced me [s.w. Ex. 22:16 of a man seducing a woman], and I was seduced; You are stronger than me [s.w. Dt. 22:15] and I am overcome" (Abraham Heschel's translation understands "stronger than" to imply rape; most translations are too embarrassed to render the words as they really are). The extreme language isn't surprising given that Jeremiah was suicidal (:14-18) and likely bi-polar – consider how he oscillates between praise in :13 and a death wish in :14. So here in :7 Jeremiah is saying that he was attracted by God, he was seduced by Him, but then the whole thing became too much – he felt his soul had been inappropriately taken over. And yet in 15:16 he says that he had found God's word and eaten it of his own freewill, and as a result, "I am called by Your name" – the language of a woman marrying and taking her husband's name (Is. 4:1). But here, Jeremiah felt he had been forcibly used and not married. He resented the complete takeover of his heart. But he reasons himself through it, until in :13 he can come to again praise Yahweh in ecstasy, and recognize

become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocks me. ⁸ For whenever I speak, I cry out Your word; I cry, Violence and destruction! But the word of Yahweh is made a reproach to me and a derision all the day. ⁹ If I say, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name; then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I can't. ¹⁰ For I have heard the defaming of many, terror on every side. Denounce, and we will denounce him, say all my familiar friends, those who watch for my fall; Perhaps he will be persuaded, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. ¹¹ But Yahweh is with me as an awesome mighty one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail; they shall be utterly disappointed, because they have not dealt wisely, even with an everlasting dishonour which shall never be forgotten. ¹² But, Yahweh of Armies, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see Your vengeance on them; for to You have I revealed my cause. ¹³ Sing to Yahweh, praise Yahweh; for He has delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evildoers. ¹⁴ Cursed is the day in which I was born: don't let the day in which my mother bore me be blessed. ¹⁵ Cursed is the man who brought news to my father saying, A boy is born to you; making him very

glad. ¹⁶ Let that man be as the cities which Yahweh overthrew, and didn't relent: and let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noontime; ¹⁷ because God didn't kill me from the womb; and so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb always great. ¹⁸ Why came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

CHAPTER 21 Jul. 31

Jeremiah's Message for Zedekiah

The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, when king Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest saying, ² Please inquire of Yahweh for us; for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon makes war against us: perhaps Yahweh will deal with us according to all His wondrous works, that He may go up from us. ³ Then Jeremiah said to them, You shall tell Zedekiah: ⁴ Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who besiege you without the walls; and I will gather them into the midst of this city. ⁵ I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, wrath and great indignation. ⁶ I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man

that he had simply revealed to God how he felt in that moment, which God knew anyway because He sees and knows all things (:12).

20:14 Here Jeremiah quotes Job's words; even in his depression, he perceived the similarities between himself and other depressed Biblical heroes.

and animal: they shall die of a great plague. ⁷ Afterward, says Yahweh, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even such as are left in this city from the plague, from the sword and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life: and he shall strike them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy. ⁸ To this people you shall say, Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. ⁹ He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he who goes out, and passes over to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be to him for a prey. ¹⁰ For I have set My face against this city for evil and not for good, says Yahweh: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

A Warning for the Royal Family of Judah

¹¹ Touching the house of the king of Judah, hear the word of Yahweh: ¹² House of David, thus says Yahweh, Execute justice in the morning, and deliver him who is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor, lest My wrath go forth like fire, and burn so that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. ¹³ Behold, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley and of the rock of the plain, says Yahweh; you that say, who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter into our habitations? ¹⁴ I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, says Yahweh; and I will kindle a fire in her forest, and it shall devour all that is around her.

CHAPTER 22 Aug. 1

How the People of Judah Could Have Pleased God

Thus said Yahweh: Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word saying, ² Hear

21:6 *They shall die of a great plague* – There seems no record of this happening, indeed the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem wasn't as awful as it could have been; because God in His love and grace for a faithless people reduced the judgment threatened? Likewise the threat that none would be spared (:7) must be compared against the fact that many Jews were saved alive and taken into captivity in Babylon.

21:9 By surrendering to the Babylonians they would be expressing their recognition that they had indeed sinned, and should rightfully be placed in the hands of their enemies.

21:12 Even at this very late stage, with Jerusalem surrounded (:2,4), God was prepared to relent and not fulfil all the prophetic words of destruction; His wrath was still capable of being quenched. Unquenchable or eternal fire therefore refers to the wrath of God which has reached such a point that it can no longer be extinguished; but once the objects of that wrath are 'burnt', as the metaphor requires, they will not exist eternally in that burning process. Notice that the one thing He so wished to see was "justice" – because this is the epitome of so much spirituality and right behaviour. This is how very sensitive He is to how we treat each other.

the word of Yahweh, king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter in by these gates. ³ Thus says Yahweh: Execute justice and righteousness, and deliver him who is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence, to the foreigner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place. ⁴ For if you do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. ⁵ But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself, says Yahweh, that this house shall become a desolation. ⁶ For thus says Yahweh concerning the house of the king of Judah: You are Gilead to Me, the head of Lebanon. Yet surely I will make you a wilderness, cities which are not inhabited. ⁷ I will prepare destroyers against you, each

one with his weapons; they shall cut down your choice cedars and cast them into the fire. ⁸ Many nations shall pass by this city and shall say every man to his neighbour, Why has Yahweh done thus to this great city? ⁹ Then they shall answer, Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Punishment for the Kings of Judah

¹⁰ Don't weep for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep bitterly for him who goes away into exile; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. ¹¹ For thus says Yahweh touching Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went forth out of this place: He shall not return there any more. ¹² But in the place where they have led him captive, there shall he die, and he shall see this land no more. ¹³ Woe to him

22:2 Jeremiah must've been so nervous when he learnt to whom he must preach. He'd have had to take a deep breath to say these things, just as we have to when trying to swing a conversation around to witnessing to Christ to those we feel awed by or would far rather not witness to.

22:3 In giving Israel the reasons for their destruction, God parallels their breaking covenant with Him, with their injustice (21:12; 22:3,9,13). Mal. 2:8,10,14 speaks of how a broken covenant with God is related to a broken covenant with our brethren and our partner. The nature of our covenant relationship with God is reflected in our relationships with each other. If we sense the grace of God shown to us in covenant relationship, we will respond by having justice and integrity toward others in all our ways, awed as we will be by the certainty and reliability of His grace to us through His covenant with us.

22:6 Note the dramatic contrast within this verse. God so loved Judah, He saw them as beautiful, and yet with those feelings in mind He was going to destroy them. They were so wicked and rebellious against them, but truly He loved them with a father's love. His punishment of them wasn't the offended wrath of a capricious deity. If God has such love for the condemned and rebellious just because they are His children; how much more confident can we be of His grace toward us who are in Christ.

who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his rooms by injustice; who uses his neighbour's service without wages, and doesn't give him his hire; ¹⁴ who says, I will build me a wide house and spacious rooms, and cuts him out windows; and makes a ceiling with cedar, painted with vermilion. ¹⁵ Shall you reign, because you strive to excel in cedar? Didn't your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. ¹⁶ He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Wasn't this to know Me? says Yahweh. ¹⁷ But your eyes and your heart are not but for your covetousness, and for shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. ¹⁸ Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: they shall not lament for him saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister!

They shall not lament for him saying Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! ¹⁹ He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up your voice in Bashan, and cry from Abarim; for all your lovers are destroyed. ²¹ I spoke to you in your prosperity; but you said, I will not hear. This has been your way from your youth, that you didn't obey My voice. ²² The wind shall feed all your shepherds, and your lovers shall go into captivity: surely then you will be ashamed and confounded for all your wickedness. ²³ Inhabitant of Lebanon, who makes your nest in the cedars, how greatly to be pitied you will be when pangs come on you, the pain as of a woman in travail! ²⁴ As I live, says Yahweh, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet on My right hand, yet

22:13-19 This is a passionate condemnation of Jehoiakim for building an extension to his house, using his neighbours as workmen and not giving them the agreed wages. We see this sort of thing all the time. And shrug and think it good fortune it didn't happen to us. But that's not the spirit of prophecy; God and the prophets were so sensitive to that kind of abuse of power. No matter how poor we may be, we each have power in some form over others in the context of our relationships with them, and we are not to misuse it.

22:16 To know God means to have an active relationship with Him, which will involve showing care and justice towards the poor.

22:22 *Surely then you will be ashamed* – God was so [apparently] sure that the exile would bring about Judah's repentance and return to Him. But actually the very opposite happened. It's rather like "They will reverence My son" (Mt. 21:37) – when actually they crucified Him. It's an indication of His passion and how deeply He wishes His plans of redemption for us to work out. He's not ashamed to as it were humiliate Himself, lay Himself open to petty critics, in His passion for us.

22:24 God's knowledge of possible futures is brought out several times in Jeremiah. He considered how even if Coniah were the signet upon His right hand, yet He would still have to uproot Israel. He fantasized about how if the prophets had been faithful and if Israel had heard them, then Israel would have repented (23:22). This reveals the extent of His passion for us; and it's this knowledge which must make His experience of us so tragic and sad, more than we can ever know. He knows all the infinite num-

would I pluck you from there; ²⁵ and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of them of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. ²⁶ I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you will die. ²⁷ But to the land to which their soul longs to return, to it they shall not return. ²⁸ Is this man Coniah a despised broken vessel? Is he a vessel in which none delights? Why are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they don't know? ²⁹ O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Yahweh. ³⁰ Thus says Yahweh, Write you this man childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling in Judah.

CHAPTER 23 Aug. 2

Hope for the Future

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of

My pasture! says Yahweh. ² Therefore thus says Yahweh the God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit on you the evil of your doings, says Yahweh. ³ I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴ I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, says Yahweh. ⁵ Behold, the days come says Yahweh, that I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name by which he shall be called: Yahweh our righteousness. ⁷ Therefore behold, the days come says Yahweh, that they shall no more say, As Yahweh lives, who brought up the children of Israel

bers of possible futures there could have been if we were more faithful. This thought alone should inspire us to try to live up more to our potentials, to trade our talents, and thus to experience His working with us.

23:2 Both God and the pastors of Israel are described as having 'driven out' Israel from their land (:2,3,8); the pastors' sin resulted in all the people sinning and deserving judgment, and God worked with this system, confirming His people in the evil way they had taken. There is no doubt that we can be counted responsible for making another brother sin, even though he too bears responsibility for that sin.

23:5 Jesus was the final fulfilment of this "branch"; He was a branch of David in the sense that He had David as His ancestor (Lk. 1:31-35). He therefore didn't pre-exist as a person before the time of David.

23:6 *Yahweh our righteousness* – Jesus never sinned, He was as righteous as God in His character. By baptism into Him, that righteousness is counted to us; and thereby He is for us the means to God's righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30).

out of the land of Egypt; ⁸ but, As Yahweh lives, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries where I had driven them. They shall dwell in their own land.

Unfaithful Prophets and their Punishment

⁹ Concerning the prophets. My heart within me is broken, all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of Yahweh, and because of His holy words. ¹⁰ For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourns; the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their way is evil, and their might is not right; ¹¹ for both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house have I found their wickedness, says Yahweh. ¹² Therefore their way shall be to them as slippery places in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein; for I will bring evil on them, even the year of their visitation, says Yahweh. ¹³ I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they

prophesied by Baal, and caused My people Israel to err. ¹⁴ In the prophets of Jerusalem also I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that none does return from his wickedness: they are all of them become to Me as Sodom, and its inhabitants as Gomorrah. ¹⁵ Therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Jerusalem is ungodliness gone forth into all the land.

A Warning from God

¹⁶ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, Don't listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Yahweh. ¹⁷ They say continually to those who despise Me, Yahweh has said, You shall have peace; and to each one who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come on you. ¹⁸ For who has stood in the council

23:10 Human "might is not right"; human power is fiercely criticized by the prophets. One of the most striking features of the prophets is their denunciation of human power. Judah were doing what was humanly sensible and smart. To trust in politics, in what seems the usual human response to an issue rather than trust in God, is in fact something which breaks God's heart. The life of faith in God is simply the very opposite of what seems humanly sensible. To give money we'd surely be better saving; risk our lives and health for another; neglect our business or career for the sake of the Lord's work. These ought to be the *normal* decisions we make, if we are walking in step with the spirit; and yet it would appear that they are the exceptions to the rule of far too many of our lives. And the point is, God's heart broke because His people were and are like this (:9).

23:12 *They shall be driven on, and fall* – God confirms people in the downward spiral they choose.

of Yahweh, that he should perceive and hear His word? Who has noted My word, and heard it? ¹⁹ Behold, the storm of Yahweh, His wrath, has gone forth. Yes, a whirling storm. It shall burst on the head of the wicked. ²⁰ The anger of Yahweh shall not return, until He has executed, and until He has performed the intents of His heart: in the latter days you shall understand it perfectly. ²¹ I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I didn't speak to them, yet they prophesied. ²² But if they had stood in My council, then had they caused My people to hear My words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. ²³ Am I a God at hand, says Yahweh, and not a God afar off? ²⁴ Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? says Yahweh. Don't I fill heaven and earth? says Yahweh. ²⁵ I have heard what the prophets have said, who prophesy lies in My name saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. ²⁶ How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, even the prophets of the deceit of their own heart? ²⁷ Who think to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. ²⁸ The prophet who has a dream, let

him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the straw to the wheat? says Yahweh. ²⁹ Isn't My word like fire? says Yahweh; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? ³⁰ Therefore behold, I am against the prophets, says Yahweh, who steal My words each one from his neighbour. ³¹ Behold, I am against the prophets, says Yahweh, who use their tongues and say, He says. ³² Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says Yahweh, and do tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting: yet I didn't send them, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, says Yahweh.

The Burden of God

³³ When this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask you saying, What is the burden of Yahweh? Then you shall tell them, What burden! I will cast you off, says Yahweh. ³⁴ As for the prophet, the priest and the people who shall say, The burden of Yahweh, I will even punish that man and his house. ³⁵ You shall say each one to his neighbour and each one to his brother, What has Yahweh answered? and, What has Yahweh spoken? ³⁶ You shall mention the burden of Yahweh no more: for

23:18 It is indeed hard to see the world from God's perspective; but this is what the spirit of prophecy was and is all about. The prophets stood in the presence of God, and partook in His "council" (:22), i.e. His inner circle of trusted friends (see too 15:19). The way God speaks of the prophets as being His "council" suggests He is open to dialogue and even 'advice' from men; such is His humility and desire to work with us rather than merely demand our submission.

23:36 The false prophets were judged according to their words; each man's word was

every man's own word shall be his burden; for you have perverted the words of the living God, of Yahweh of Armies our God. ³⁷ You shall say to the prophet, What has Yahweh answered you? and, What has Yahweh spoken? ³⁸ But if you say, The burden of Yahweh; therefore thus says Yahweh: Because you say this word, The burden of Yahweh, and I have sent to you saying, You shall not say, The burden of Yahweh; ³⁹ therefore, behold, I will utterly forget you, and I will cast you off, and the city that I gave to you and to your fathers, away from My presence: ⁴⁰ and I will bring an everlasting reproach on you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

CHAPTER 24 Aug. 3

Good and Bad Figs

Yahweh showed me and behold, two baskets of figs set before Yahweh's temple, after that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and

the princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. ² One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first-ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. ³ Then Yahweh said to me, What do you see, Jeremiah? I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, that can't be eaten, they are so bad. ⁴ The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁵ Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so will I regard the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for good. ⁶ For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. ⁷ I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Yahweh: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God; for they shall return to Me with their whole heart. ⁸ As the bad figs, which can't be eaten, they are

to be his burden at the day of Babylonian judgment. Gal. 6:5 alludes here in saying that at the judgment, every man shall bear his own burden – i.e., that of his own words. Wrong speech will be condemned at the day of judgment (Tit. 2:8), out of our own mouths we will be judged (Lk. 19:22). The implication seems to be that our words will be quoted back to us during the judgment process. By our words we really will be justified or condemned (Mt. 12:37). How we speak, especially if we claim to bear God's Name as baptized believers, will be the basis of our judgment.

24:3 It was obvious what Jeremiah had seen; but God asked him to verbalize it. By putting things into words out loud, we become the more conscious of them. It's no bad idea to pray our private prayers out loud, to recount out loud to God our situations so that we perceive them more accurately rather than just assuming that we have internally assessed the situation correctly.

24:8 The spiritually weakest were those who remained in the land and went down into Egypt. Yet when given the choice of going to Babylon or remaining with these people, Jeremiah chose to remain with them, knowing they were the weakest. If we truly seek

so bad, surely thus says Yahweh, So will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt, ⁹ I will even give them up to be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil; to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. ¹⁰ I will send the sword, the famine, and the plague, among them, until they be consumed from off the land that I gave to them and to their fathers.

CHAPTER 25 Aug. 4

Seventy Years of Exile

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (the same was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), ² which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah, and to all

the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying: ³ From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years, the word of Yahweh has come to me, and I have spoken to you, rising up early and speaking; but you have not listened. ⁴ Yahweh has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them (but you have not listened, nor inclined your ear to hear) ⁵ saying, Return now each one from his evil way and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Yahweh has given to you and to your fathers, from of old and even for evermore; ⁶ and don't go after other gods to serve them or worship them, and don't provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no harm. ⁷ Yet you have not listened to Me, says Yahweh; so that you provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt. ⁸ Therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies: Because you have not heard

God's glory in people, it may be that we in some ways make the choice to be with the weak so that by all means we may save some; when the nicer thing to do is to associate only with the spiritually stronger.

25:3 *Rising up early and speaking* – Just as God also did (:4). In our witness to the world, we are especially united with God. He is speaking through us; our feelings of disappointment, discouragement and rejection are in a sense His feelings; our joy at converting another is His joy. In this sense Jesus says He will be personally with us as we obey the commission to take His message to all the world (Mt. 28:20).

25:8 *Because you have not heard My words* – Time and again, ignoring God's word is presented as the main reason for Judah's condemnation. The people would've heard Jeremiah teaching and preaching, and simply shrugged. They may have accepted him as a prophet, but they were not prepared to have their lives disrupted by his message; they were fine as they were, too busy (as they thought). The fact they didn't take seriously the emotional man from Anathoth was the basis of their condemnation. Yet they loyally went to the temple (26:2) and offered sacrifice. They weren't atheists. They simply didn't take God's word seriously. People are just the same today. We likewise should be aware that our easy access to God's word today makes us very much ac-

My words, ⁹ behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says Yahweh, and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations around; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. ¹⁰ Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹ This whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² It shall happen that when seventy years are accomplished, then I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, says Yahweh, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate forever. ¹³ I

will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations. ¹⁴ For many nations and great kings shall make bond servants of them, even of them; and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands.

The Vision of the Cup of Wine

¹⁵ For thus says Yahweh the God of Israel to me: Take this cup of the wine of wrath at My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. ¹⁶ They shall drink, and reel back and forth, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. ¹⁷ Then took I the cup at Yahweh's hand, and made all the nations to drink, to whom Yahweh had sent me: ¹⁸ Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and its kings, and its princes, to make them a desola-

countable. We ought to be reading it at least daily and seriously trying to conform our lives and thinking to it.

25:9 *And against all these nations around* – Judah's sin lead to other nations suffering. People suffer the effects of others' sin, as we see in the consequence of Adam's sin. This isn't because God punishes the righteous with the wicked, but because He allows people the freewill to sin; and the sinfulness of sin is in the harmful effect it has upon others.

25:15 Being given a cup of wine to drink from God is a double symbol – of condemnation, as here, or of blessing and salvation (1 Cor. 10:16). This is why our drinking of the cup of wine at the communion service is a step either to our eternal blessing or condemnation, and this is why we are powerfully helped by the symbol to examine ourselves at that meeting especially, knowing that we have only one of two possible destinies – eternal death or the blessing of eternal life (1 Cor. 11:29). And there is no way out by simply refusing to drink it – for if we refuse, we shall be made to drink it to our condemnation (:28).

25:18–26 We seem to have here a chronological prediction of the nations which Babylon attacked and destroyed, beginning with Jerusalem (:29); and finally Sheshach, a code name for Babylon, drinks the cup of destruction herself.

tion, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day; ¹⁹ Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; ²⁰ and all the mixed people, and all the kings of the land of the Uz, and all the kings of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Gaza, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod; ²¹ Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon; ²² and all the kings of Tyre, and all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the isle which is beyond the sea; ²³ Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all who have the corners of their beard cut off; ²⁴ and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mixed people who dwell in the wilderness; ²⁵ and all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes; ²⁶ and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world, which are on the surface of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. ²⁷ You shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh of Armies the God of Israel: Drink, and be drunk, vomit, fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. ²⁸ It shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at your hand to drink, then you shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh of Armies: You shall surely drink. ²⁹ For, behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by My name; and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth, says Yahweh of Armies.

Jeremiah Must Warn the People

³⁰ Therefore you must prophesy against them all these words and tell them, Yahweh will roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will mightily roar against His fold; He will give a shout, as those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. ³¹ A noise shall come even to the end of the land; for Yahweh has a controversy with the nations; He will enter into judgement with all flesh: as for the wicked, He will give them to the sword, says Yahweh. ³² Thus says Yahweh of Armies, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great storm shall be raised up from the uttermost parts of the earth. ³³ The slain of Yahweh shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground. ³⁴ Wail, you shepherds, and cry; and wallow in dust, you principal of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are fully come, and you shall fall like a goodly vessel. ³⁵ The shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. ³⁶ A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and the wailing of the principal of the flock! For Yahweh lays waste their pasture. ³⁷ The peaceable folds are brought to silence because of the fierce anger of Yahweh. ³⁸ He has left His den, as the lion; for their land has become an astonishment because of the fierceness of the oppression, and because of His fierce anger.

CHAPTER 26 Aug. 5***Jeremiah Speaks God's Words at the Temple***

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from Yahweh saying, ² Thus says Yahweh: Stand in the court of Yahweh's house and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in Yahweh's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them; don't diminish a word. ³ Perhaps they will listen, and turn every man from his evil way; so that I may repent Me of the evil which I purpose to do to them because of the evil of their doings. ⁴ You shall tell them, Thus says Yahweh: If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, ⁵ to listen to the words of My servants the prophets whom I send to you, even

rising up early and sending them, to which you have not listened; ⁶ then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

Jeremiah on Trial

⁷ The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Yahweh.

⁸ It happened that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Yahweh had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him saying, You shall surely die.

⁹ Why have you prophesied in the name of Yahweh saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? All the people were gathered to Jeremiah in the house of Yahweh.

26:2 *Perhaps they will listen* – This leads in to the implications that God doesn't actually know for sure how His people will respond to His word. So great is the freewill we have been given as we in our generation read and hear the words of the Bible. God of course *could* know our response, but at times He limits His knowledge in the same way as He limits His power – in that He *could* do all things but He doesn't do all He'd like to do because of our limitation of Him. The limitation of God is shown by how He speaks about prayer: "The Lord's... ear [is not] dull, that it *cannot* hear... your sins have hid His face from you so that He *will not* hear" (Is. 59:1,2). In this sense God limits His possibilities. He *can* see all things, and yet in the time of Israel's apostasy He hides His face from them (Mic. 3:4 cp. Dt. 32:19,20). The Hebrew word *ulay*, 'perhaps', is significant in this connection. "Perhaps they will listen", God says, in reflection upon Ezekiel's preaching ministry to God's people (Ez. 12:1-3). Of Jeremiah's prophetic work, God likewise comments: "Perhaps [Heb. *ulay*] they will listen" (2:3; 36:3,7; 51:8; also Is. 47:12). This uncertainty of God as to how His people will respond to His word reflects the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to our kind of time. It has huge implications for us, too. With what eagerness must God Almighty look upon us as we sit down to read His word daily! 'Are they going to listen? How are they going to respond?'

26:8 *You shall surely die* – People get very angry when we say things which criticize their relationship with God and their behaviour before Him, and suggest that their established way of worship is wrong.

¹⁰ When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of Yahweh; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Yahweh's house. ¹¹ Then spoke the priests and the prophets to the princes and to all the people saying, This man is worthy of death; for he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears. ¹² Then spoke Jeremiah to all the princes and to all the people saying, Yahweh sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard. ¹³ Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Yahweh your God; and Yahweh will repent Him of the evil that He has pronounced against you. ¹⁴ But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. ¹⁵ Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves, and on this city, and on its inhabitants; for of a truth Yahweh has sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.

Jeremiah's Life Is Spared

¹⁶ Then the princes and all the people said to the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he has spoken to us in the name

of Yahweh our God. ¹⁷ Then rose up certain of the elders of the land and spoke to all the assembled people saying, ¹⁸ Micah the Morashtite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. ¹⁹ Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Didn't he fear Yahweh, and entreat the favour of Yahweh, and Yahweh relented of the disaster which He had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls. ²⁰ There was also a man who prophesied in the name of Yahweh, Uriah the son of Shemaiah of Kiriath Jearim; and he prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah: ²¹ and when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Uriah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt: ²² and Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him, into Egypt; ²³ and they fetched forth Uriah out of Egypt, and

26:19 In Hezekiah's time, all Judah had to repent to avert total destruction – but even though they didn't, the prayer of Hezekiah saved the nation. This is the power of just one righteous person, God is so sensitive to righteousness. In the Old Testament there are several examples of just one righteous man saving the sinful or spiritually weak people of God from destruction; and those cases were to prepare Israel for the concept of the supreme righteousness and intercession of Christ being able to save we who are likewise sinners.

brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. ²⁴ But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

CHAPTER 27 Aug. 6

Slaves of Nebuchadnezzar

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, ² Thus says Yahweh to me: Make bonds and bars and put them on your neck; ³ and send them to the king of Edom, to the king of Moab, to the king of the children of Ammon, to the king of Tyre and to the king of Sidon, by the hand of the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah; ⁴ and give them a command to their masters saying, Thus says Yahweh of Armies the God of Israel, You shall tell your masters: ⁵ I have made the earth, the men and the animals that are on the

surface of the earth, by My great power and by My outstretched arm; and I give it to whom it seems right to Me. ⁶ Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the animals of the field also have I given him to serve him. ⁷ All the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come: and then many nations and great kings shall make him their bond servant. ⁸ It shall happen, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, says Yahweh, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the plague, until I have consumed them by his hand. ⁹ But as for you, don't you listen to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreams, nor to your soothsayers, nor to your sorcerers, who speak to you saying, You shall not serve the king of Babylon: ¹⁰ for they prophesy a lie

27:3 *The messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah* – Instead of trusting solely in God, Zedekiah was trying to make alliances with other nations to stave off the Babylonian invasion. But the message was again that all such human might would fail, and total repentance was the only way for Judah to be saved.

27:5 If God takes away from us what we have been accustomed to having – in Judah's case, their independence as a nation – then we should recognize that God as creator of all has the right to do this, and that nothing we have, be it material or immaterial, is personally ours. This is one outcome of believing in God as creator rather than in atheistic evolution.

27:6 *And the animals of the field also* – This is emphasized several times. We see thereby God's huge sensitivity to the natural creation. It also opens up the possibility that there is a latent spirituality within all of creation; God is in some sense in contact with them. Rom. 8:19-23 seems to hint that the natural creation will in some sense be delivered into a new spiritual dimension at Christ's return and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

to you, to remove you far from your land, and that I should drive you out, and you should perish. ¹¹ But the nation that shall bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, that nation will I let remain in their own land, says Yahweh; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

Message for Zedekiah

¹² I spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. ¹³ Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as Yahweh has spoken concerning the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? ¹⁴ Don't listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you saying, You shall not serve the king of Babylon; for they prophesy a lie to you. ¹⁵ For I have not sent them, says Yahweh, but they prophesy falsely in My name; that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you, and the prophets who prophesy to you.

Serve the King of Babylon and Live

¹⁶ Also I spoke to the priests and to all this people saying, Thus says

Yahweh: Don't listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you saying, Behold, the vessels of Yahweh's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon; for they prophesy a lie to you. ¹⁷ Don't listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: why should this city become a desolation? ¹⁸ But if they be prophets, and if the word of Yahweh be with them, let them now make intercession to Yahweh of Armies, that the vessels which are left in the house of Yahweh, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, don't go to Babylon. ¹⁹ For thus says Yahweh of Armies concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that are left in this city, ²⁰ which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon didn't take, when he carried away captive Jehoniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; ²¹ yes, thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of Yahweh, and in the house of the king of Judah and at Jerusalem: ²² They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be, until the day that I visit them, says Yahweh; then

27:14 Speaking God's truth made Jeremiah everybody's enemy. His own people, from the masses to the leadership, the religious leaders and their false prophets, the surrounding Gentile nations – all were insulted by what he had to say. There are times in our own ministries when we will be left alone because of our loyalty to God's word – or so it will seem.

27:21 It would appear that the expensive vessels of God's house had been taken into the house of the king. We must learn the lesson, not to use the things of God's spiritual house for our own personal benefit.

will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

CHAPTER 28 Aug. 7

The False Prophet Hananiah

It happened the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet, who was of Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of Yahweh, in the presence of the priests and of all the people saying, ² Thus speaks Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³ Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Yahweh's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried to Babylon: ⁴ and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, who went to Babylon, says Yahweh; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah Denounces Hananiah

⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah said to

the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people who stood in the house of Yahweh, ⁶ even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: Yahweh do so; Yahweh perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring again the vessels of Yahweh's house, and all them of the captivity, from Babylon to this place. ⁷ Nevertheless hear you now this word that I speak in your ears, and in the ears of all the people: ⁸ The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of plague. ⁹ The prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet shall happen, then shall the prophet be known, that Yahweh has truly sent him. ¹⁰ Then Hananiah the prophet took the bar from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and broke it. ¹¹ Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people saying, Thus says Yahweh: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon within two full years from off the neck of all the nations. The prophet Jeremiah

28:3, 4 Hananiah had taken Jeremiah's prophecies of restoration but said it would happen within two years rather than the 70 years which Jeremiah had spoken of in chapter 25. And he inserted a false prediction that Jeconiah would return from Babylon. False teaching follows this pattern; slightly changing God's true word and slipping in a few other things. This is what makes false religion attractive, and why it will be accepted by those who aren't familiar with God's word. We live in a world where there are many voices, many claims, clamouring for our belief; only a familiarity with the Bible text and an acceptance of it as the final authority will enable us to discern truth from error.

28:11 *The prophet Jeremiah went his way* – There are times in such conflict situations when we too just have to walk away. God's says one thing, and the popular religious leaders say another. We can make our point and then walk away from endless argument and controversy.

went his way. ¹² Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the bar from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah saying, ¹³ Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus says Yahweh: You have broken the bars of wood; but you have made in their place bars of iron. ¹⁴ For thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the animals of the field also. ¹⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah: Yahweh has not sent you; but you make this people to trust in a lie. ¹⁶ Therefore thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will send you away from off the surface of the land: this year you shall die, because you have spoken rebellion against Yahweh. ¹⁷ So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

CHAPTER 29 Aug. 8

Jeremiah's Letter to the People in Babylon

Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet

sent from Jerusalem to the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, ² (after that Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem), ³ by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), saying, ⁴ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, to all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat their fruit. ⁶ Take wives, and father sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there, and don't be diminished. ⁷ Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to Yahweh for it; for in its peace you shall have peace. ⁸ For thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Don't let your

28:13 *Go, and tell Hananiah* – Jeremiah may well have thought 'Oh no, I never want to see that man again'. But the motive and purpose of correcting false teaching is for the sake of helping those who are deceived.

29:5, 6 By doing so, the exiles would be expressing their faith that God's word about a 70 year captivity was going to be true. The Jewish false prophets in Babylon were telling them that the captivity would soon be over and they would be back in the land of Judah (:8). False teaching tries to tell us that we can have the restored Kingdom now, with no need to wait long, no need to accept our sinfulness nor truly repent.

29:7 *Pray to Yahweh for it; for in its peace you shall have peace* – Alluded to in 1 Tim. 2:1,2 about how we should pray for the nations in which we live, that we might be able to live in peace.

prophets who are in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you; neither listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. ⁹ For they prophesy falsely to you in My name: I have not sent them, says Yahweh.

The People's Return Promised

¹⁰ For thus says Yahweh, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you and perform My word of grace towards you, in causing you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope and a future. ¹² You shall call on Me, and you shall go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says Yahweh, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places where I have driven you, says Yahweh; and I will bring you again to the place from where I caused you to be carried away captive. ¹⁵ Because you have said, Yahweh has raised us up prophets in Babylon; ¹⁶ thus says Yahweh concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who haven't gone forth with you into captivity; ¹⁷ thus says Yahweh of

Armies; Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that can't be eaten, they are so bad. ¹⁸ I will pursue after them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the earth, to be an object of horror, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations where I have driven them; ¹⁹ because they have not listened to My words, says Yahweh, with which I sent to them My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but you would not hear, says Yahweh. ²⁰ Hear therefore the word of Yahweh, all you of the captivity, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Punishment for False Prophets

²¹ Thus says Yahweh of Armies the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie to you in My name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall kill them before your eyes; ²² and of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captives of Judah who are in Babylon saying, Yahweh make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; ²³ because

29:15 The sin of the Jewish captives in exile would bring about suffering on the Jews who then remained in the land (:16,17). Again we see that sin is about the damage we do to others.

29:23 *And have committed adultery* – Repeatedly, the false prophets of both Old and New Testaments are associated with immoral behaviour. Wrong beliefs about God of-

they have worked folly in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken words in My name falsely, which I didn't command them; and I am He who knows, and am witness, says Yahweh. ²⁴ Concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite you shall speak saying, ²⁵ Thus speaks Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, saying, Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests saying, ²⁶ Yahweh has made you priest in the place of Jehoiada the priest, that there may be officers in the house of Yahweh, for every man who is mad, and makes himself a prophet, that you should put him in the stocks and in shackles. ²⁷ Now therefore, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who makes himself a prophet to you, ²⁸ because he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, The captivity is long: build houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat their fruit? ²⁹ Zepha-

niah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. ³⁰ Then came the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah, saying, ³¹ Send to all them of the captivity saying, Thus says Yahweh concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, and I didn't send him, and he has caused you to trust in a lie; ³² therefore thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither shall he see the good that I will do to My people, says Yahweh, because he has spoken rebellion against Yahweh.

CHAPTER 30 Aug. 9

God Will Rescue Israel and Judah

The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying, ² Thus speaks Yahweh, the God of Israel saying, Write all the words that I have spoken to you in a book. ³ For, behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will turn again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says

ten lead to wrong behaviour; false teaching is often wrong teaching about way of life, rather than being simply honestly mistaken in theological interpretation of the Bible. *I am He who knows, and am witness* – It's not painless to simply say that we believe God's Name is Yahweh and that this means "I am". He therefore sees and knows all things because He "is" in all ways, and our lives must be appropriate to Him being as He is. Note that God is presented as both witness and judge. Our lives are as it were played out before the Divine courtroom.

29:26 The whole tremendous experience of having God's mind in them, sharing His perspective, seeing the world through His eyes, made the prophets appear crazy to others. There's a marked emphasis upon the fact that they were perceived as madmen (:24,26; Hos. 9:7; 2 Kings 9:11). For us to walk down a street for even ten minutes, feeling and perceiving and knowing the sin of every person in those rooms and houses and yards, feeling the weeping of God over each of them... would send us crazy. And yet God strengthened the prophets, and there's no reason to think that He will not as it were strengthen us in our sensitivity too.

Yahweh; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

⁴ These are the words that Yahweh spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. ⁵ For thus says Yahweh: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. ⁶ Ask now,

and see whether a man does travail with child: why do I see every man with his hands on his waist, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? ⁷ Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

⁸ It shall come to pass in that day, says Yahweh of Armies, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds; and strangers shall no more make him their bond servant; ⁹ but they shall serve Yahweh their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up to them.

¹⁰ Therefore don't you be afraid, O Jacob my servant, says Yahweh; neither be dismayed, Israel: for, behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall

make him afraid. ¹¹ For I am with you, says Yahweh, to save you: for I will make a full end of all the nations where I have scattered you, but I will not make a full end of you; but I will correct you in measure, and will in no way leave you unpunished.

God Will Heal His People

¹² For thus says Yahweh, Your hurt is incurable, and your wound grievous.

¹³ There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines. ¹⁴ All your lovers have forgotten you; they don't seek you: for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the greatness of your iniquity, because your sins were increased. ¹⁵ Why do you cry for your hurt? Your pain is incurable: for the greatness of your iniquity, because your sins were increased, I have done these things to you. ¹⁶ Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, each one of them, shall go into captivity; and those who despoil you shall be a spoil, and all who prey on you will I give for a prey. ¹⁷ For I will restore health

30:7 *That day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble* – Dan. 12:1 says the same thing in the same language, but says that the ultimate salvation of Israel will be in the appearance of Christ and the resurrection from the dead (Dan. 12:2,3). The Babylonian invasion was known as the time of Israel's trouble (2:28; 8:15; 11:12; Neh. 9:32). There was the possibility that the Babylonian invasion and capture of Jerusalem was the time of trouble which would lead to Israel's final salvation in the coming of their Messiah; but instead they chose to believe their false prophets and refused to repent. So the whole possible scenario didn't come true then, and was reapplied to a latter day invasion of Israel, the taking of Jerusalem, Israel's repentance, hearing the words of the true prophets, the return of Christ, the resurrection and the establishment of God's Kingdom. That scenario could now come true at any moment.

to you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says Yahweh; because they have called you an outcast, saying, It is Zion, whom no man seeks after.

Restored to Be God's People

¹⁸ Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I will turn again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city shall be built again on its own hill, and the palace shall be inhabited in its own former way. ¹⁹ Out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. ²⁰ Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me; and I will punish all who oppress them. ²¹ Their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from their midst; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach to Me: for who is he who has had boldness to approach to Me? says Yahweh. ²² You shall be My people, and I will be your God. ²³ Behold, the storm of Yahweh, His wrath, has gone forth, a sweep-

ing storm: it shall burst on the head of the wicked. ²⁴ The fierce anger of Yahweh will not return, until He has executed, and until He has performed the intentions of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it.

CHAPTER 31 Aug. 10

God Will Rebuild Israel

At that time, says Yahweh, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. ² Thus says Yahweh, The people who were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. ³ Yahweh appeared of old to me saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you. ⁴ Again will I build you, and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel: again you shall be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who make merry. ⁵ Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy its fruit. ⁶ For there shall be a day when the watchmen on the hills of Ephraim shall cry, Arise, and let us go up to Zion to Yahweh our

30:17 *I will restore health to you* – Although their wound was humanly incurable (:12,15). God really can do the impossible, and the impossible thing we struggle with is that sinners condemned to suffering and death can really be saved from that and given eternal life.

Zion, whom no man seeks after – The attitude of others to us God's people is so painful for Him. He desperately seeks His people, and for others to consider we are down and out, not wanted by anyone, provokes Him to action. Even though His people were so sinful, the fact others mocked them was significant to God. This colossal sensitivity of God is an encouragement to us who can feel at times that we are insignificant and ultimately, existentially alone.

30:18 We see here the theme of God's Kingdom actually being a re-establishment of the entity which once was on earth (Ez. 21:25-57; Acts 1:6). See too :20 "as before".

God. ⁷ For thus says Yahweh, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout for the chief of the nations: publish, praise, and say, Yahweh, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. ⁸ Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, along with the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who travails with child together: a great company shall they return here. ⁹ They shall come with weeping; and with petitions will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first born. ¹⁰ Hear the word of Yahweh, you nations, and declare it

in the islands afar off; and say, He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. ¹¹ For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob, and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. ¹² They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow to the goodness of Yahweh, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. ¹³ Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

31:13 This is what shall happen after Rachel weeps for her slain children (:15) and she enters the new covenant (:31). She will be as a virgin who takes her tambourine in hand and dances, entering a new covenant with her *ba'al*, her Lord, her husband, who has obliterated the memory of all her sins in a way that only a Divine being could do (:13). Women in love are stereotypically associated with emotions of giddiness, hysteria, excitement, joy... and this is the language applied to the once weeping Rachel, who wept over the children God had taken from her. And *yet...* according to the New Testament quotations and expositions of :31, this is the very same 'new covenant' into which we enter in baptism (Heb. 8:8,13; 12:24). This is God's joy over us, and it should be ours over Him. The damage of sin can at times seem so permanent that we can feel that nothing whatever can change things for us now, as Rachel weeping for her children. But the dramatic transformation really can happen when we enter into the new covenant. It's hard to put together how God will slay Rachel's children with thirst, forget them and show them no pity (Hos. 2:3,4; 4:6; 9:12), leave her weeping for them, and then dry her eyes and speak of a new covenant and new relationship with her. But the point of it all is that this is indeed how radical the cycle of sin, judgment and repentance really is in the lives of each of us. If a movie were to be made of all this, none of us would be able to resist it. The story of how through love gone sour, estrangement, anger and battery, a couple triumph in love and true, eternal intimacy. But this is the wonder and power of true repentance. And it is also a powerful window into the consequence and nature of human sin. The whole story, the images and ideas... surely leave us knowing once and for all that our religion and relationship with God simply can never be merely abstract contemplation of Biblical ideas, devoid of commitment and passion in response to God's love. All these wonderful ideas come down to us through reading and reflection upon Scripture. But Bible reading, under-

¹⁴ I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says Yahweh.

God Offers Hope

¹⁵ Thus says Yahweh: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. ¹⁶ Thus says Yahweh: Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says Yahweh; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷ There is hope for your latter end, says Yahweh; and your children shall come again to their own border. ¹⁸ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as an untrained calf: turn me, and I shall be turned; for You are Yahweh my God. ¹⁹ Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I struck on my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I bore the reproach of my youth. ²⁰ Is Ephraim

My dear son? Is he a darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says Yahweh. ²¹ Set up road signs, make guideposts; set your heart towards the highway, even the way by which you went: turn again, virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities. ²² How long will you go here and there, you backsliding daughter? For Yahweh has created a new thing in the earth: a woman shall follow after a man. ²³ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, Yet again shall they use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I shall bring again their captivity: Yahweh bless you, habitation of righteousness, mountain of holiness. ²⁴ Judah and all its cities shall dwell therein together, the farmers, and those who go about with flocks. ²⁵ For I have satiated the weary soul, and every sorrowful soul have I replenished. ²⁶ On this I awakened, and saw; and my sleep was sweet to me. ²⁷ Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will sow the house of Israel

stood and felt as it should be, can never be a passive, neutral, private experience. If we truly are in covenant relationship with this wondrous God, it demands our all. Our failures, forgiven as they are, will haunt us for their awfulness; and the wonder of His love will never cease to move us to real tears in the midst of this passionless, too busy, postmodern world.

31:22 *A woman shall follow after a man* – It was unheard of for a woman to take the initiative in starting a romance leading towards marriage; the man always chose his woman. Hence Ruth and Naomi's outstanding initiative regarding Boaz. Our repentance is presented here as a woman taking the initiative to as it were woo God Almighty; who as it happens has a heart that yearns for her anyway (:20). This is the strange romance of repentance, a mutual attraction that lasts for eternity. And the grace of it all is that this initiative of Judah for God, this new thing in the earth, was created by Him.

and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of animal. ²⁸ It shall happen that like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to overthrow and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, says Yahweh. ²⁹ In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰ But each one shall die for his own iniquity: every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

God Makes a New Covenant with the People

³¹ Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says Yahweh. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Yahweh: I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people: ³⁴ and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying, Know Yahweh; for they shall all know Me, from their least to their greatest, says Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. ³⁵ Thus says Yahweh, who gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of

the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea, so that its waves roar; Yahweh of Armies is His name: ³⁶ If these ordinances depart from before Me, says Yahweh, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. ³⁷ Thus says Yahweh: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says Yahweh. ³⁸ Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that the city shall be built to Yahweh from the tower of Hananel to the gate of the corner. ³⁹ The measuring line shall go out further straight onward to the hill Gareb, and shall turn about to Goah. ⁴⁰ The whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields to the brook Kidron, to the corner of the horse gate towards the east, shall be holy to Yahweh; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever.

CHAPTER 32 Aug. 11
Jeremiah Buys a Field

The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ² Now at that time the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem; and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house. ³ For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up saying, Why do you prophesy and say, Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will give this city

into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; ⁴ and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall see his eyes; ⁵ and he shall bring Zedekiah to Babylon, and he shall be there until I visit him, says Yahweh: though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not prosper? ⁶ Jeremiah said, The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁷ Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle shall come to you, saying, Buy my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. ⁸ So Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of Yahweh, and said to me, Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of Yah-

weh. ⁹ I bought the field that was in Anathoth of Hanamel my uncle's son, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰ I subscribed the deed, and sealed it, and called witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. ¹¹ So I took the deed of the purchase, both that which was sealed, containing the terms and conditions, and that which was open; ¹² and I delivered the deed of the purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses who subscribed the deed of the purchase, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the guard. ¹³ I commanded Baruch before them, saying, ¹⁴ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, this deed of the purchase which is sealed, and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel; that they may continue many days. ¹⁵ For thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and

32:8 *Then I knew that this was the word of Yahweh* – To buy property in a land terrorized by the Babylonians and about to be taken over by them (note the date given in :1), as God Himself had predicted, seemed pointless and foolish. There was only any point in doing this if it would result in Jeremiah's family gaining the land at a future date, but it seems from 16:2 that Jeremiah had no children. But sometimes God asks us to do such counter-instinctive things that we know that this just has to be His hand. Likewise Peter tested whether it was really Jesus walking on the water by saying that if it was Jesus, then only He would ask him to come walking on the water; only the Lord would ask us to do such counter-instinctive things (Mt. 14:28).

32:15 The repeated emphasis upon witnessing the purchase and making it legal was because at the end of the 70 years captivity, land would again be valuable and be bought and sold; and this land which Jeremiah was buying would therefore be a valued part of his family's inheritance. So God was asking Jeremiah to put his money where his mouth was for the sake of the hope of the restored Kingdom which he was preaching. Sometimes God asks us to do the same; to make a sacrifice, even a financial one, for the sake of the hope of the Kingdom which we profess to others.

vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land. ¹⁶ Now after I had delivered the deed of the purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to Yahweh, saying,

Jeremiah Prays and Questions God

¹⁷ Ah Lord Yahweh! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for You, ¹⁸ Who show loving kindness to thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them; the great, the mighty God, Yahweh of Armies is His name; ¹⁹ great in counsel, and mighty in working; whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give each one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: ²⁰ who performed signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even to this day, both in Israel and among other men; and made Yourself a name, as it is at this day; ²¹ and brought forth Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, wonders, a strong hand,

an outstretched arm and with great terror; ²² and gave them this land, which You swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; ²³ and they came in, and possessed it, but they didn't obey Your voice, neither walked in Your law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do: therefore You have caused all this evil to come on them. ²⁴ Behold, the siege mounds, they have come to the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what You have spoken has happened; and behold, You see it. ²⁵ You have said to me, Lord Yahweh, Buy the field for money, and call witnesses; whereas the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

God Answers Jeremiah

²⁶ Then came the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah saying, ²⁷ Behold, I am Yahweh, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me? ²⁸ There-

32:23 *Done nothing of all that You commanded* – Yet they were *partially* obedient; even within Jeremiah we see evidence of them offering sacrifices. But giving only part of our hearts to God is effectively giving nothing; the lesson is the demand for wholeheartedness in devotion. Hence :30 says that Israel “have done *only* that which was evil in My sight from their youth”. Another window onto this is to understand that when someone believes, righteousness is imputed to them; but to the unbeliever, sin is imputed (Rom. 4:8). Hence all the blood of the prophets was counted upon those who slew Jesus (Mt. 23:35). We cannot therefore simply choose not to believe and claim some kind of neutrality before God; sin will be added to our existing sins (Ps. 69:27).

32:25 Although Jeremiah did what God commanded and openly justified it to others on the basis that one day, God's promised restoration would happen – yet he evidently struggled within himself and with God about this issue. We may appear confident in faith and hope in the future Kingdom, and so may others, but who knows the internal struggles going on within us all.

fore thus says Yahweh: Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: ²⁹ and the Chaldeans who now fight against this city shall come and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs they have offered incense to Baal, and poured out drink offerings to other gods, so as to provoke Me to anger. ³⁰ For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only that which was evil in My sight from their youth; for the children of Israel have only provoked Me to anger with the work of their hands, says Yahweh. ³¹ For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and of My wrath from the day that they built it even to this day; that I should remove it from before My face, ³² because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ³³ They have turned to Me the back and not the face: and though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction. ³⁴ Instead they set their

abominations in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. ³⁵ They built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech; which I didn't command them, neither did it come into My mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. ³⁶ Now therefore thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, concerning this city, about which you say, It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence:

God Explains about the Field

³⁷ Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries where I have driven them in My anger, and in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: ³⁸ and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: ³⁹ and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for their good, and of their children after them: ⁴⁰ and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from following them, to do them good; and I will put My fear in their hearts, that they may not

32:37 *Out of all the countries* – The Babylonians scattered the Jews amongst all their empire. Hence the book of Esther describes how the Jews were to be found in all 127 provinces of the empire; the command to kill them and then to save them had to be written in all those different languages (Esther 8:9; 9:30).

32:40 *I will put My fear in their hearts* – Part of the new covenant involved God giving those included in it a new heart (:39), putting His word within their minds (31:33). Whilst we of our own freewill have to be prepared to enter that covenant with God, our salvation isn't by our works nor by our steel willed mastery of our own minds; God works within the human heart, to some extent even giving us spirituality.

depart from Me. ⁴¹ Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul. ⁴² For thus says Yahweh: Like as I have brought all this great evil on this people, so will I bring on them all the good that I have promised them. ⁴³ Fields shall be bought in this land, about which you say, It is desolate, without man or animal; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. ⁴⁴ Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe the deeds, and seal them, and call witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the hill country, and in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South: for I will cause their captivity to return, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 33 Aug. 12

God Promises Restoration to Israel and Judah

Moreover the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard, saying, ² Thus says Yahweh who does it, Yahweh

who forms it to establish it; Yahweh is His name: ³ Call to Me, and I will answer you, and will show you great things, and difficult, which you don't know. ⁴ For thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are broken down to make a defence against the mounds and against the sword; ⁵ while men come to fight with the Chaldeans, and to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have killed in My anger and in My wrath, and for all whose wickedness I have hidden My face from this city: ⁶ Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them; and I will reveal to them abundance of peace and truth. ⁷ I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. ⁸ I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, by which they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, by which they have sinned against Me, and by which they have transgressed against Me. ⁹ This city shall be to Me for a name of joy, for a praise and for a glory, before all the nations of the

32:44 These were exactly the things which Jeremiah had been asked to do right then, *before* this promised time of restoration of the Kingdom. The command wasn't simply so that his relatives' descendants might be blessed by his obedience with some land to the family name (note the implication in 16:2 that he didn't have his own children); rather was it an invitation to him to live out the Kingdom life in this life, even though the environment was very much not the time of God's restored Kingdom, in fact the very opposite. We too are invited to experience the Kingdom life in some ways even now.

33:7 *As at the first* – One proof that the future Kingdom of God will be on earth rather than in Heaven is because that Kingdom is to be a restoration of the Kingdom of God as it had been in the form of Israel (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:6). The language of restoration “as at the first” is a major theme in Jeremiah – note “yet again” (:10).

earth, which shall hear all the good that I do to them, and shall fear and tremble for all the good and for all the peace that I procure to it. ¹⁰ Thus says Yahweh: Yet again there shall be heard in this place, about which you say, It is waste, without man and without animal, even in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without animal, ¹¹ the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, Give thanks to Yahweh of Armies, for Yahweh is good, for His loving kindness endures forever; who bring thanksgiving into the house of Yahweh. For I will cause the captivity of the land to return as at the first, says Yahweh. ¹² Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Yet again shall there be in this place which is waste, without man and without animal, and in all its cities, a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. ¹³ In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of

the lowland, and in the cities of the South, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks again pass under the hands of him who numbers them, says Yahweh.

God Promises a King

¹⁴ Behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will perform that word of grace which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days, and at that time, will I cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up to David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name by which it shall be called: Yahweh our righteousness. ¹⁷ For thus says Yahweh: David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸ neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to burn meal offerings, and to

33:10 *That are desolate* – They were not at that moment desolate (:1), but God’s prophetic word is so certain, that what He *predicts* will happen is spoken of as if it already exists. Likewise :12 “which *is* waste”.

33:15 Israel’s return from the nations where they had been scattered would be associated with the coming of Messiah to lead them once they had returned. It seems from Haggai 2 and Zech. 4 that Zerubbabel [meaning ‘branch brought from Babylon’] could have fulfilled these prophecies. But due to the prosperity in captivity which the Jews attained (see Esther 10), most chose not to return to the land, and those who did weren’t willing to obey God’s law. Indeed, extra-Biblical history records that Zerubbabel returned to Babylon. So the “branch” prophecies were reapplied to Christ; by baptism into Him, God’s righteousness is counted to us. We live at a time when the Jews are literally scattered worldwide; around the time when they return to the land, Christ will come as “the branch” to restore God’s Kingdom on earth. We may yet have to see a far greater return to the land than happened since the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel.

do sacrifice continually. ¹⁹ The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah saying, ²⁰ Thus says Yahweh: If you can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, so that there shall not be day and night in their season; ²¹ then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant, that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne; and with the Levites the priests, My ministers. ²² As the army of the sky can't be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David My servant, and the Levites who minister to Me. ²³ The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah saying, ²⁴ Don't consider what this people has spoken saying, The two families which Yahweh chose, has He not cast them off? Thus do they despise My people, that they should be no more a nation before them. ²⁵ Thus says Yahweh: If My covenant of day and night fails, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; ²⁶ then will I also cast away the seed of Jacob, and of David My servant, so that I will not take of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and will have mercy on them.

CHAPTER 34 Aug. 13

A Warning for Zedekiah

The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army and all the kingdoms of the land that were under his dominion, and all the peoples, were fighting against Je-

rusalem and against all the cities of it, saying: ² Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, Go speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him, Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire: ³ and you shall not escape out of his hand, but shall surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and your eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with you mouth to mouth, and you shall go to Babylon. ⁴ Yet hear the word of Yahweh, O Zedekiah king of Judah: thus says Yahweh concerning you, You shall not die by the sword; ⁵ you shall die in peace; and with the burnings of your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so shall they make a burning for you; and they shall lament you saying, Ah Lord! Because I have spoken the word, says Yahweh. ⁶ Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, ⁷ when the king of Babylon's army was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish and against Azekah; for these alone remained of the cities of Judah as fortified cities.

Shameful Treatment of Slaves

⁸ The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty to them; ⁹ that every man should let his male servant, and every man his female servant, who is a Hebrew or a Hebrew-

ess, go free; that none should make bond servants of them, of a Jew his brother. ¹⁰ All the princes and all the people obeyed, who had entered into the covenant, that everyone should let his male servant and everyone his female servant, go free, that none should make bond servants of them any more; they obeyed, and let them go: ¹¹ but afterwards they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. ¹² Therefore the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, ¹³ Thus says Yahweh, God of Israel: I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, ¹⁴ At the end of seven years you shall let go every man his brother who is a Hebrew, who has been sold to you,

and has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you: but your fathers didn't listen to Me, neither inclined their ear. ¹⁵ You had now turned, and had done that which is right in My eyes, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name: ¹⁶ but you turned and profaned My name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom you had let go free at their pleasure, to return; and you brought them into subjection, to be to you for servants and for handmaids. ¹⁷ Therefore thus says Yahweh: you have not listened to Me, to proclaim liberty each man to his brother and each man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim to you a liberty, says Yahweh, to the sword, to the plague and to the famine; and I will make you to be tossed back and forth among

34:11 The prophets not only reflected God's dismay and passionate feelings, they expressed their own dismay too. Lack of justice was a major concern of the prophets. But to us, injustice may be so commonplace we don't really worry about it too much. Given all the idolatry going on at the time of Jeremiah, we'd have expected the condition for being spared judgment at the hands of their invaders to be: 'Throw your idols away!'. But :11,22 offers them a reprieve if they stopped abusing their brethren. When, temporarily, the Jews ceased doing that and proclaimed liberty to their brethren – the pending judgment was put on hold. When they again abused their brethren, not giving them the "liberty" which must be afforded to all those made in God's image, then the Babylonians returned. And we need to ask whether we proclaim liberty to our brethren – or abuse them by not allowing them the basic freedom which is the dignity God allows to each of His children.

34:17 *Among all the kingdoms of the earth* – The Hebrew *eretz* means both "earth" in the sense of the whole planet, and also "the land" promised to Abraham. This ambiguity helps us understand how the restoration prophecies could have had their fulfilment in the regathering of the Jews scattered throughout the 127 provinces of the Babylonian and then Persian empires, which straddled the land promised to Abraham; and yet they will now have their major fulfilment in our last days, in the restoration of Israel from their dwelling places in literally the entire planet.

all the kingdoms of the earth. ¹⁸ I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts; ¹⁹ the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, who passed between the parts of the calf; ²⁰ I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for food to the birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth. ²¹ Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army who have for now gone away from you. ²² Behold, I will command, says Yahweh, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against

it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.

CHAPTER 35 Aug. 14

Jeremiah Meets with the Rechabites

The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ² Go to the house of the Rechabites, and speak to them, and bring them into the house of Yahweh, into one of the rooms, and give them wine to drink. ³ Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers, all his sons and the whole family of the Rechabites; ⁴ and I brought them into the house of Yahweh, into the room of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was by the room of the princes, which was above the room of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the

34:18 This speaks of how the Jews must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. God too has cut such a covenant commitment to us. In Genesis 15, He made a one-sided commitment to Abraham and to us Abraham's seed by baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:27-29); and He passed between the pieces of the sacrificed animals to confirm it. But it was none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). Usually both parties passed between the dead animals – but in Gen. 15, only Yahweh did. It was a one-sided covenant from God to man, exemplifying His one-way grace. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is – that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern – and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. From one viewpoint, the only way we can not be saved is to wilfully refuse to participate in this covenant.

threshold. ⁵ I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine and cups; and I said to them, Drink wine! ⁶ But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us saying, You shall drink no wine, neither you, nor your sons, forever: ⁷ neither shall you build house, nor sow seed, nor plant a vineyard nor own one; but all your days you shall dwell in tents; that you may live many days in the land in which you live. ⁸ We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he commanded us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters; ⁹ nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither do we have vineyard, nor field, nor seed: ¹⁰ but we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. ¹¹ But it happened, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land,

that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians; so we dwell at Jerusalem.

A Lesson Learned from the Rechabites

¹² Then came the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah saying, ¹³ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Go, and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to listen to My words? says Yahweh.

¹⁴ The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab that he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; and to this day they drink none, for they obey their father's commandment: but I have spoken to you, rising up early and speaking; and you have not listened to Me. ¹⁵ I have sent also to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return now every man

35:14 Jonadab's requirements of his descendants were unreasonable. There was nothing wrong in drinking wine nor in owning vineyards or living in a house. Indeed, all these three things are listed amongst the blessings which God would give Israel in Canaan (Dt. 6:11; 8:12; Ps. 104:15). But the point is that if other people can show such careful obedience to human commands, even if they are unnecessary and increasingly irrelevant – how much more should we be obedient to God's word. All around us are great examples of single minded dedication of life – to wrong principles. Self-sacrificial humanitarian atheists are ever before us with their good deeds. Men give their lives to and for what they believe and for political leaders – even though those beliefs are faulty and the leaders have feet of clay. How much more committed should we be... faced as we are with the ultimate truths of God and His Son. *If they can do it* – why can't we, and why can't we do even more than them? We can also reflect that Jonadab asked his descendants to not indulge in the legitimate blessings which God had given (houses, wine and vineyards). There are different levels in spiritual life; we can grab what blessings God gives us and run with them; or we can forego them, give them to others, use them for Him, refuse them simply to exercise the spiritual muscles of our self-control.

from his evil way, and amend your doings, and don't go after other gods to serve them, and you shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but you have not inclined your ear, nor listened to Me. ¹⁶ Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me; ¹⁷ therefore thus says Yahweh, the God of Armies, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them, but they have not heard; and I have called to them, but they have not answered. ¹⁸ Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he commanded you; ¹⁹ therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever.

CHAPTER 36 Aug. 15

Jeremiah Dictates a Scroll

It happened in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying, ² Take a scroll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and against Judah and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day. ³ It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do to them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. ⁴ Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of Yahweh, which He had spoken to him, on a scroll of a book. ⁵ Jeremiah commanded Baruch saying, I am shut up; I can't go into the house of Yahweh: ⁶ therefore you go, and read in the scroll, which you have written from my mouth, the words of Yahweh in the ears of the people in Yahweh's house on the fast day; and also you shall read them in the ears of all Ju-

36:2 Jeremiah was asked to write down his words *so that perhaps* Judah would repent (:3). God recognized that by regularly reading those words there was a far higher chance the message might sink in and they would be motivated to action. Hearing God's word read to us is one thing, but reading it ourselves is another process. We who are literate and have Bibles are greatly blessed with the potential for really getting to grips with God's word in a manner which others haven't been blessed with. To waste and fritter away that responsibility in favour of trashy novels is something we shall have to give account for.

36:3 God says that perhaps Judah would *hear His word* and repent; in :7 Jeremiah repeats this by saying that perhaps Judah would *pray* and repent. True prayer is therefore a reflection of our hearing of God's word. His word influences ours. If the Lord's word abides in us, then prayer becomes powerful, as our will merges with that of God in our requests (Jn. 15:7).

dah who come out of their cities. ⁷ It may be they will present their supplication before Yahweh, and will return each one from his evil way; for great is the anger and the wrath that Yahweh has pronounced against this people.

Baruch Reads the Scroll

⁸ Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of Yahweh in Yahweh's house. ⁹ Now it happened in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, that all the people in Jerusalem, and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem, proclaimed a fast before Yahweh. ¹⁰ Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of Yahweh, in the room of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court, at the entry of the new gate of Yahweh's house, in the ears of all the people. ¹¹ When Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of Yahweh, ¹² he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's room: and behold, all the princes were sitting there, Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and El-

nathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. ¹³ Then Micaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. ¹⁴ Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to Baruch, saying, Take in your hand the scroll in which you have read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand, and came to them. ¹⁵ They said to him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears. ¹⁶ Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, they turned in fear one towards another, and said to Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. ¹⁷ They asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How did you write all these words at his mouth? ¹⁸ Then Baruch answered them, he pronounced all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. ¹⁹ Then the princes said to Baruch, Go, hide, you and Jeremiah; and let no man know where you are. ²⁰ They went in to the king into the court; but they had laid up the scroll in the room of Elishama the scribe; and they told

36:9 The paradox is that the leadership fasted, but didn't ultimately want to hear God's word. Even such self-deprivation is of no meaning unless we are going to be guided by God's word.

36:19 It's a common feature of human response that we tend to 'shoot the messenger', and this is supremely true when it comes to response to someone preaching repentance and God's demands upon human life. This is the main psychological reason behind religious persecution. The source of discomfort must be removed from our presence or even destroyed.

all the words in the ears of the king.
 21 So the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll; and he took it out of the room of Elishama the scribe. Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes who stood beside the king.

The King Burns the Scroll

22 Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month: and there was a fire in the brazier burning before him. 23 It happened, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. 24 They were not afraid, nor tore their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words. 25 Moreover Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the scroll; but he would not hear them. 26 The king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet; but Yahweh hid them. 27 Then the

word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the scroll and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, 28 Take again another scroll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned. 29 Concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah you shall say, Thus says Yahweh: You have burned this scroll saying, Why have you written therein saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from there man and beast? 30 Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit on the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31 I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, because they didn't listen. 32 Then took Jeremiah another scroll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe the son of Neriah, who wrote therein from

36:23 As noted on :19, the natural human response to God's word prodding at their conscience is to remove it, to shoot the messenger. In our day one way of getting rid of the inconvenient demands of God's word is to declare parts of it uninspired by Him; not really His word, just the local views of the time; or to embark upon complex academic attempts to obscure the obvious message beneath a cloud of uncertainty, radical re-translation and polemics.

36:24 *They were not afraid* – But when they first heard those words, they were afraid (:16). Our response to and even interpretation of God's word is so often influenced by those around us. In the presence of unbelievers we can be tempted to see it the way they do... Bible reading and response has to be a totally personal enterprise, and at times it calls us to be prepared to stand alone, with our backs to the world if necessary.

the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides to them many like words.

CHAPTER 37 Aug. 16

A Message for Zedekiah

Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king, instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. ² But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, listened to the words of Yahweh, which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah. ³ Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah saying, Pray now to Yahweh our God for us. ⁴ Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison. ⁵ Pharaoh's army had come forth out of Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they broke up from Jerusalem. ⁶ Then came the word of Yahweh to the prophet Jeremiah saying, ⁷ Thus says Yahweh, the God of Is-

rael, You shall tell the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: Behold, Pharaoh's army which has come forth to help you shall return to Egypt into their own land. ⁸ The Chaldeans shall return and fight against this city; and they shall take it, and burn it with fire. ⁹ Thus says Yahweh, Don't deceive yourselves by saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart. ¹⁰ For though you had struck the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire. ¹¹ It happened that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, ¹² then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. ¹³ When he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet saying, You are falling away to the Chaldeans. ¹⁴ Then Jeremiah said,

37:12 Later in Jeremiah, we read of how Jeremiah was given the choice of honourable retirement in Babylon, or to remain with God's spiritually weak people in the land. He chose to stay with them, and even went down into Egypt with the weakest of them. Perhaps he learnt to do that from his experience at this time. We too are taught by failures in one situation to be stronger the next time we are faced with the choice. It seems he had had enough and just wanted to get away from the aggressive, rejective audience he had in Jerusalem. It is hinted in 32:25 that Jeremiah may have somewhat resented having to buy the field, so that perhaps his family relatives would inherit it at the time of the restored Kingdom in 70 years time, after his death. So he wanted to enjoy it now. And for these things he suffered. We can't have the hope of eternity *and* enjoy it now, even if we may have some foretastes of it.

It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans. But he didn't listen to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

Jeremiah Imprisoned

¹⁵ The princes were angry with Jeremiah and struck him and imprisoned him in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. ¹⁶ When Jeremiah had come into the dungeon house and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; ¹⁷ then Zedekiah the king sent and fetched him: and the king asked him secretly in his house saying, Is there any word from Yahweh? Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. ¹⁸ Moreover Jeremiah said to king Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against you, or against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? ¹⁹ Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? ²⁰ Now please

hear, my lord the king: please let my supplication be presented before you, that you not cause me to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, unless I die there. ²¹ Then Zedekiah the king commanded and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

CHAPTER 38 Aug. 17

Jeremiah Put into the Dungeon

Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah and Pashhur the son of Malchijah heard the words that Jeremiah spoke to all the people saying, ² Thus says Yahweh, He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine and by the plague; but he who goes forth to the Chaldeans shall live, and his life shall be to him for a prey, and he shall live. ³ Thus says Yahweh, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he

37:17 Those who know God's word will find encouragement there in their experiences of life – but that encouragement is dependent upon their appreciation of the word, and their ability to see the similarities between their situation and that of others who have gone before. Thus when Zedekiah called Jeremiah out of the prison house to meet him and show him the word of God, he ought to have perceived that he was going through the very experience of Pharaoh with Joseph (see too :20). Jeremiah's desperate plea not to be sent back to prison to die there surely echoes that of Joseph to his brethren; for Jeremiah was let down like Joseph had been into a pit with no water in, so reminiscent of Joseph (Gen. 37:24). But Zedekiah didn't want to see all this; he should've listened to Jeremiah, as Pharaoh had listened to Joseph and saved himself. It was all potentially set up for him; but he refused to take note. One of the many reasons for daily Bible reading is that we become familiar with the text of Scripture, and can more easily perceive the similarities between our life situations and those of Bible characters who have gone before us.

shall take it. ⁴ Then the princes said to the king, Please let this man be put to death; because he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words to them: for this man doesn't seek the welfare of this people, but their hurt. ⁵ Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he who can do anything against you. ⁶ Then they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. In the dungeon there was no water, but mud; and Jeremiah sank in the mud. ⁷ Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, a eunuch who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin), ⁸ Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house and spoke to the king saying, ⁹ My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is likely to die in the place where he is, because of the famine; for there is no more bread in the city. ¹⁰ Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian saying, Take from here

thirty men with you, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies.

Jeremiah Rescued

¹¹ So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there rags and worn-out clothes and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. ¹² Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, Put now these rags and worn-out clothes under your armpits under the cords. Jeremiah did so. ¹³ So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

Jeremiah's Last Conversation with Zedekiah

¹⁴ Then Zedekiah the king sent and took Jeremiah the prophet to him into the third entry that is in the house of Yahweh: and the king said to Jeremiah, I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me. ¹⁵ Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, If I declare it to you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me. ¹⁶ So Zedekiah the king swore secretly to Jeremiah saying, As Yahweh lives, who

38:7 *Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, a eunuch* – As a dark skinned foreigner who was well known to be a eunuch, he would likely have been despised within Jerusalem society. But it was exactly the despised who God loves to use as tools to save His people. And it's exactly these types who have the empathy to be able to reach out to save those like Jeremiah. We too can be such people, if we meditate enough upon who we really are and the significance of our sins.

38:16 *Who made us this soul* – The fact we had our lives created by God means we should never take another's life apart from at His specific command.

made us this soul, I will not put you to death, neither will I give you into the hand of these men who seek your life. ¹⁷ Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Armies, the God of Israel: If you will go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then your soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and you shall live, and your family. ¹⁸ But if you will not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire and you shall not escape out of their hand. ¹⁹ Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews who are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand and they mock me. ²⁰ But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver you. Obey, I beg you, the voice of Yahweh, in that which I speak to you: so it shall be well

with you, and your soul shall live. ²¹ But if you refuse to go forth, this is the word that Yahweh has shown me: ²² behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Your familiar friends have deceived you and have prevailed over you. Your feet are now sunk in the mud, and they now turn away from you. ²³ They shall bring out all your wives and your children to the Chaldeans; and you shall not escape out of their hand, but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and you shall cause this city to be burned with fire. ²⁴ Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and you shall not die. ²⁵ But if the princes hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and tell you, Declare to us now what you have said to the king; don't

38:22 *Your feet are now sunk in the mire* – The emphasis would've been on “*your feet*”. Jeremiah witnessed to Zedekiah on the basis of bridge building. Jeremiah warned him that politically and spiritually, *his* feet were sunk in the mud – just after Jeremiah himself had sunk in the mud and been miraculously delivered from it (:6). We must build bridges into the real world in which the people who are our audience live and love, work and play, laugh and weep, struggle and suffer, grow old and die. We do this by revealing to them that we too are human, we're not knights in shining armour; and we seek to relate our experiences to theirs, so that there is that point of ‘flash’ where we as it were catch each others’ eye, and are united by experience. It is from that point that we have won their trust and can proceed to credibly share the doctrinal content of the Gospel with them. The more real, the more credible.

38:23 *You shall cause this city to be burned with fire* – God somehow arranged things within His purpose so that Zedekiah's repentance would have enabled the salvation of all Israel. But his failure to repent, his fear of his image amongst men who were themselves condemned and on borrowed time, meant that judgment came on all His people. What this shows is that there are times and places where God is willing to save people for the sake of the spirituality of a third party, but if he or she fails in this, deliverance doesn't *necessarily* arise from another place, as it would have done in Esther's time.

hide it from us, and we will not put you to death; also what the king said to you: ²⁶ then you shall tell them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there. ²⁷ Then came all the princes to Jeremiah, and asked him; and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived. ²⁸ So Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was taken.

CHAPTER 39 Aug. 18

Jerusalem Is Taken

It happened when Jerusalem was taken, (in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and besieged it; ² in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city), ³ that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, Nergal Sharezer, Samgarnebo, Sar-sechim, Rabsaris, Nergal Sharezer, Rabmag, with all the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon. ⁴ It

happened that when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls; and he went out towards the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; and he gave judgement on him. ⁶ Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon killed all the nobles of Judah. ⁷ Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon. ⁸ The Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹ Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city, the deserters also who fell away to him, and the residue of the people who remained. ¹⁰ But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, who had nothing, in the land of Judah, and

39:5 The parable of the good Samaritan features a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and being attacked, to be saved by grace when no human help could assist him (Lk. 10:30). The wounded man represents us all, and yet he is modelled upon Zedekiah. This weak king who loved hearing God's word and wanted to do the right thing, but was simply weak and gave in to the pressure of circumstance and thereby seriously sinned – is representative of each of us.

39:10 These very poor people didn't show themselves spiritually strong, whereas at least some of the more prosperous who were taken to Babylon did repent and some returned to the land after 70 years. Poverty doesn't always mean spirituality; for the problem with poverty is that it can become obsessive and distracts people from God.

gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

Jeremiah Not to Be Harmed

¹¹ Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon commanded Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard concerning Jeremiah saying, ¹² Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do to him even as he shall tell you.

¹³ So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushazban, Rab-saris, Nergal Sharezer, Rabmag, and all the chief officers of the king of Babylon; ¹⁴ they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guard, and committed him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he lived among the people. ¹⁵ Now the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the guard, saying, ¹⁶ Go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian saying, Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring My words on this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished before you in that day.

¹⁷ But I will deliver you in that day, says Yahweh; and you shall not be

given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. ¹⁸ For I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but your life shall be for a prey to you; because you have put your trust in me, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 40 Aug. 19

Jeremiah is Set Free

The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah, who were carried away captive to Babylon. ² The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, Yahweh your God pronounced this evil on this place; ³ and Yahweh has brought it, and done according as He spoke: because you have sinned against Yahweh, and have not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing has come on you. ⁴ Now, behold, I release you this day from the chains which are on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will take care of you; but if it seems bad to

39:18 *Because you have put your trust in me* – Ebedmelech is commended for his faith, and yet at the same time God points out his fear (:17). Ideally, faith should preclude fear. Ebedmelech feared, and yet he still believed. Perhaps faith is rarely total in human beings, but God accepts that all the same, in His grace. Note that Ebedmelech is promised deliverance because of his faith – when we would have expected him to be given deliverance because he had delivered God’s prophet Jeremiah. Thus we see that good works are not on their own of significance to God; it is faith in Him which is of the essence.

40:4 *All the land is before you* – Jeremiah would have recalled how Lot was in a similar position, given the opportunity of living where he wanted; and he wrongly chose the Sodom area, and spiritually suffered for it. Jeremiah would’ve immediately been on his guard, in case this offer of living where he liked could lead him to wrong

you to come with me into Babylon, don't: behold, all the land is before you; where it seems good and right to you to go, there go. ⁵ If you remain, then return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever you think it right to go. So the captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present, and let him go. ⁶ Then went Jeremiah to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land. ⁷ Now when all the captains of the forces who were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed to him

men, and women, and children, and of the poorest of the land, of those who were not carried away captive to Babylon; ⁸ then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite and Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men. ⁹ Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan swore to them and to their men saying, Don't be afraid to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

The Harvest

¹⁰ As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to stand before the Chaldeans who shall come to us: but you, gather grapes and summer fruits and

choices. The more familiar we are with Scripture and the more we reflect upon and personalize it, the easier it will be for us to see our situations as being in essence what others were in, and the clearer the decisions will become.

40:6 Jeremiah was popular with the Babylonians because he had repeatedly urged Judah to surrender to them and predicted the Babylonian victory. So he was offered a nice retirement package in the opulence of Babylon, amongst his fellow Jews, whom God had predicted would be the ones who would repent, rather than those very poor few who remained in the land. Jeremiah's chose to remain in unstable Judah, which would've suffered all the practical and economic problems associated with anarchy, marauding gangs and a land destroyed by a lengthy military campaign; and he also chose to remain among the materially poor and spiritually weakest. They wouldn't have been very nice company. The first wave of Jews taken captive to Babylon included faithful Daniel and his friends, Ezekiel and other prophets. But Jeremiah chose the hardest way, to stay with the weakest and poorest; he must've been so spiritually lonely. In various contexts we also have these choices, and if we are truly motivated by the love of Christ, we will seek the higher level choices as Jeremiah did.

40:9 *Don't be afraid to serve the Chaldeans* – Gedaliah is alluding to Jeremiah's words of 27:8,11,12, where he had urged Judah to recognize their sins and the need for punishment of them, and therefore serve the Chaldeans. Because they didn't do this, destruction came. But even afterwards, it seems Gedaliah was still urging the people to accept this principle.

oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken. ¹¹ Likewise when all the Jews who were in Moab, and among the children of Ammon, and in Edom, and who were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan; ¹² then all the Jews returned out of all places where they were driven, and came to the land of Judah to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and gathered grapes and summer fruits very much. ¹³ Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces who were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, ¹⁴ and said to him, Do you know that Baalis the king of the children of Ammon has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam didn't believe them. ¹⁵ Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly saying, Please let me go, and I will kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know

it: why should he take your life, that all the Jews who are gathered to you should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish? ¹⁶ But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, You shall not do this thing; for you speak falsely of Ishmael.

CHAPTER 41 Aug. 20

Gedaliah is Killed

Now it happened in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal and one of the chief officers of the king, and ten men with him, came to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they ate bread together in Mizpah. ² Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men who were with him, and struck Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and killed him whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. ³ Ishmael also killed all the Jews who were with him, with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the

40:10-15 The positive situation described here, both materially and spiritually, was perhaps an outcome of the people being willing to obey Jeremiah's earlier appeal to serve the Babylonians (see on :9). It would seem from 41:5 that the destroyed temple was at least partially operating; and as many as 80 men had cut themselves in repentance and a fervent desire for God to hear their prayers, and were bringing sacrifice to Him. The king's daughters were allowed to remain in Mizpah, and some of the "greatest" amongst the Jews also remained in the land (42:1). This situation is never predicted by Jeremiah; all the prophecies suggest a total destruction of the people and the severing of God's relationship with the land. But in wrath God remembered mercy; what we see here is grace indeed. And yet, once again, the situation didn't last because of human failure – in this case, Ishmael's evil explained in chapter 41, and Gedaliah's un wisdom in :16.

41:1 To eat bread together was a sign of fellowship and mutual acceptance. The breaking of bread service is therefore designed as a comfort to us of the Lord's acceptance of us. He is willing to do this any time with us.

Chaldeans who were found there, the men of war. ⁴ It happened the second day after he had killed Gedaliah, and no man knew it, ⁵ that there came men from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even eighty men, having their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and having cut themselves, with meal offerings and frankincense in their hand, to bring them to the house of Yahweh. ⁶ Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it happened, as he met them, he said to them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

The Evil Done by Ishmael

⁷ It was so that when they came into the midst of the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah killed them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men who were with him. ⁸ But ten men were found among those who said to Ishmael, Don't kill us; for we have stores hidden in the field, of wheat, barley, oil and honey. So he stopped, and didn't kill them among their brothers. ⁹ Now the cistern in which Ishmael cast all the dead bodies of the men whom he had killed along with Gedaliah was the same which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with those who were killed. ¹⁰ Then Ishmael carried away captive all the remainder of the people who were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people who remained in

Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam; Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the children of Ammon. ¹¹ But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces who were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, ¹² then they took all the men and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon. ¹³ Now it happened that when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces who were with him, then they were glad. ¹⁴ So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned about and returned and went to Johanan the son of Kareah. ¹⁵ But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the children of Ammon. ¹⁶ Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces who were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had killed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought back from Gibeon: ¹⁷ and they departed, and lived in Geruth Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt, ¹⁸ because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, because

Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had killed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor over the land.

CHAPTER 42 Aug. 21

The People Ask Jeremiah to Pray for Them

Then all the captains of the forces, Johanan the son of Kareah, Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah and all the people from the least even to the greatest came near, ² and said to Jeremiah the prophet, Please let our supplication be presented before you, and pray for us to Yahweh your God, even for all this remnant; for we are left but a few of many, as your eyes do see us: ³ that Yahweh your God may show us the way in which we should walk, and the thing that we should do. ⁴ Then

Jeremiah the prophet said to them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray to Yahweh your God according to your words; and it shall happen that whatever thing Yahweh shall answer you, I will declare it to you; I will obey nothing back from you. ⁵ Then they said to Jeremiah, Yahweh be a true and faithful witness among us, if we don't do according to all the word with which Yahweh your God shall send you to us. ⁶ Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of Yahweh our God to whom we send you; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of Yahweh our God.

God Answers

⁷ It happened that after ten days the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah. ⁸ Then called he Johanan the son of

42:4 *I will keep nothing back from you* – Paul uses the very same phrase from the LXX in Act 20:20 in the same context; of declaring to God's people what He has revealed to him. Many of the allusions made by Bible characters to the words of other Bible characters may not have been conscious; but they were so filled with God's word that they came out with those phrases which they had in their hearts as a result of their continual reflection upon God's word. This is how the Bible can become a living word for us; in that we find ourselves talking even to ourselves, in our deepest self-talk, in the terms and phrases we encounter in the Bible (Eph. 5:19). This is the essence of spiritual mindedness, which is what Christianity is all about.

42:6 *We will obey* – Whilst their attitude is great on paper, chapter 43 explains that they simply rejected the answer they received. At this point, they were approaching God and seeking guidance from His word with their minds already made up as to what they wanted the answer to be. This is the attitude which robs so much prayer and Bible reading of its value – people can do these things in the hope they will be confirmed in their own views and wishes, and if they aren't confirmed in them, they just continue in them anyway. Prayer and Bible study must be done with a true openness of mind and willingness to be directed by them, even into paths and choices we strongly don't wish to make.

God to whom we send you – Prayer was envisaged by them as a going to God, a journey into His presence. Although we are in His presence all the time, this doesn't take away the special entry into God's personal presence which is what prayer is all about.

Kareah, and all the captains of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, ⁹ and said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel to whom you sent me to present your supplication before Him: ¹⁰ If you will still live in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I grieve over the distress that I have brought on you. ¹¹ Don't be afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; don't be afraid of him, says Yahweh: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. ¹² I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you, and cause you to return to your own land. ¹³ But if you say, We will not dwell in this land; so that you don't obey the voice of Yahweh your God, ¹⁴ saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: ¹⁵ now therefore hear the word of Yahweh, O remnant of Judah: Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, If you indeed set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to live there; ¹⁶ then it shall happen, that the sword which you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine, about which you are afraid, shall follow close behind you there in Egypt; and there you shall die. ¹⁷ So shall it be with all the men who set their faces to go into Egypt to live there: they shall die by the sword, by the famine and by the plague; and none of them

shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring on them. ¹⁸ For thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: As My anger and My wrath has been poured forth on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so shall My wrath be poured forth on you, when you shall enter into Egypt; and you shall be an object of horror and an astonishment, a curse and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more.

Jeremiah Warns the People

¹⁹ Yahweh has spoken concerning you, remnant of Judah, Don't you go into Egypt: know certainly that I have testified to you this day. ²⁰ For you have dealt deceitfully against your own souls; for you sent me to Yahweh your God saying, Pray for us to Yahweh our God; and according to all that Yahweh our God shall say, so declare to us, and we will do it: ²¹ and I have this day declared it to you; but you have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh your God in anything for which He has sent me to you. ²² Now therefore know certainly that you shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place where you desire to go to live there.

CHAPTER 43 Aug. 22

The People Flee to Egypt

It happened that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking to all the people all the words of Yahweh their God, with which Yahweh their God had sent him to them, even all these words, ² then spoke Azariah the son of Hoshaiiah, and Johanan the son of

Kareah, and all the proud men, saying to Jeremiah, You speak falsely: Yahweh our God has not sent you to say, You shall not go into Egypt to live there; ³ but Baruch the son of Neriah sets you on against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may put us to death, and carry us away captive to Babylon. ⁴ So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, didn't obey the voice of Yahweh, to dwell in the land of Judah. ⁵ But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah, who were returned from all the nations where they had been driven, to live in the land of Judah; ⁶ the men, and the women, and the children, and the king's daughters, and every person who Nebuzaradan the captain of the

guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan; and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah; ⁷ and they came into the land of Egypt; for they didn't obey the voice of Yahweh: and they came to Tahpanhes.

The Invasion of Egypt Foretold

⁸ Then came the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, ⁹ Take great stones in your hand, and hide them in mortar in the brick work, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah; ¹⁰ and tell them, Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne on these stones that I have hidden; and he shall spread

43:2 See on 42:6. The way out of finding that God's word is telling us something we don't want to hear is to claim that actually, that part isn't inspired. The problem with rejecting parts of God's word – the inconvenient bits – is that we then have no mechanism with which to decide which parts to accept and which not to; the process becomes subjective to the point that God's word is no longer His but effectively our own. And it's pride which is at the root of refusing to accept God's word as inspired – for "all the proud men" refused to accept Jeremiah's word as inspired.

43:5 *The remnant of Judah, who were returned from all the nations where they had been driven* – It seems that during the short period of peace immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem (see on 40:10-15), some of the Jews who had fled over Judah's border into neighbouring countries started to return. This was becoming a foretaste of the prophesied restoration and return which was to happen after 70 years; but their trust in Egypt and lack of faith in Jeremiah's prophetic word meant that this possible scenario didn't come true. We too by grace have many possible scenarios open to us, but our unbelief and desire to follow our gut feelings lead us not to fulfil them.

43:8 *Jeremiah in Tahpanhes* – It's incredible that Jeremiah went there with them, despite having had his prophetic words specifically ignored, and being slandered as actually not a true prophet of Yahweh. But this was his level of identity with God's people, weak as they were. After reading this verse, the spiritual weakness of others in the family of God should never again make us think that we want nothing to do with them. We need to stick with them as Jeremiah did.

his royal pavilion over them. ¹¹ He shall come, and shall strike the land of Egypt; such as are for death shall be put to death, and such as are for captivity to captivity, and such as are for the sword to the sword. ¹² I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captive: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his garment; and he shall go forth from there in peace. ¹³ He shall also break the pillars of Beth Shemesh that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of Egypt shall he burn with fire.

CHAPTER 44 Aug. 23

God's Message for the Jews in Egypt

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who lived in the land of Egypt, who lived at Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis and in the country of Pathros, saying, ² Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: You have seen all the evil that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwells therein, ³ because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, to serve other gods that they didn't know, neither they, nor you, nor your

fathers. ⁴ However I sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them saying, Oh, don't do this abominable thing that I hate! ⁵ But they didn't listen nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods. ⁶ Therefore My wrath and My anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as it is this day. ⁷ Therefore now thus says Yahweh, the God of Armies, the God of Israel: Why do you commit great evil against your own souls, to cut off from yourselves man and woman, infant and nursing child out of the midst of Judah, to leave yourselves none remaining; ⁸ in that you provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to live; that you may be cut off, and that you may be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? ⁹ Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁰ They are not humbled even to this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in My law, nor in My statutes, that

44:3 Time and again Jeremiah accuses the people of purposefully inciting God to anger through their worshipping of Him along with other gods (7:18,19; 11:17,18; 25:6; 44:3-8) – whereas the onlooker would've likely commented that at least they were doing *something*, and Jeremiah should just calm himself down about it all. The demand is for total dedication.

I set before you and before your fathers. ¹¹ Therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set My face against you for evil, even to cut off all Judah. ¹² I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to live there, and they shall all be consumed; in the land of Egypt shall they fall; they shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine; they shall die, from the least even to the greatest, by the sword and by the famine; and they shall be an object of horror, an astonishment, a curse and a reproach. ¹³ For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the plague; ¹⁴ so that none of the remnant of Judah, who have gone into the land of Egypt to live there, shall escape or be left to return into the land of Judah, to which they will have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return save such as shall escape.

The People Refuse to Heed God's Message

¹⁵ Then all the men who knew that their wives burned incense to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, even all the people who lived in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah saying, ¹⁶ As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of Yahweh, we will not listen to you. ¹⁷ But we will certainly perform every word that is gone forth out of our mouth, to burn incense to the queen of the sky, and to pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of food, and were well, and saw no evil. ¹⁸ But since we left off burning incense to the queen of the sky, and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. ¹⁹ When we burned incense to the queen of the sky, and

44:14 *For none shall return save such as shall escape* – God's grace is amazing here. He had promised total destruction of Judah; but some survived. He had told Jeremiah that He wouldn't respond to Jeremiah's prayers for the people (7:16; 11:14). Yet Jeremiah had prayed for this remnant of the people, and God had responded (42:6). The people had solemnly promised to do whatever God said in response. He told them not to go to Egypt. They went anyway. God said they would be destroyed there "so that none... shall be left to return". And now He hints at the possibility that some would still return to Judah from Egypt. He so seeks relationship with His people. See on :28.

44:18 *Were well, and saw no evil* – Their motivation was simply to have a situation where they would experience good and not "evil", in the sense of disaster. Yet they had claimed that they would accept God's word whether it meant good or evil for them (42:6). However, their agenda was clearly that they wanted good in this life, right now; rather than accepting evil now as a preparation for God's future Kingdom. The prosperity Gospel has likewise totally misunderstood this; through much tribulation in this life we shall come to enter God's Kingdom (Acts 14:22).

44:19 There is fair emphasis on the role the women played in the decision to worship

poured out drink offerings to her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her, without our husbands? ²⁰ Then Jeremiah said to all the people, to the men, and to the women, even to all the people who had given him an answer, saying, ²¹ The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, didn't Yahweh remember it, and didn't it come into His mind? ²² So that Yahweh could no longer endure you, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which you have committed; therefore your land has become a desolation, an astonishment and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day. ²³ Because you have burned incense, and because you have sinned against Yahweh, and have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, nor walked in His law, nor in His statutes, nor in His testimonies; therefore this evil has happened to you, as it is this day. ²⁴ Moreover Jeremiah said to all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of Yahweh, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt: ²⁵ Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, saying, You and your wives

have both spoken with your mouths, and with your hands have fulfilled it saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of the sky, and to pour out drink offerings to her: establish then your vows, and perform your vows.

God Will Punish Them

²⁶ Therefore hear the word of Yahweh, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by My great name, says Yahweh, that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt saying, As the Lord Yahweh lives. ²⁷ Behold, I watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until they are all gone. ²⁸ Those who escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who have gone into the land of Egypt to live there, shall know whose word shall stand, Mine, or theirs. ²⁹ This shall be the sign to you, says Yahweh, that I will punish you in this place, that you may know that My words shall surely stand against you for evil: ³⁰ Thus

“the queen of the sky”. Perhaps the women were attracted by the idea of a female deity and cast off their faith in Yahweh because of that attraction. People can be abused and discriminated against, just as women were at that time, and yet allow this to lead them into rejecting the true God because they think some other religious system gives value to the abused and glorifies them; when in fact it is Yahweh alone who can glorify anything and ultimately right any wrong.

44:28 Having said that all the Jews in Egypt would be destroyed (:27), there is still going to be a tiny remnant, by God's grace. See on :14.

says Yahweh, Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of those who seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was his enemy, and sought his life.

CHAPTER 45 Aug. 24

God Will Spare Baruch's Life

The message that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ² Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, to you, Baruch: ³ You said, Woe is me now! For Yahweh has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and I find no rest. ⁴ You shall tell him, Thus says Yahweh: Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up; and this

will be so in the whole land. ⁵ Do you seek great things for yourself? Don't seek them; for, behold, I will bring evil on all flesh, says Yahweh; but your life will I give to you for a prey in all places where you go.

CHAPTER 46 Aug. 24

God's Message for Egypt

The word of Yahweh which came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations. ² Of Egypt: concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon struck in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah. ³ Prepare the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle! ⁴ Harness the horses, rise up, you horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, put on the coats of mail. ⁵ Why have I seen it? They are dismayed and are turned backward; and their mighty ones are

45:5 The command not to see great material things for himself was given to Baruch in the context of the fact that the entire nation of Judah was about to be taken over and destroyed by Babylon. Likewise James 5:3 comments upon the absurdity of heaping up treasures in the last days. If Jesus is about to return and establish His Kingdom here, then amassing wealth in this present order of things which is so soon to be destroyed is bizarre. To live *as if* the day of Christ's return is upon us appears to have been an expectation of the early Christians. It is not to say that we actually *know* that day shall be hear imminently; rather are we to live *as if* it will be.

46:2 The disobedient Jews had fled to Egypt because they thought there would be support and stability there from the Babylonians. Here God prophesies that the Egyptian army would be destroyed and wouldn't be a strength to the Jews. Egypt so often becomes a symbol of human strength which God's people are tempted to trust in rather than in Him. His requirements are often counter-instinctive to obey; to remain in the ruins of Judah under Babylonian occupation was in fact the way to peace; but Egypt always looks the logical, more attractive choice.

46:5 *Why have I seen it?* – Jeremiah like us at times was weary at having to teach bad news to sinners, and the loss of life because of human pride.

beaten down and have fled apace, and don't look back: terror is on every side, says Yahweh. ⁶ Don't let the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; in the north by the river Euphrates have they stumbled and fallen. ⁷ Who is this who rises up like the Nile, whose waters toss themselves like the rivers? ⁸ Egypt rises up like the Nile, and his waters toss themselves like the rivers: and he says, I will rise up, I will cover the land; I will destroy cities and its inhabitants. ⁹ Go up, you horses; and rage, you chariots; and let the mighty ones go forth: Cush and Put, who handle the shield; and the Ludim, who handle and bend the bow. ¹⁰ For that day is of the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself of His adversaries: and the sword shall devour and be satiate, and shall drink its fill of their blood; for the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, has a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. ¹¹ Go up into Gilead and take balm, virgin daughter of Egypt: in vain do you use many medicines; there is no healing for you. ¹² The nations have heard of your shame, and the earth is full of your cry; for the mighty man has stumbled against the mighty, they are fallen both of them together.

Egypt Is Warned

¹³ The word that Yahweh spoke to Jeremiah the prophet, how that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon should come and strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ Declare in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Memphis and in Tahpanhes: say, Stand forth, and prepare; for the sword has devoured around you. ¹⁵ Why are your strong ones swept away? They didn't stand, because Yahweh pushed them over. ¹⁶ He made many to stumble, yes, they fell one on another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our birth, from the oppressing sword. ¹⁷ They cried there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he has let the appointed time pass by. ¹⁸ As I live, says the King whose name is Yahweh of Armies, surely like Tabor among the mountains, and like Carmel by the sea, so shall he come. ¹⁹ You daughter who dwells in Egypt, furnish yourself to go into captivity; for Memphis shall become a desolation and shall be burnt up without inhabitant. ²⁰ Egypt is a very beautiful heifer; but destruction out of the north has come, it has come. ²¹ Also her hired men in the midst of her are like calves of the stall; for they also are turned back, they are fled away

46:9 The reference to "mighty ones" here and in :5 is an allusion to the Hebrew word *elohim*, which also means "mighty ones" or 'the one great mighty one', and is often applied to God and His armies of Angels. The mighty ones of Egypt and her allies were what Judah preferred to trust in, rather than in the mighty ones of Israel's God. Hence God calls Himself by His title "Yahweh of Armies" in :18. His was the true army, not human armies. Day by day and at times hour by hour, we have this same choice – between trust in God's might or human might. Biblical history is recorded so that we might make the right choice.

together, they didn't stand: for the day of their calamity has come on them, the time of their visitation. ²² The sound of it shall go like the serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as wood cutters. ²³ They shall cut down her forest, says Yahweh, though it can't be searched; because they are more than the locusts, and are innumerable. ²⁴ The daughter of Egypt shall be disappointed; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. ²⁵ Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Behold, I will punish Amon of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with her gods, and her kings; even Pharaoh, and those who trust in him: ²⁶ and I will deliver them into the hand of those who seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants; and afterwards it shall be inhabited like in the days of old, says Yahweh.

God Will Save His People

²⁷ But don't you be afraid, Jacob My servant, neither be dismayed, Israel: for, behold, I will save you from afar,

and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. ²⁸ Don't you be afraid, O Jacob My servant, says Yahweh; for I am with you: for although I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you, I will not make a full end of you, but I will correct you in measure, and will in no way leave you unpunished.

CHAPTER 47 Aug. 25

God's Message about the Philistines

The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before that Pharaoh struck Gaza. ² Thus says Yahweh: Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall become an overflowing stream, and shall overflow the land and all that is therein, the city and those who dwell therein; and the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall wail. ³ At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong ones, at the rushing of his chariots, at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers don't look back to their children for feebleness

46:27 *None shall make him afraid* – This was how it would be at the time of the restored Kingdom of God; and yet Judah are then told that therefore right now in this life “Don't you be afraid” (:28). They were to live now the kind of life they would eternally live in the Kingdom; and we too are asked to live the Kingdom life now. In this sense as Jesus often promised, we who believe in Him “have eternal life” right now (1 Jn. 5:13); not in that we will never die in this life, but in the sense that we can begin to live now the kind of life we will eternally live in the future Kingdom.

47:1 The Philistines were another group of people with whom Judah were tempted to trust upon against the Babylonians; but here their destruction is foretold. They should of course have realized from Biblical history that the Philistines were God's enemies, and they ought to have driven them out of the land rather than think about making such alliances with them.

of hands; ⁴ because of the day that comes to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper who remains: for Yahweh will destroy the Philistines, the remnant of the isle of Caphtor. ⁵ Baldness has come on Gaza; Ashkelon is brought to nothing, the remnant of their valley: how long will you cut yourself? ⁶ You sword of Yahweh, how long will it be before you be quiet? Put up yourself into your scabbard; rest, and be still. ⁷ How can you be quiet, since Yahweh has given you a command? Against Ashkelon, and against the seashore, there has He appointed it.

CHAPTER 48 Aug. 26

God's Message for Moab

Of Moab. Thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Woe to Nebo! for it is laid waste; Kiriat-haim is disappointed, it is taken; Misgab is put to shame and broken down. ² The praise of Moab is no

more; in Heshbon they have devised evil against her: Come, and let us cut her off from being a nation. You also, Madmen, shall be brought to silence: the sword shall pursue you. ³ The sound of a cry from Horonaim, desolation and great destruction! ⁴ Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. ⁵ For by the ascent of Luhith with continual weeping shall they go up; for at the descent of Horonaim they have heard the distress of the cry of destruction. ⁶ Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness. ⁷ For because you have trusted in your works and in your treasures, you also shall be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity, his priests and his princes together. ⁸ The destroyer shall come on every city, and no city shall escape; the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed; as Yahweh has spoken. ⁹ May wings be given to Moab, that she may fly

47:6 Again as in 46:5 we sense Jeremiah's weariness at all the bloodshed and his desire for an end to come. We likely feel the same as we survey our world and the prophecies of its immediate future. The fact is, if Judah had been faithful, there would've been no Babylonian invasion, no destruction of the nations Judah wanted to make alliances with to stave it off rather than repenting.

48:6 It appears that God was even concerned about saving some of Gentile Moab, who had been so aggressive to His beloved people. He gave them the same choice as He did to Judah – if they believed that Babylon really would take their land, then they should act appropriately. But just as leaders madly cling on to power, so people more than anything else want to retain their existing lifestyle and environment; we are all so conservative by nature, as Jesus recognized in His parable of Lk. 5:39. The old must continue at all costs, we think; whereas God's word demands of us a counter-instinctive and radical change. This theme continues in :11, where we read of Moab as wine which has settled for too long.

48:9 It really was God's will that even Moab be obedient; or perhaps this was Jeremiah's interjection, as he too wished that Moab would flee their land and thereby escape death at the hand of the Babylonians. There was no gloating over the fact that Israel's historical enemy was also to suffer, just as believers shouldn't get caught up

and get her away: and her cities shall become a desolation, without any to dwell therein. ¹⁰ Cursed is he who does the work of Yahweh negligently; and cursed is he who keeps back his sword from blood. ¹¹ Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed. ¹² Therefore behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will send to him those who pour off, and they shall pour him off; and they shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles in pieces. ¹³ Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence. ¹⁴ How do you say, We are mighty men, and valiant men for the war? ¹⁵ Moab is laid waste, and they are gone up into his cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, says the King, whose name is Yahweh of Armies. ¹⁶ The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hurries fast. ¹⁷ All you who are around him, bemoan him; all you who know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, the beautiful rod! ¹⁸ You daughter who dwells in Dibon, come down from your glory,

and sit in thirst; for the destroyer of Moab has come up against you, he has destroyed your strongholds. ¹⁹ Inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and watch: ask him who flees, and her who escapes; say, What has been done? ²⁰ Moab is disappointed; for it is broken down: wail and cry; tell it by the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste. ²¹ Judgement has come on the plain country, on Holon, Jahzah, Mephaath, ²² Dibon, Nebo, Beth Diblathaim, ²³ Kiriathaim, Beth Gamul, Beth Meon, ²⁴ Kerioth, Bozrah, and on all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near.

The Humbling of Moab

²⁵ The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, says Yahweh. ²⁶ Make him drunken; for he magnified himself against Yahweh: and Moab shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. ²⁷ For wasn't Israel a derision to you? Was he found among thieves? For as often as you speak of him, you shake your head. ²⁸ You inhabitants of Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock; and be like the dove that makes her nest over the mouth of the abyss. ²⁹ We have heard of the pride of Moab. He is very proud; his loftiness, and his pride, and his arro-

in feelings of national aggression against another race; rather did God and Jeremiah reveal a true perception of the value of the human person, and therefore a desire that they should repent.

48:13 The intended purpose of the judgment upon Moab was so that they would quit their allegiance to Chemosh their god. In those days, a people couldn't exist without a national god, and in any case, there is within all humans a basic desire to worship at least something. The implication seems to be that if they quit Chemosh, then they would adopt Yahweh as their national God.

gance, and the highness of his heart.

³⁰ I know his wrath, says Yahweh, that it is nothing; his boastings have worked nothing. ³¹ Therefore will I wail for Moab; yes, I will cry out for all Moab: for the men of Kir Heres shall they mourn. ³² With more than the weeping of Jazer will I weep for you, vine of Sibmah: your branches passed over the sea, they reached even to the sea of Jazer: on your summer fruits and on your vintage the destroyer is fallen. ³³ Gladness and joy is taken away from the fruitful field and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to cease from the wine presses: none shall tread with shouting; the shouting shall be no shouting. ³⁴ From the cry of Heshbon even to Elealeh, even to Jahaz have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even to Horonaim, to Eglath Shelishiyah: for the waters of Nimrim also shall become desolate. ³⁵ Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, says Yahweh, him who offers in the high place, and him who burns incense to his gods. ³⁶ Therefore my

heart sounds for Moab like pipes, and my heart sounds like pipes for the men of Kir Heres: therefore the abundance that he has gotten is perished.

³⁷ For every head is bald, and every beard clipped: on all the hands are cuttings, and on the waist sackcloth.

³⁸ On all the housetops of Moab and in its streets there is lamentation every where; for I have broken Moab like a vessel in which none delights, says Yahweh. ³⁹ How it is broken down! How they wail! How Moab has turned the back with shame! So shall Moab become a derision and a terror to all who are around him.

⁴⁰ For thus says Yahweh: Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread out his wings against Moab. ⁴¹ Keri-oth is taken, and the strongholds are seized, and the heart of the mighty men of Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

⁴² Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he has magnified himself against Yahweh. ⁴³ Fear, the pit and the snare are upon you, inhabitant of Moab, says Yahweh.

48:31 *Therefore will I wail for Moab* – Moab was to weep for her own destruction (:20), but Jeremiah was so identified with them that he felt their future pain and desolation, and wept with them ahead of time. This was how sure Jeremiah was that these prophetic words he preached would come true. He didn't just relay them to the world as a duty, as merely a messenger. He identified with his audience and felt for them. This is our pattern in preaching. We must ask whether we have a heart that bleeds for this world, whether we have ever wept tears for the people we preach to and for the world around us which is fast heading to destruction.

48:36 *Therefore my heart sounds for Moab* – The preceding verses are clearly God Himself speaking. Both His and Jeremiah's heart [see on :31] groaned for Moab, the continual enemy of God's people. God weeps for the arrogant, for the condemned, for His enemies (:42). We who at times fear His judgment of us should remember this; ultimately His love and desire to save is very great, and we unlike Moab have openly shown in baptism, daily prayer and the life of faith that we do indeed want to be saved.

⁴⁴ He who flees from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he who gets up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring on him, even on Moab, the year of their visitation, says Yahweh. ⁴⁵ Those who fled stand without strength under the shadow of Heshbon; for a fire is gone forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and has devoured the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. ⁴⁶ Woe to you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh is undone; for your sons are taken away captive, and your daughters into captivity. ⁴⁷ Yet will I revive the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, says Yahweh. Thus far is the judgement of Moab.

CHAPTER 49 Aug. 27

God's Message for Ammon

Of the children of Ammon. Thus says Yahweh: Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? why then does Malcam possess Gad, and his people dwell in its cities? ² Therefore behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will cause an alarm of war to

be heard against Rabbah of the children of Ammon; and it shall become a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel possess those who possessed him, says Yahweh. ³ Wail, Heshbon, for Ai is laid waste; cry, you daughters of Rabbah, clothe yourself in sackcloth: lament, and run back and forth among the fences; for Malcam shall go into captivity, his priests and his princes together. ⁴ Why do you glory in the valleys, your flowing valley, backsliding daughter? Who trusted in her treasures, saying, who shall come to me? ⁵ Behold, I will bring a fear on you, says the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, from all who are around you; and you shall be driven out every man right forth, and there shall be none to gather together the fugitives. ⁶ But afterwards I will revive the fortunes of the children of Ammon, says Yahweh.

God's Message for Edom

⁷ Of Edom. Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel perished from the pru-

48:47 The latter day blessing of Moab will be when Christ returns and all Israel's angry neighbours finally humble themselves and accept the God of Israel. So many prophecies of their judgment end with this prospect in view. The destruction of the wicked is but part of God's greater plan to bring people from all nations to Him and the eternal blessing of His Kingdom on earth.

49:1 *Why then does Malcam possess Gad* – It was Ammon who had gone over their border to possess the land intended for the Israelite tribe of Gad; hence the reference to Israel repossessing their own land from Ammon in :2. But Malcam, the god of Ammon, is spoken of here as if it was Ammon (as in :3). A people are identified with the name of their god, in that those who worship idols become like them (Ps. 115:8). Israel were unusual in that they had a national God, Yahweh, but they didn't totally identify with Him because they also worshipped gods like Malcam whom the surrounding nations worshipped. By baptism into the Lord's Name and becoming the spiritual people of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29) we are to be totally identified with our God.

dent? Has their wisdom vanished?

⁸ Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths, inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau on him, the time that I shall visit him. ⁹ If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, wouldn't they steal until they had enough? ¹⁰ But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbours; and he is no more.

¹¹ Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me. ¹² For thus says Yahweh: Behold, they to whom it didn't pertain to drink of the cup shall certainly drink; and are you he who shall altogether go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you shall surely drink. ¹³ For I have sworn by Myself, says Yahweh, that Bozrah

shall become an astonishment, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all its cities shall be perpetual wastes.

¹⁴ I have heard news from Yahweh, and an ambassador is sent among the nations saying, Gather yourselves together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. ¹⁵ For, behold, I have made you small among the nations, and despised among men. ¹⁶ As for your terror, the pride of your heart has deceived you, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill: though you should make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there, says Yahweh. ¹⁷ Edom shall become an astonishment: each one who passes by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all its plagues. ¹⁸ As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbouring cities, says Yahweh, no man shall dwell there, neither shall any son of man live

49:9 *If thieves by night, wouldn't they steal until they had enough?* – This recalls how Prov. 6:30 says that we don't despise a thief who steals because he is hungry. Although all sin is sin, it seems that there are degrees of sin, hence the varying degrees of sacrifice required under the Law of Moses for different sins. God is particularly angry with those who revel in sin as Edom had done, for they as it were sinned for the pleasure of it rather than because human weakness pushed them into the sinful situation (not that sin in any form can be justified). We should bear this in mind when responding to others' failures.

49:11 *Let your widows trust in Me* – As in all these prophecies there is an appeal for the enemies of God's people to repent. The widows of the soldiers whom God had slain are asked to turn to God and trust Him; again we see that the ultimate intention of judgment is to bring people to God and finally bring about the establishment of His Kingdom.

49:16 God wanted to bring down the pride of Edom. They were not His people, they were one of many Gentile nations. Yet God observed their pride and how they trusted in their mountain strongholds. His colossal perception of the attitudes of every human being on earth is perhaps beyond our full appreciation. If He looks with such detail upon the hearts of those who don't know Him, how much more does He look upon us, and also knows the hearts of all those who intersect with us His children.

therein. ¹⁹ Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the pride of the Jordan against the strong habitation: for I will suddenly make them run away from it; and whoever is chosen, him will I appoint over it: for who is like Me? And who will appoint Me a time? And who is the shepherd who will stand before Me? ²⁰ Therefore hear the counsel of Yahweh that He has taken against Edom; and His purposes, that He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely they shall drag them away, the little ones of the flock; surely he shall make their habitation desolate over them. ²¹ The earth trembles at the noise of their fall; there is a cry, the noise which is heard in the Red Sea. ²² Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread out his wings against Bozrah: and the heart of the mighty men of Edom at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

God's Message for Damascus

²³ Of Damascus. Hamath is con-

founded, and Arpad; for they have heard evil news, they are melted away: there is sorrow on the sea; it can't be quiet. ²⁴ Damascus has grown feeble, she turns herself to flee, and trembling has seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken hold of her, as of a woman in travail. ²⁵ How is the city of praise not forsaken, the city of My joy! ²⁶ Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be brought to silence in that day, says Yahweh of Armies. ²⁷ I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben Hadad.

God's Message for Kedar, Hazor and Elam

²⁸ Of Kedar, and of the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon struck. Thus says Yahweh: Arise, go up to Kedar, and destroy the children of the east. ²⁹ Their tents and their flocks shall they take; they shall carry away for themselves their curtains, and all their vessels,

49:25 *How is the city of praise not forsaken, the city of My joy!* – This could be the stubborn denial of the king of Damascus. Yet Jerusalem is the city of praise that shall not be forsaken eternally, and which shall be the eternal joy of God's people when it is declared the capital of the future Kingdom of God on earth (Ps. 9:14; 102:21; Is. 62:12; 65:18). So it seems that God and Jeremiah interject in the midst of these woeful prophecies of the destruction of Gentile cities like Damascus, to reflect that ultimately Jerusalem will not be destroyed like they shall be. This encourages us to see the predictions of Jerusalem or Zion's eternal presence and joy as having a literal dimension to their fulfilment; the Jerusalem which we can locate on a map, view photographs of or visit shall indeed be the eternal capital city of God's Kingdom on earth, in the same way as Christ shall reign eternally on David's throne / place of kingship, which was in Jerusalem (Lk. 1:31-35).

49:28 *Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon struck* – The destruction of all these nations is prophesied as a warning to Judah not to make allegiance with them in the hope they would stave off the Babylonian invasion. The lesson is so repeated – that

and their camels; and they shall cry to them, Terror on every side!³⁰ Flee, wander far off, dwell in the depths, you inhabitants of Hazor, says Yahweh; for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has taken counsel against you, and has conceived a purpose against you.³¹ Arise, go up to a nation that is at ease, that dwells without care, says Yahweh; that have neither gates nor bars, that dwell alone.³² Their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their livestock a spoil: and I will scatter to all winds those who have the corners of their beards cut off; and I will bring their calamity on them from every side, says Yahweh.³³ Hazor shall be a dwelling place of jackals, a desolation forever: no man shall dwell there, neither shall any son of man live therein.³⁴ The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,³⁵ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might.³⁶ On Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of the sky, and will scatter them towards

all those winds; and there shall be no nation where the outcasts of Elam shall not come.³⁷ I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before those who seek their life; and I will bring evil on them, even My fierce anger, says Yahweh; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them;³⁸ and I will set My throne in Elam, and will destroy from there king and princes, says Yahweh.³⁹ But it shall happen in the latter days, that I will restore the fortunes of Elam, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 50 Aug. 28

The Fall of Babylon and Israel's Return

The word that Yahweh spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet.² Declare among the nations and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and don't conceal: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is disappointed, Merodach is dismayed; her images are disappointed, her idols are dismayed.³ For out of the north there comes up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate,

all human strength is not going to work out, the only way of escape from the consequences of sin is by listening to God's prophetic word.

49:30 *Has conceived a purpose against you* – But :31 explains that God had commanded Nebuchadnezzar to attack these nations. God is therefore shown to be capable of putting thoughts and ideas in the minds of wicked Gentiles, even though they of their own freewill conceive the plans themselves. We're unable to exactly understand this process nor the ethics of it all, but the fact is that it happens. The encouragement is that if God does this kind of thing to wicked people, He is likewise able to work upon the weak hearts of those of us who do love Him in weakness and who eagerly invite Him to put good rather than evil in our hearts because we feel so weak in our own mental strength.

50:2 *Babylon is taken, Bel is disappointed, Merodach is dismayed* – Note how Babylon is so identified with her gods; see on 48:13; 49:1.

and none shall dwell therein: they are fled, they are gone, both man and animal. ⁴ In those days, and in that time, says Yahweh, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; they shall go on their way weeping, and shall seek Yahweh their God. ⁵ They shall inquire concerning Zion with their faces turned towards it saying, Come, and join yourselves to Yahweh in an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten. ⁶ My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. ⁷ All who found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We are not guilty, because they have sinned against Yahweh, the habitation of righteous-

ness, even Yahweh, the hope of their fathers. ⁸ Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the male goats before the flocks. ⁹ For behold, I will stir up and cause to come up against Babylon a company of great nations from the north country; and they shall set themselves in array against her; from there she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of an expert mighty man; none shall return in vain. ¹⁰ Chaldea shall be a prey: all who prey on her shall be satisfied, says Yahweh. ¹¹ Because you are glad, because you rejoice, O you who plunder My inheritance, because you are wanton as a heifer that treads out the grain, and neigh as strong horses; ¹² your mother shall be utterly disappointed; she who bore you shall be confounded: behold, she shall be the least of the nations, a wilderness, a

50:3 Time and again the prophets describe the judgments to fall upon Israel in the same terms as they speak of the condemnations of the surrounding nations (compare :3 and :13). The message was clear: rejected Israel would be treated as Gentiles. Even if we are separated from this world externally, we can still act in a worldly way, and share the world's condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29,32).

50:4 God's intention was that when Babylon fell, the exiles would repent and return to rebuild Zion and enter the new covenant (:5). Babylon fell, the new king, Cyrus of Persia, commanded them to return and rebuild the temple; but the Jews didn't repent and therefore many of them remained in Babylon, where they had a good life. The fall of Babylon is spoken of in Revelation as happening at Christ's return; the prophecy will be reapplied and fulfilled at that time. The return of the Jews to Israel over the last few generations is surely a preparation for this.

50:8 There was an urgency to flee from Babylon, even though at the time the Jews were prosperous there; there were Jews in leadership positions, as the Biblical record makes clear in Daniel; and archaeological research shows that the Jews were in senior business and administrative positions. But there was an urgency to flee from there and return to Judah and rebuild the Kingdom. The call to leave Babylon is interpreted in the New Testament as representing the call of the Gospel, to leave this present system of things at least mentally (Rev. 18:4). But will the new Israel respond better than historical Israel?

dry land, and a desert. ¹³ Because of the wrath of Yahweh she shall not be inhabited, but she shall be wholly desolate: everyone who goes by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. ¹⁴ Set yourselves in array against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she has sinned against Yahweh. ¹⁵ Shout against her all around: she has submitted herself; her bulwarks are fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it is the vengeance of Yahweh: take vengeance on her; as she has done, do to her. ¹⁶ Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him who handles the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn each one to his people, and they shall flee each one to his own land. ¹⁷ Israel is a hunted sheep; the lions have driven him away: first, the king of Assyria devoured him; and now at the last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones. ¹⁸ Therefore thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. ¹⁹ I will bring Israel again to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in

Gilead. ²⁰ In those days and in that time, says Yahweh, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I leave as a remnant.

The Destruction of Babylon

²¹ Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: kill and utterly destroy after them, says Yahweh, and do according to all that I have commanded you. ²² A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. ²³ How is the hammer of the whole earth cut apart and broken! How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! ²⁴ I have laid a snare for you, and you are also caught, Babylon, and you weren't aware: you are found, and also caught, because you have struggled against Yahweh. ²⁵ Yahweh has opened His armoury and has brought forth the weapons of His indignation; for the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, has a work to do in the land of the Chaldeans. ²⁶ Come against her from the utmost border; open her storehouses; cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly; let nothing of her be left. ²⁷ Kill all her bulls; let

50:14 *She has sinned against Yahweh* – Gentile unbelievers are still counted as sinning against God. His sensitivity to sin must make it so hard to be God... perceiving and feeling the sin of every person amongst the billions of this world. We should be therefore the more sensitive to His sensitivity. This also means that He must be thrilled with the genuine efforts of His people to be righteous, as He observes so much rebellion against Him.

50:20 *The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none* – An encouragement to us as to the totality and depth of God's ability to forgive.

them go down to the slaughter: woe to them! For their day has come, the time of their visitation. ²⁸ The voice of those who flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of Yahweh our God, the vengeance of His temple. ²⁹ Call together the archers against Babylon, all those who bend the bow; encamp against her all around; let none of it escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she has done, do to her; for she has been proud against Yahweh, against the Holy One of Israel. ³⁰ Therefore her young men will fall in her streets, and all her men of war will be brought to silence in that day, says Yahweh. ³¹ Behold, I am against you, you proud one, says the Lord, Yahweh of Armies; for your day has come, the time that I will visit you. ³² The proud one shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all who are around him. ³³ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: The children of Israel and the children

of Judah are oppressed together; and all who took them captive hold them fast; they refuse to let them go. ³⁴ Their Redeemer is strong; Yahweh of Armies is His name: He will thoroughly plead their cause, that He may give rest to the earth, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon. ³⁵ A sword is on the Chaldeans, says Yahweh, and on the inhabitants of Babylon, on her princes and on her wise men. ³⁶ A sword is on the boasters, and they shall become fools; a sword is on her mighty men, and they shall be dismayed. ³⁷ A sword is on their horses, and on their chariots, and on all the mixed people who are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is on her treasures, and they shall be robbed. ³⁸ A drought is on her waters, and they shall be dried up; for it is a land of engraved images, and they are mad over idols. ³⁹ Therefore the wild animals of the desert with the wolves shall dwell there, and the ostriches shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall

50:29 *For she has been proud* – For all the millions of sins of Babylon, not least her idolatry, it is her pride which is seen as her main sin; for pride is the essence of all sin (see too :31,32,36).

50:33 *They refuse to let them go* – The Babylonians initially ‘refused’ to let Judah return in the same way as Egypt did under Pharaoh. However, there’s no hint that the Jews actually asked to return. Babylon ‘refused’ to respond to the Angels’ attempts to encourage Babylon to send the Jews back; this may be referred to in Dan. 10:13. From the viewpoint of a Jewish person in Babylon, all this Angelic activity was quite invisible. We too can think God is inactive when in fact He is working powerfully for us behind the scenes.

50:39 *It shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be lived in from generation to generation* – The fact Babylon has been rebuilt at times and didn’t cease to be inhabited after the Medes captured it and overthrew the Babylonian empire means that this prophecy must have a future fulfilment. It’s not impossible that literal Babylon may be rebuilt, and the latter-day equivalent of the Babylonian and Assyrian empires

it be lived in from generation to generation. ⁴⁰ As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring cities, says Yahweh, so shall no man dwell there, neither shall any son of man live therein. ⁴¹ Behold, a people comes from the north; and a great nation and many kings shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth. ⁴² They lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roars like the sea; and they ride on horses, each one set in array as a man to the battle, against you, daughter of Babylon. ⁴³ The king of Babylon has heard the news of them, and his hands wax feeble: anguish has taken hold of him, pains as of a woman in labour. ⁴⁴ Behold, the enemy shall come up like a lion from the pride of the Jordan against the strong habitation: for I will suddenly make them run away from it; and whoever is chosen, him will I appoint over it: for who is like Me? And who will appoint Me a time? And who is the shepherd who can stand before Me? ⁴⁵ Therefore hear the counsel of Yahweh that He has

taken against Babylon; and His purposes, that He has purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely they shall drag them away, even the little ones of the flock; surely he shall make their habitation desolate over them. ⁴⁶ At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth trembles, and the cry is heard among the nations.

CHAPTER 51 Aug. 29

More Judgement against Babylon

Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I will raise up a destroying wind against Babylon and against those who dwell in Lebkamai. ² I will send to Babylon strangers who shall winnow her; and they shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her around. ³ Against him who bends let the archer bend his bow, and against him who lifts himself up in his coat of mail: don't spare her young men; utterly destroy all her army. ⁴ They shall fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans, and thrust through in her streets. ⁵ For neither Israel nor Judah is forsaken, of his God, of Yahweh of Ar-

be re-established in the form of some superpower which will likewise persecute Israel, and meet its final end at Christ's return.

51:1 *A destroying wind* – The Hebrew *ruach* translated “wind” is also translated “spirit”; God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7). The reference seems to be to a specific Angel who was given the task of destroying Babylon; rather like the Angel who slew the firstborn of Egypt and the faithless Israelites in the wilderness is called “the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10). God gives His Angels specific tasks to perform, in the same way as He works with us and will work with us when we take over the Angels' role in the future Kingdom on earth (Lk. 20:35,36; Heb. 2:5). We have even now been given specific work to do, and we should pray to perceive what that is (Eph. 2:10). Also note that the apparently ‘negative’ phenomena in human life, “evil” in the sense of destruction, come from God through His Angels designated to perform that work – there is no personal Satan figure who is out of God's control and working against Him.

mies; though their land is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel. ⁶ Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and save every man his life; don't be cut off in her iniquity: for it is the time of Yahweh's vengeance; He will render to her a recompense. ⁷ Babylon has been a golden cup in Yahweh's hand, who made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. ⁸ Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: wail for her; take her balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. ⁹ We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go each one into his own country; for

her judgement reaches to the sky, and is lifted up even to heaven. ¹⁰ Yahweh has brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of Yahweh our God. ¹¹ Make sharp the arrows; hold firm the shields: Yahweh has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it: for it is the revenge of Yahweh, the revenge for His temple. ¹² Set up a standard against the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set the watchmen, prepare the ambushes; for Yahweh has both purposed and done that which He spoke concerning the inhabitants of

51:6 Quoted about us in Rev. 18:4; see on 50:8.

51:8 *Wail for her; take her balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed* – If God wanted to save even Babylon, how much more is He eager to save us who do believe in and love Him. After all the prophecies of destruction against Babylon, they could all have been averted if she had been taken the message of repentance by the Jews and had accepted it. But part of the problem was that the Jews were comfortable in Babylon [see on 50:8] and therefore they didn't see she needed to repent too much, and they didn't preach this to her. One of the reasons we don't preach to this world is because we are too comfortable within it, as Judah were in Babylon.

51:9 *Her judgement... is lifted up even to Heaven* – But sins are described as 'rising up to Heaven' (2 Chron. 28:9); here the judgement for them is spoken of as also 'rising up to Heaven' (same Hebrew words). Sin and judgment are therefore paralleled. Sin is its own judgment. Whenever we commit sin, we do so knowing (at least in one part of our brain) the judgment / condemnation which it is. In this sense, we know God's judgments, and the coming day of judgment shouldn't therefore be some totally unknown situation for us. For we have His judgments revealed ahead of time in His word.

51:12 *Yahweh has both purposed and done that which He spoke* – The idea of God 'preparing' implies that there is a gap between the plan being made, and it being executed – hence the statement here that He has planned *and done* as planned (see too 4:28; Lam. 2:17; Is. 22:11; 37:26; Zech. 1:6; 8:14). This 'gap' is significant when we come to consider the idea of God's 'relenting' or change of mind – stating something is going to happen, but then changing His mind because of human behaviour during the 'time gap' between the statement and its' execution. How then are we to understand God's capacity to know the future? All we can say is that God Almighty throws Himself into our experience, by limiting Himself to our kind of time – with all the suspense, hope, excitement, joy, disappointment which this involves. Often we read

Babylon. ¹³ You who dwell on many waters, abundant in treasures, your end has come, the measure of your covetousness. ¹⁴ Yahweh of Armies has sworn by Himself saying, Surely I will fill you with men, as a swarm of locusts; and they shall lift up a shout against you.

A Hymn of Praise to God

¹⁵ He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding has He stretched out the heavens: ¹⁶ when He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures. ¹⁷ Every man has become a brute, without knowledge. Every goldsmith is disappointed by his image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. ¹⁸ They are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

of how God says He is planning evil and devising a plan against His enemies (18:11; 26:3; 49:20,30; 50:45; Mic. 2:3; 4:12). But having shared with us His plans through the prophets, He is open to being persuaded not to perform them – as we see in the case of Nineveh, and the intercessions of Moses. See on :29.

51:15, 16 The implication is that the same Divine word which brought about creation (God spoke His word and it was done), and which still sustains it, is the same word of God which we meet in the prophets proclaiming destruction. The awesome power of God's word as it is in our times in the Bible is the same creative power we see in the natural creation, and carries the same destructive power as has been witnessed throughout history in His destruction of wicked entities.

51:24 The destruction of Babylon was because of their destruction of the temple; but it took at least 70 years for this judgment to come, in the same way as it took nearly 40 years for Jerusalem to be destroyed for crucifying Christ. The generation who killed Him and that which destroyed the temple all died in their beds. The gap between the sin and the judgment coming was surely in order to give a chance for repentance, and for the subsequent generation to perceive the evil their fathers had done and repent of

¹⁹ The portion of Jacob is not like these; for He is the former of all things; and Jacob is the tribe of His inheritance: Yahweh of Armies is His name. ²⁰ You are my battle axe and weapons of war: and with you will I break in pieces the nations; and with you will I destroy kingdoms; ²¹ and with you will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; ²² and with you will I break in pieces the chariot and him who rides therein; and with you will I break in pieces man and woman; and with you will I break in pieces the old man and the youth; and with you will I break in pieces the young man and the virgin; ²³ and with you will I break in pieces the shepherd and his flock; and with you will I break in pieces the farmer and his yoke; and with you will I break in pieces governors and deputies.

Babylon to Be Desolate Forever

²⁴ I will render to Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in

your sight, says Yahweh. ²⁵ Behold, I am against you, destroying mountain, says Yahweh, which destroys all the land; and I will stretch out My hand on you and roll you down from the rocks, and will make you a burnt mountain. ²⁶ They shall not take of you a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but you shall be desolate for ever, says Yahweh. ²⁷ Set up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz: appoint a marshal against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough canker worm. ²⁸ Prepare against her the nations, the kings of the Medes, its governors, and all its deputies, and all the land of their dominion. ²⁹ The land trembles and is in pain; for the plans of Yahweh against Babylon do stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant. ³⁰ The mighty men of Babylon have declined to fight, they remain in their strongholds; their might has

failed; they are become as women: her dwelling places are set on fire; her bars are broken. ³¹ One runner will run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every quarter: ³² and the passages are seized, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are frightened. ³³ For thus says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while, and the time of harvest shall come for her. ³⁴ Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me, he has crushed me, he has made me an empty vessel, he has, like a monster, swallowed me up, he has filled his maw with my delicacies; he has cast me out. ³⁵ The violence done to me and to my flesh be on Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, my blood be on the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. ³⁶ Therefore thus says Yahweh: Behold, I will plead your cause, and

it. But this lack of repentance and disassociation was what caused such fearful judgment to finally come upon them. In the length of the ‘gap’ we see the passion of God for human repentance and for people to perceive the sin not only of themselves but of the societies in which they live.

51:29 *The plans of Yahweh against Babylon do stand* – God states His plans but is open to change; in Babylon’s case, they remained or ‘stood’ because there was no repentance nor intercession for her; see on :12.

51:36 *I will plead your cause* – Judah is as it were the one who takes Babylon to the Divine court, with the complaint of :34,35. God is the one who will both plead our cause as an advocate, and take vengeance, i.e. order the sentence, as our judge. Mic. 7:9 speaks of how Micah has sinned against Yahweh, and yet He will plead his cause and also execute judgment. Likewise with Israel, the Lord stood up to plead as an advocate, and also He stood as the Judge to pronounce the verdict in favour of His people (Is. 3:13); even though He is also the witness against them (Mal. 3:5). In this mixture of metaphor we see how the judicial process is biased in our favour by the

take vengeance for you; and I will dry up her sea, and make her fountain dry. ³⁷ Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment and a hissing, without inhabitant. ³⁸ They shall roar together like young lions; they shall growl as lions' cubs. ³⁹ When they are heated, I will make their feast, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, says Yahweh. ⁴⁰ I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with male goats. ⁴¹ How is Sheshach taken and the praise of the whole earth seized! How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! ⁴² The sea has come up on Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of its waves. ⁴³ Her cities are become a desolation, a dry land and a desert, a land in which no man dwells, neither does any son of man pass thereby. ⁴⁴ I will execute judgement on Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he has swallowed up; and the nations shall not flow any more to him: yes, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

Hope for God's People

⁴⁵ My people, go away from the midst of her, and save yourselves every man from the fierce anger of Yahweh. ⁴⁶ Don't let your heart faint, neither fear for the news that shall be heard in the land; for news shall come one year, and after that in another year shall come news, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. ⁴⁷ Therefore behold the days come, that I will execute judgement on the engraved images of Babylon; and her whole land shall be confounded; and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. ⁴⁸ Then the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for joy over Babylon; for the destroyers shall come to her from the north, says Yahweh. ⁴⁹ As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the land. ⁵⁰ You who have escaped the sword, go, don't stand still; remember Yahweh from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. ⁵¹ We are confounded, because we have heard reproach; confusion has covered our faces: for strangers have come into the sanctuaries of

simple fact that God loves His people; hence Paul, having made the same observations with his use of legal terms, concludes that there is nobody who can condemn God's people (Rom. 8:33,34). The events of our lives, all the abuses we suffer, are being considered by God right now in His court. He is both our advocate, the ultimate accurate witness to our sufferings, both of the facts and also our internal feelings, and is also the judge. His apparent silence isn't that at all. The ongoing process of the court of Heaven should be our continual comfort.

51:39 *A perpetual sleep and not wake* – The ultimate punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23), which is unconsciousness, without any hope of a future resurrection. Eternal conscious torment of the wicked isn't taught in the Bible.

51:48 *The heavens and the earth* – Another example of where 'heavens and earth' refer to the people of Israel and aren't to always be taken literally, especially when we read of their 'destruction'.

Yahweh's house. ⁵² Therefore behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that I will execute judgement on her engraved images; and through all her land the wounded shall groan.

⁵³ Though Babylon should mount up to the sky, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from Me shall destroyers come to her, says Yahweh. ⁵⁴ The sound of a cry from Babylon, and of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans! ⁵⁵ For Yahweh lays Babylon waste, and destroys out of her the great voice; and their waves roar like many waters; the noise of their voice is uttered: ⁵⁶ for the destroyer has come on her, even on Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, their bows are broken in pieces; for Yahweh is a God of recompenses, He will surely requite. ⁵⁷ I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake up, says the King whose name is Yahweh of Armies. ⁵⁸ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly overthrown, and her high gates shall be burned with

fire; and the peoples shall labour for vanity, and the nations for the fire; and they shall be weary.

Jeremiah Gives a Scroll to Seraiah

⁵⁹ The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. Now Seraiah was chief quartermaster. ⁶⁰ Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come on Babylon, even all these words that are written concerning Babylon. ⁶¹ Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When you come to Babylon, then see that you read all these words, ⁶² and say, Yahweh, You have spoken concerning this place to cut it off, that none shall dwell therein, neither man nor animal, but that it shall be desolate forever. ⁶³ It shall be, when you have made an end of reading this book, that you shall bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: ⁶⁴ and you shall say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring on her; and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

51:61 The Babylonians had been kindly disposed to Jeremiah because he had prophesied their victory against Jerusalem and had urged Judah to surrender rather than fight Babylon; and they had offered him a comfortable retirement in Babylon after Jerusalem fell (40:4). Such a prophecy would've seemed the height of ingratitude towards them. The captive Jews had just arrived in Babylon; to pronounce the destruction of Babylon was the last thing they wanted to do, because they sought the favour of their captors. To speak out God's word is so often counter-instinctive, awkward, embarrassing and difficult.

51:63, 64 Babylon's destruction is as a stone being cast into the sea (Jesus repeats this in Rev. 18:21). But Jesus also uses this very image to describe the judgment of those who offend one of His little ones (Mt. 18:6). To upset fragile believers by our rejection of them is to be as bad as proud, idolatrous Babylon who destroyed Yahweh's temple

CHAPTER 52 Aug. 30***Nebuchadnezzar Takes Jerusalem***

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ² He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. ³ For through the anger of Yahweh it happened in Jerusalem and Judah, until He had cast them out from His presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ⁴ It happened in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they built forts against it round about. ⁵ So the city was besieged to the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. ⁶ In the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was severe in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. ⁷ Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden;

(now the Chaldeans were against the city all around;) and they went towards the Arabah. ⁸ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. ⁹ Then they took the king and carried him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; and he gave judgment on him. ¹⁰ The king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he killed also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. ¹¹ He put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon, and imprisoned him until the day of his death. ¹² Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, who stood before the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem: ¹³ and he burned the house of Yahweh, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burned he with fire. ¹⁴ All the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down all the walls of Jerusalem all around. ¹⁵ Then Nebuzaradan the captain of

and slew His people. And it will meet the same judgment. We should therefore be extra careful not to reject our fellow believers, especially the "little ones" whose faith is new or fragile. Three of the Gospel records feature this saying of Jesus (also Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:2); it is so very important.

52:3 Zedekiah's rebellion was of his own freewill, and God through Jeremiah had pleaded with him not to rebel but to surrender; yet in another sense, God confirmed Zedekiah in this stubbornness, because He wanted to express His anger against Judah. If we reject God's word as Zedekiah did, then we will be confirmed in the way to destruction we wish to go.

52:8 See on 39:5.

the guard carried away captive of the poorest of the people, and the residue of the people who were left in the city, and those who fell away, who fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude.¹⁶ But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vineyard keepers and farmers.

Desecration of God's Temple

¹⁷ The Chaldeans broke the pillars of brass that were in the house of Yahweh, and the bases and the bronze sea that were in the house of Yahweh they broke in pieces and carried all of their brass to Babylon.¹⁸ They also took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the basins, the spoons and all the vessels of brass with which they ministered.¹⁹ The captain of the guard took away the cups, the fire pans, the basins, the pots, the lampstands, the spoons and the bowls; that which was of gold, in gold, and that which was of silver, in silver.²⁰ They took the two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve bronze bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made for the house of Yahweh. The brass of all these vessels was without weight.²¹ As for the pillars, the height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits; and a line of twelve cubits encircled it; and its thickness was four fingers. It was hollow.²² A capital of brass was on it; and the height of the one

capital was five cubits, with network and pomegranates on the capital all around, all of brass: and the second pillar also had like these, and pomegranates.²³ There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates were one hundred on the network all around.

The People of Judah Taken to Babylon

²⁴ The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the threshold:²⁵ and out of the city he took an officer who was set over the men of war; and seven men of those who saw the king's face, who were found in the city; and the scribe of the captain of the army, who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the midst of the city.²⁶ Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.²⁷ The king of Babylon struck them, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away captive out of his land.²⁸ This is the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand and twenty-three Jews;²⁹ in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty-two persons;³⁰ in the twenty third year

52:27 If this includes Seraiah (:24), and this Seraiah is the same one as in 51:61, it may be that he died because he had in his heart decided that he would not relay God's word nor obey the difficult preaching commission which he had been given (see on 51:61).

of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty-five persons: all the persons were four thousand six hundred.

³¹ It happened in the thirty seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the twenty fifth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah,

and brought him forth out of prison; ³² and he spoke kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon, ³³ and changed his prison garments. Jehoiachin ate bread before him continually all the days of his life: ³⁴ and for his allowance, there was a continual allowance given him by the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

LAMENTATIONS

CHAPTER 1 Aug. 31

The Suffering of Jerusalem

How the city sits solitary, that was full of people! She has become a widow, she who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a tributary! ² She weeps bitterly in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies. ³ Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude she dwells among the nations, she finds no rest: all her persecutors overtook her within the narrows. ⁴ The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn assembly; all her gates are desolate, her priests do sigh: her virgins are afflicted, and she herself is in bitterness. ⁵ Her adversaries are become

the head, her enemies prosper; for Yahweh has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her young children are gone into captivity before the adversary. ⁶ From the daughter of Zion all her majesty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, they are gone without strength before the pursuer. ⁷ Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that were from the days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the adversary, no one helped her; the adversaries saw her, they mocked at her desolations. ⁸ Jerusalem has grievously sinned; therefore she has become as an unclean thing; all who honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yes, she sighs, and turns backward. ⁹ Her filthiness was in her skirts; she didn't remember her latter end; therefore is

1:1 God speaks as if He is married to Israel, and that even in their sufferings, He would suffer with them, as a husband suffers with his wife: "The destroyer will come upon us" (Jer. 6:22,26) even sounds as if God let Himself in a way be 'destroyed' in Israel's destruction; for each of us dies a little in the death of those we love. The idea of God being destroyed in the destruction of His people may be the basis of the descriptions of Zion as being left widowed (here and Is. 54:1-8). We ask the question – if she was a widow, who died? Her husband, God, was as it were dead. The very idea of the death of the immortal God is awful and obnoxious. But this was and is the depth of God's feelings at His peoples' destruction, but it paves the way for the idea of God somehow being "in Christ" at His death.

1:9 *No comforter* – Seeing God knows all things, we should have total openness with God; this is why some of the great heroes of faith apparently openly question God, because they realized that if they felt something internally, then God knew this anyway. Thus Jeremiah complains that Zion has no comforter – in clear reference to the prophecies of Is. 40:1 that when Judah went into captivity, they would have a comforter. When Jeremiah complains that "The comforter who should refresh my soul is far from me" (:16) he is surely saying "The prophesied comforter of Isaiah just simply hasn't

she come down wonderfully; she has no comforter: see, Yahweh, my affliction; for the enemy has magnified himself. ¹⁰ The adversary has spread out his hand on all her pleasant things: for she has seen that the nations are entered into her sanctuary, concerning whom You commanded that they should not enter into Your assembly. ¹¹ All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for food to refresh the soul: look, Yahweh, and see; for I am become abject.

Jerusalem Confesses Her Transgressions

¹² Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look, and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which is brought on me, with which Yahweh has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. ¹³ From on high has He sent fire into my bones, and it prevails against them; He has spread a net for my feet, He has turned me back: He has made me desolate and faint all the day. ¹⁴ The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hand; they are knit together, they have come up on my neck; He has

made my strength to fail: the Lord has delivered me into their hands, against whom I am not able to stand.

¹⁵ The Lord has set at nothing all my mighty men in the midst of me; He has called a solemn assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter of Judah. ¹⁶ For these things I weep; my eye, my eye runs down with water; because the comforter who should refresh my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy has prevailed. ¹⁷ Zion spreads forth her hands; there is none to comfort her; Yahweh has commanded concerning Jacob, that those who are around him should be his adversaries: Jerusalem is among them as an unclean thing. ¹⁸ Yahweh is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandment: please hear, all you peoples, and see my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. ¹⁹ I called for my lovers, but they deceived me: my priests and my elders gave up the spirit in the city, while they sought themselves food to refresh their souls. ²⁰ See, Yahweh; for I am in distress; my heart is troubled;

come!'. He had his doubts – and he expresses them openly to God. We can find this same openness in prayer before God if we have a living relationship with Him.

1:18 In Jer. 15:15-19, Jeremiah asks for vengeance on his persecutors, and accuses God of deceiving him. God's response is to ask him to repent of this, so that he can resume his prophetic work. Perhaps Jeremiah had this incident in mind when he commented: "Yahweh is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandment". This indicates that at least in Jeremiah's case, he was not irresistibly carried along by the Spirit in some kind of ecstasy, having no option but to speak God's word. His speaking of God's word required that he shared the essentially loving and gracious spirit / disposition of his God; and he struggled to have this. Note too how repentance requires a specific, sober recognition that God is right and we were wrong – repentance isn't a mere shrugging of the shoulders and half-second acceptance that we messed up.

my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaves, at home there is as death.²¹ They have heard that I sigh; there is none to comfort me; all my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that You have done it: You will bring the day that You have proclaimed, and they shall be like me.²² Let all their wickedness come before You; do to them, as You have done to me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.

CHAPTER 2 Sep. 1

God's Punishment of Jerusalem

How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He has cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and hasn't remembered His footstool in the day of His anger.² The Lord has swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and has not pitied: He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes.³ He has cut off in fierce anger all the horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy: He has burned up Jacob like a flaming fire, which devours all around.⁴ He has bent His bow like an enemy, He has stood with His right hand as an adversary, has killed all that were

pleasant to the eye: in the tent of the daughter of Zion He has poured out His wrath like fire.⁵ The Lord has become as an enemy, He has swallowed up Israel; He has swallowed up all her palaces, He has destroyed his strongholds; He has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.⁶ He has violently taken away His tent, as if it were just in a garden; He has destroyed His place of assembly: Yahweh has caused solemn assembly and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion, and has despised in the indignation of His anger the king and the priest.⁷ The Lord has cast off His altar, He has abhorred His sanctuary; He has given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces: they have made a noise in the house of Yahweh, as in the day of a solemn assembly.⁸ Yahweh has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; He has stretched out the line, He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying; He has made the rampart and wall to lament; they languish together.⁹ Her gates are sunk into the ground; He has destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the nations where the law is not; yes, her prophets find no vision from Yahweh.

The Suffering of the People

¹⁰ The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground, they keep silence; they have cast up dust on

2:1 Ascending to heaven and falling from heaven are Biblical idioms often used for increasing in pride and being humbled respectively – see too Job 20:6; Jer. 51:53 (about Babylon); Mt. 11:23 (about Capernaum). The language of falling from Heaven which we meet in the Bible isn't therefore to be taken literally.

their heads; they have clothed themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground. ¹¹ My eyes do fail with tears, my heart is troubled; my liver is poured on the earth, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the young children and the infants swoon in the streets of the city. ¹² They ask their mothers for grain and wine, whilst they swoon as the wounded in the streets of the city, with their soul poured out into their mothers' bosom. ¹³ What shall I testify to you? What shall I liken to you, daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare to you, that I may comfort you, virgin daughter of Zion? For your breach is great like the sea: who can heal you? ¹⁴ Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; they did not expose

your sin to ward off your captivity, but have seen for you false oracles and causes of banishment. ¹⁵ All that pass by clap their hands at you. They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem saying, Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole land? ¹⁶ All your enemies have opened their mouth wide against you; they hiss and gnash the teeth; they say, We have swallowed her up; certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it! ¹⁷ Yahweh has done that which He purposed; He has fulfilled His word that He commanded in the days of old; He has thrown down, and has not pitied: He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you; He has exalted the horn of your adversaries. ¹⁸ Their heart cried to the Lord: wall of the

2:14 before the Babylonian invasion, Judah had been offered the prospect of eternally remaining in their land, if they repented (Jer. 7:7). And after it happened, Jeremiah commented: "Your prophets... did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity". It could have been 'warded off' by the peoples' repentance and the more powerful entreaty of the prophets. Note how Jeremiah, himself a prophet at the time, so wishes to take the blame upon himself for not pleading more powerfully with the people. Perhaps we will have similar feelings when the time of tribulation breaks forth in the very last days. Others' repentance to some degree depends upon the depth of our entreaty.

2:15 Christ on the cross was bearing the judgment of Israel's sins when He was offered gall to quench His thirst (3:15) and when those from Jerusalem mocked and wagged their heads at Him. By baptism into His death we accept that the just judgment for our sins has been laid upon Him, and we will rise again with Him in resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). We will therefore avoid the tendency to transfer our sin and the judgment for it onto others, and judge them harshly.

2:16 *Gnash the teeth* – There will be "gnashing of teeth" for the rejected at the last day (Mt. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28). In the Old Testament, gnashing of teeth always means to hate somebody, often the righteous (here and Job 16:9; Ps. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10). Could it not be that the rejected hate their Lord and His people, who will be watching the judgment in some form, and therefore go and join the ranks of the embittered armies that come against Him? Or is their extreme hatred against themselves?

2:18 Jeremiah wanted his grief to be reflective of the grieving prayer of the remnant

daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no respite; don't let the apple of your eye cease. ¹⁹ Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, that faint for hunger at the head of every street.

Jerusalem Speaks

²⁰ Look, Yahweh, and see to whom You have done thus! Shall the women eat their fruit, the children that are dandled in the hands? Shall the priest and the prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? ²¹ The youth and the old man lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword: You have killed them in the day of Your anger; You have slaughtered, and not

pitied. ²² You have called, as in the day of a solemn assembly, my terrors on every side; there was none that escaped or remained in the day of Yahweh's anger: those that I have dandled and brought up has my enemy consumed.

CHAPTER 3 Sep. 2

Affliction

I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. ² He has led me and caused me to walk in darkness, and not in light. ³ Surely against me He turns his hand again and again all the day. ⁴ My flesh and my skin He has made old; He has broken my bones. ⁵ He has built against me, and surrounded me with gall and travail. ⁶ He has made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead. ⁷ He has walled me about, that I can't go forth; He has made my

to their God. His grief really was and is to be the pattern for others. Attitudes to prayer influence others. Doubtless it influenced the Lord Himself, who wept over Zion (Lk. 19:41), inevitably holding Jeremiah in His mind. Note that Isaiah had prophesied that God would not rest until Zion be restored. Watchmen would be set upon Zion's walls who would give Him no rest until the walls be rebuilt (Is. 62:1,6,7). At this time, Zion was felt by God to be the "apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8). This prophesy started to be fulfilled straight after the Babylonian invasion when Jeremiah urged the desolated people to pray: "Let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no respite; don't let the apple of your eye cease". The prayerful remnant gave *themselves* no rest; and thus was fulfilled the prophecy that *God* would have no rest. Sincere prayer according to God's will meant that there was a strong mutuality between the Father and those who prayed to Him. The apple of *His* eye was also theirs; and thus the prayers were ultimately answered and Zion was restored. Our spirit and His are united. All this speaks of an incredible personal bonding in prayer between the Creator and each, specific one of His creatures.

3:7 Jeremiah felt himself totally identified with sinful Judah. Instead of turning away in disgust from God's sinful people who had so abused him, he instead strongly identified with them and on that basis pleaded with God for them; and in this he sets us an amazing challenge and pattern. He was "afflicted" (1:9; 3:1; as Judah, 1:3,7; "built against", :5, as Judah was, Jer. 52:4; "made old", i.e. prematurely aged, :4, as Judah,

chain heavy. ⁸ Yes, when I cry, and call for help, He shuts out my prayer. ⁹ He has walled up my ways with cut stone; He has made my paths crooked. ¹⁰ He is to me like a bear lying in wait, as a lion in secret places. ¹¹ He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces; He has made me desolate. ¹² He has bent His bow, and set me as a target for the arrow. ¹³ He has caused the shafts of His quiver to enter into my kidneys. ¹⁴ I am become a derision to all my people, and their song all the day. ¹⁵ He has filled me with bitterness, He has sated my thirst with wormwood. ¹⁶ He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones; He has covered me with ashes. ¹⁷ You have removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. ¹⁸ I said, My strength is

perished, and my expectation from Yahweh. ¹⁹ Remember my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. ²⁰ My soul still remembers them, and is bowed down within me. ²¹ This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope.

God's Compassion

²² It is because of Yahweh's graces that we are not consumed, because His compassion doesn't fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴ Yahweh is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. ²⁵ Yahweh is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. ²⁶ It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Yahweh. ²⁷ It is good for a man that he bear the yoke

Ps. 102:26; 50:9; 51:6; felt his prayers not heard, :8, as Judah's weren't; walled about and inclosed, :7,9, as Judah (Hos. 2:6); had God act to him "as a bear", :10, as He was to Judah (Hos. 13:8; Am. 5:19); and "as a lion", :10, as He was to Judah (Jer. 5:6; 49:19; 50:44); God bent His bow against him (:12), as He did against Judah (2:4 s.w.); suffered affliction and misery, :19, as Judah did (1:7 s.w.); drank gall (:5,19) as Judah had to (Jer. 8:14; 9:15; 23:15); had none to comfort him (1:21), as Judah didn't (1:9); bore a yoke (:27), as did Judah (Jer. 27:8,12).

3:13 Notice how Jeremiah's innermost being was turned for his people, because he felt that *he* had shared in their sin. The arrows of God entered into his kidneys, and this is why he so cried out. But God's arrows were against a sinful Judah (2:4). Yet Jeremiah so identified with them that he felt they had entered *him*; and this is why he could cry out in the way he did. Even though he hadn't sinned as they had, he felt that because they had, so had he, as he was so identified with them. He reached such a level of grief through identifying himself so closely with those for whom he grieved. Time and again, the descriptions of his personal suffering and grief are expressed in the terms of the very sufferings which he had prophesied as coming upon a sinful Israel. And so with us, if we feel and show a solidarity with the people of this world, with our brethren, then we will grieve for them. If we maintain a selfish, postmodern detachedness from them, then we will never have a heart that bleeds for them. Jeremiah could so easily have shrugged his shoulders and reasoned that Judah had had their chance; and it wasn't on his head. But he didn't. His attitude was that he had to seek the sheep until he found it.

3:15 See on 2:15.

in his youth. ²⁸ Let him sit alone and keep silence, because He has laid it on him. ²⁹ Let him put his mouth in the dust, if so be that in this case there may be hope. ³⁰ Let him give his cheek to Him who strikes him; let him be filled full with reproach. ³¹ For the Lord will not cast off forever. ³² For though He cause grief, yet He will have compassion according to the multitude of His graces. ³³ For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. ³⁴ To crush under foot all the prisoners of the earth, ³⁵ to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, ³⁶ to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord doesn't approve. ³⁷ Who is he who says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord doesn't command it? ³⁸ Doesn't evil and good come out of the mouth of the Most High? ³⁹ Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

A Call to Repentance

⁴⁰ Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to Yahweh. ⁴¹ Let us lift up our heart with our hands to God in the heavens. ⁴² We have transgressed and have rebelled; You have not pardoned. ⁴³ You have covered with anger and pursued us; You have killed, You have not pitied. ⁴⁴ You have covered Yourself with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through. ⁴⁵ You have made us an off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the nations. ⁴⁶ All our enemies have opened their mouth wide against us. ⁴⁷ Fear and the pit have come on us, devastation and destruction. ⁴⁸ My eye runs down with streams of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people. ⁴⁹ My eye pours down, and doesn't cease, without any intermission, ⁵⁰ until Yahweh look down, and see from heaven. ⁵¹ My eye affects my soul, because of all the daughters of my city. ⁵² They have chased me

3:38 *Evil and good come out of the mouth of the Most High* – As in Is. 45:5-7 we see that both positive and negative experiences come from God; He is truly almighty and doesn't just provide the good whilst the evil, or disaster, comes from some sinful 'Satan' being. This isn't taught in the Bible; in fact, the very opposite.

3:40 God *now* tries our hearts (Job 7:18; Ps. 11:4; 17:3; 26:2; 139:23). In likely allusion to the descriptions of God searching and trying our hearts in the Psalms, Jeremiah says that we should search and try our hearts – we should seek to know ourselves as God does, seeing ourselves as He sees us.

3:45 Paul described himself as the off-scouring of all things – using the very language of condemned Israel (1 Cor. 4:13). Paul so wanted to see their salvation that he identified with them to this extent. By doing so he was reflecting in essence the way the Lord Jesus so identified Himself with us sinners, as our representative, "made sin" [whatever precisely this means] for the sake of saving us from that sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

3:48-51 What he saw with his eye affected his mind / heart. Let us not see the doom of others, the pain and suffering of another life, and walk on by not permanently moved. What we see should affect our heart – if we have a heart that bleeds. And a bleeding heart doesn't merely bleed – it *does* something concrete, in prayer and action. Consider other examples of the bleeding heart of Jeremiah in 1:16,20; 2:11.

relentlessly like a bird, those who are my enemies without cause. ⁵³ They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and have cast a stone on me. ⁵⁴ Waters flowed over my head; I said, I am cut off.

Jeremiah's Reflects on His Redemption from the Dungeon

⁵⁵ I called on Your name, Yahweh, out of the lowest dungeon. ⁵⁶ You heard my voice; don't hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry. ⁵⁷ You drew near in the day that I called on You; You said, Don't be afraid. ⁵⁸ Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life. ⁵⁹ Yahweh, You have seen my wrong. Judge my cause. ⁶⁰ You have seen all their vengeance and all their devices against me. ⁶¹ You have heard their reproach, Yahweh, and all their devices against me, ⁶² the lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. ⁶³ You see their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their song. ⁶⁴ You will render to them a recompense, Yahweh, according to the work of their hands. ⁶⁵ You will give them hardness of heart, Your curse to them. ⁶⁶ You will pursue them in anger, and destroy them from under the heavens of Yahweh.

CHAPTER 4 Sep. 3

Terrible Suffering in Jerusalem

How the gold has become dim! The most pure gold has changed! The stones of the sanctuary are poured out at the head of every street. ² The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they now esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! ³ Even the jackals draw out the breast, they nurse their young ones: the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. ⁴ The tongue of the nursing child clings to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaks it to them. ⁵ Those who fed delicately are desolate in the streets: those who were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. ⁶ For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands were laid on her. ⁷ Her nobles were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk; they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was as of sapphire. ⁸ Their appearance is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin clings to their bones; it is withered, it has become

4:6 By an interesting metonymy in the Hebrew language, the idol, the thing that facilitated sin, is put for their punishment / ruin. Sin and the punishment for it are inextricably linked. The Hebrew language reflects this identity here too, in that the Hebrew word for "punishment" is the same as for "iniquity". And so it is with all the things of this present evil world; movies, music, novels, the needle, the bottle.... there is nothing unclean in itself, but these things can all be put by metonymy for the condemnation that can arise from the sin they facilitate. It's a powerful thought, as we face hourly temptation.

like a stick. ⁹ Those who are killed with the sword are better than those who are killed with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field. ¹⁰ The hands of the pitiful women have boiled their own children; they were their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

God's Anger Poured Out

¹¹ Yahweh has accomplished His wrath, He has poured out His fierce anger; He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has devoured its foundations. ¹² The kings of the land didn't believe, neither all the inhabitants of the world, that the adversary and the enemy would enter into the gates of Jerusalem. ¹³ It is because of the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. ¹⁴ They wander as blind men in the streets, they are polluted with blood, so that men can't touch their garments. ¹⁵ Depart! they cried to them, Unclean! Depart, depart, don't touch! When they fled away and wandered, men said among the nations, They shall not live here any more. ¹⁶ The anger of Yahweh has scattered them; He will no more regard them: they didn't respect the persons of the priests, they didn't favour the elders. ¹⁷ Our eyes still

fail, looking in vain for our help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save. ¹⁸ They hunt our steps, so that we can't go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end has come. ¹⁹ Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the sky: they chased us on the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. ²⁰ The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Yahweh, was taken in their pits; of whom we said, Under His shadow we shall live among the nations. ²¹ Rejoice and be glad, daughter of Edom that dwells in the land of Uz: the cup shall pass through to you also; you shall be drunken, and shall make yourself naked. ²² The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, daughter of Zion; He will no more carry you away into captivity: He will visit your iniquity, daughter of Edom; He will uncover your sins.

CHAPTER 5 Sep. 4

A Prayer for Mercy

Remember, Yahweh, what has come on us: look, and see our reproach. ² Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. ³ We are orphans and fatherless; our mothers are as widows. ⁴ We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold to us. ⁵ Our pursuers are on our necks: we are weary, and have

4:11 Both Yahweh and Israel are described as kindling the fire of judgment; He responded to what they had done (Jer. 11:16; 15:14; Lam. 4:11 cp. Jer. 17:4). Those who will be condemned will be only those who really wanted it.

4:15 Israel were made to depart into captivity because of their self-righteous rejection of their brethren, telling them to 'depart' from them because they considered them unclean – when they themselves were unclean.

no rest. ⁶ We have given the hand to the Egyptians, to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. ⁷ Our fathers sinned, and are no more; we have borne their iniquities. ⁸ Servants rule over us: there is none to deliver us out of their hand. ⁹ We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness. ¹⁰ Our skin is black like an oven, because of the burning heat of famine. ¹¹ They ravished the women in Zion, the virgins in the cities of Judah. ¹² Princes were hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured. ¹³ The young men were made to grind at the mill; the children stumbled under the wood. ¹⁴ The elders

have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music. ¹⁵ The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. ¹⁶ The crown is fallen from our head: woe to us! For we have sinned. ¹⁷ For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim; ¹⁸ for the mountain of Zion, which is desolate: the foxes walk on it. ¹⁹ You, Yahweh, remain forever; Your throne is from generation to generation. ²⁰ Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us so long time? ²¹ Turn us to Yourself, Yahweh, and we shall be turned. Renew our days as of old. ²² But You have utterly rejected us; You are very angry against us.

5:7 In this very context, Ez. 18 later emphasized that the people at that time were suffering for their own sins, not just for those of their fathers. Yet Jeremiah seems in his grief to have overlooked that; and yet by grace he remained amongst the faithful, despite circumstances leading him to overlook parts of God's truth and not facing up to the seriousness of Israel's sin as he ought to have done.

5:20, 21 Jeremiah's prophecies of gracious restoration were known by the exiles; but many passages in Isaiah, the Psalms (e.g. Ps. 137:7-9) and Lamentations (:20,21) indicate that the exiles had little conviction they would be fulfilled, considering Judah as "utterly rejected" by God, and just getting on with their lives in Babylon without any real hope in God's salvation. Considering the prosperity of their lives there, this was an all too convenient conclusion for them to draw. Once again we see that false interpretation of Scripture invariably has a moral subtext to it. Is. 40:1,2 speaks a message of comfort to the exiles: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God". But [in full allusion to this prophecy], the exiles were like Rachael who refused to be comforted over her loss (Jer. 31:15); they claimed they found "none to comfort" (1:2,16,17,21). But they were wilfully refusing the comfort of God's repeated word of hope and restoration. They didn't grasp the plain teaching of the prophetic word because they didn't want to – it demanded too much of them, and a giving up of the comfortable Babylon life. Hence Is. 43:19 laments: "I am doing a new thing: now it springs forth [in the decree to return to Zion?], do you not perceive it?". And do we "not perceive it?" time and again in our own lives, as to the potentials God is opening up?

EZEKIEL

CHAPTER 1 Sep. 5

The Glory of God in the Living Creatures

Now it happened in the thirtieth year in the fourth month in the fifth of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. ² In the fifth of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, ³ the word of Yahweh came specifically to Ezekiel the priest the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of Yahweh was there on him. ⁴ I looked, and behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with flashing lightning and a brightness around it; and out of its midst as it were glowing metal out of the midst

of the fire. ⁵ Out of its midst came the likeness of four living creatures. This was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. ⁶ Each one had four faces, and each one of them had four wings. ⁷ Their feet were straight feet; and the soles of their feet were like the soles of a calf's feet; and they gleamed like burnished brass. ⁸ They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and the four of them had their faces and their wings like this: ⁹ their wings were joined one to another; they didn't turn when they went; each one went straight forward. ¹⁰ As for the likeness of their faces, they each had the face of a man; and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; the four of them also

1:5 Ezekiel's opening vision of the cherubim was surely to encourage the captives in Babylon that above them was an awesome Angelic system, that was able to carry them with it back to the land – if they were workers together with God. Although it seemed that they were sitting still, nothing was happening, they were just passing time by the rivers of Babylon, above them there was an intensely active system of Angels working for their good. Asaph, writing Psalms in the captivity, perceived this when [surely referring to Ezekiel's recent vision] he speaks of how the God who dwells between the cherubim is in fact actively leading Judah somewhere (Ps. 80:1). Despite God's apparent silence, there is likewise a huge Angelic system whirring away over our lives too.

1:7 *Straight feet* – The return of the exiles led by Ezra made the journey by a "right way" from Babylon to Zion (Ezra 8:21). Yet this is the very word used about the "straight" feet of the Cherubim Angels here in :7,23. The return from Babylon involved following in the path of the Angels, walking in step with them. The restoration prophecy of Jer. 31:9 spoke of how the returnees would walk "in a straight way" (s.w.) "by the rivers of waters" – and surely Ezra consciously alluded to this when by the river Ahava he fasted for the exiles to return in a "right / straight way". He knew that these prophecies of restoration would not just automatically come true – they had to be fulfilled by much prayer, fasting and stepping out in faith. But so very few perceived that. And the challenge remains for us today – to walk in the way which God's Angels have potentially prepared for us, with prayer and boldness.

had the face of an eagle. ¹¹ Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; two wings of each one touched another, and two covered their bodies. ¹² Each one went straight forward. Where the spirit was to go, they went; they didn't turn when they went. ¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches. The fire went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. ¹⁴ The living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. ¹⁵ Now as I saw the living creatures, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces of it. ¹⁶ The appearance of the wheels and their work was like a beryl: and the four of them had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel. ¹⁷ When they went, they went in their four directions. They didn't turn when they went. ¹⁸ As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and the four of them had their rims full of eyes all around. ¹⁹ When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted

up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit was to go, they went under the spirit's control: and the wheels were lifted up beside them, for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. ²¹ When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. ²² Over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like an awesome crystal to look on, stretched forth over their heads above. ²³ Under the expanse were their wings straight, the one toward the other: each one had two which covered their bodies on this side, and each one had two which covered their bodies on that side. ²⁴ When they went, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of an army. When they stood, they let down their wings. ²⁵ There was a voice above the expanse that was over their heads when they stood and let down their wings. ²⁶ Above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and

1:20 The wheels represented God's people Israel on earth. If they had kept in step with the Spirit-Angel, following Him both to Babylon and back to Judah at His bidding, they would have been in step with God's plan for them, and all would have prospered. This passage appears to be behind Paul's appeal to us to walk in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).

1:25 *There was a voice* – The supreme exaltation of the voice / word of God.

1:26 *As the appearance of a man on it above* – Ezekiel saw only likenesses and appearances, rather than God Himself. But the implication is surely that we are made in God's image and likeness, and therefore we are invited to understand that God exists

on the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man on it above. ²⁷ I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it all around, from the appearance of his waist and upward. From the appearance of his waist and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. ²⁸ As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

CHAPTER 2 Sep. 6

The Call of Ezekiel

He said to me, son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you. ² The spirit entered into me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. ³ He said to me, Son of man, I send you to the children of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against Me. They and their fathers have transgressed against

Me even to this very day. ⁴ The children are impudent and stiff-hearted. I am sending you to them; and you shall tell them, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh'. ⁵ They, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), will at least know that there has been a prophet among them. ⁶ You, son of man, don't be afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you, and you do dwell among scorpions. Don't be afraid of their looks, though they are a rebellious house. ⁷ You shall speak My words to them, whether they will hear, or whether they will refuse to hear; for they are most rebellious. ⁸ But you, son of man, hear what I tell you; don't be rebellious like that rebellious house: open your mouth, and eat that which I give you. ⁹ When I looked, behold, a hand was put forth to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was therein. ¹⁰ He spread it before me. It was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations and mourning and woe.

in a corporeal form, in which image our bodies appear. Understanding God as a personal being rather than intangible 'spirit' greatly enhances our relationship and prayer life with God.

2:4-6 Ezekiel was shown "what the house of Israel are doing in the dark" (8:12). To pass through human life with this level of sensitivity must've been so hard. Psychologically and nervously, the stress would've been awful. It seems to me that the prophets had to be somehow psychologically strengthened by God to endure living that sensitively in this crass and unfeeling world – hence God made Ezekiel and Jeremiah as a wall and "iron pillar" to Israel, hardened their faces, so that they wouldn't be "dismayed at [the] looks" of those who watched them with anger and consternation (2:4-6; 3:8,9,27; Jer. 1:18; 15:20). This psychological strengthening was not aimed at making them insensitive, but rather in strengthening them to live sensitively to sin in a sinful world without cracking up. And He will do the same for us, too.

CHAPTER 3 Sep. 7***Ezekiel Eats the Scroll***

He said to me, Son of man, eat that which you find. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. ² So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat the scroll. ³ He said to me, Son of man, cause your belly to eat, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you. Then I ate it; and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. ⁴ He said to me, Son of man, go to the house of Israel, and speak My words to them. ⁵ For you are not sent to a people of a foreign speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel; ⁶ not to many peoples of a foreign speech and of a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to them, they would listen to you. ⁷ But the house of Israel will not

listen to you; for they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are obstinate and hard-hearted. ⁸ Behold, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. ⁹ As an adamant harder than flint have I made your forehead. Don't be afraid of them, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house. ¹⁰ Moreover He said to me, Son of man, all My words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. ¹¹ Go to them of the captivity, to the children of your people, and speak to them, and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh;' whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. ¹² Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of

3:3 This eating of God's word was to represent how Ezekiel wasn't merely to relay God's word as a disinterested messenger, but to assimilate it personally, receiving it into his heart before he spoke it to others (:10), just as we should in our witness.

3:7 Having specifically told Ezekiel that Israel would *not* hearken to His word, God later tells Ezekiel to act out his parables in front of them – for “it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house” (12:3). Here we see the supreme *hopefulness* of God, which we too should have when it appears we are preaching to hopeless cases.

3:12 Rushing – The Angels are involved with the Cherubim. Yet in Ezekiel's context, the language of chariots inevitably suggests the approach of enemy armies. Thus the cherubim chariots represented not only the Angels, but also the chariots of God's enemies; for the Lord of the Angelic hosts was manifested on earth in the Babylonian hosts. The word for the “rushing” noise of the cherubim wheels is used elsewhere about the noise of the chariots of Israel's enemies and the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 10:22; 47:3; Nah. 3:2). The Angelic armies of Heaven were therefore revealed on earth in the chariots of Babylon; it was both Babylon and the Angelic cherubim behind them who took Judah captive, and who could also return them to their land. Hence the stress in Ezekiel's vision that the wheels of the cherubim were on the earth / land. Clearly enough, the things that go on in our lives, even those things which appear as brutal and tragic as the Babylonian chariots were to Judah, are not random machinations of men; they are, in some unfathomable way, under the direct control of a God of love, who only means to do us good at our latter end.

Yahweh from His place. ¹³ I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing. ¹⁴ So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Yahweh was strong on me. ¹⁵ Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel Abib, by the river Chebar, and to where they lived; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

God Warns Israel

¹⁶ It happened at the end of seven days, that the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹⁷ Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore hear the word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me. ¹⁸ When I tell the wicked, You shall surely die; and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand. ¹⁹ Yet if you warn the wicked, and he doesn't turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have saved your own life. ²⁰ Again, when a righteous man turns from his right-

eousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at your hand. ²¹ Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man, that the righteous not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and you have saved your own life. ²² The hand of Yahweh was there on me; and He said to me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with you. ²³ Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and behold, the glory of Yahweh stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. ²⁴ Then the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and He spoke with me, and said to me, Go, shut yourself inside your house. ²⁵ But you, son of man, behold, they shall lay shackles on you and shall bind you with them, and you shall not go out among them. ²⁶ I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth, that you shall be mute, and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷ But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall tell them, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh: He who hears, let him hear; and he

3:17-21 Our duty is to witness to the Truth even if there's no response; realizing that we may have to answer at the last day if we do not do so.

3:18 Perhaps this was said to Ezekiel because for 7 days he hadn't told them the word of God as he had been asked to (:11,15,16).

3:20 God does not just disregard those who turn away from Him. He deceives them, and leads them into a downward spiral of moral and doctrinal declension. He laid a stumbling block before the righteous man who turned to sin.

who forbears, let him forbear;’ for they are a rebellious house.

CHAPTER 4 Sep. 8

The Siege of Jerusalem

You also, son of man, take a tile, and lay it before yourself, and portray on it the city - Jerusalem. ² Lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. ³ Take for yourself an iron pan and set it for a wall of iron between yourself and the city: and set your face toward it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. ⁴ Moreover lie on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; according to the number of the days that you shall lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. ⁵ For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be to you a number of days, even three hundred and ninety days. So you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. ⁶ Again, when you have accomplished these, you shall lie on your right side, and shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah: forty days, each day for

a year, have I appointed it to you. ⁷ You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm uncovered; and you shall prophesy against it. ⁸ Behold, I lay shackles on you, and you shall not turn yourself from one side to the other, until you have accomplished the days of your siege. ⁹ Take for yourself also wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, and put them in one vessel and make bread of it; according to the number of the days that you shall lie on your side, even three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat of it. ¹⁰ Your food which you shall eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time you shall eat it. ¹¹ You shall drink water by measure, the sixth part of a hin: from time to time you shall drink. ¹² You shall eat it as barley cakes, and you shall bake it in their sight with dung that comes out of man. ¹³ Yahweh said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will drive them. ¹⁴ Then I said, Ah Lord Yahweh! Behold, my soul has not been polluted; for from my youth up even until now have I not eaten of that which dies of itself, or is torn of animals;

4:1-5 Preaching through these acted parables would’ve led to people thinking Ezekiel was mad or at least, very ‘odd’; just as they may consider us when we share God’s word with them as He asks.

4:14 This is very similar to the situation when Christ asked Peter to kill and eat unclean animals (Acts 10:14). Peter saw the similarity, taking (as we should) guidance and encouragement from a Biblical example of a person who was in his situation. Peter therefore replied by quoting from Ez. 4:14, where Ezekiel refuses to eat similar food when asked to by the Angel. Perhaps Peter saw himself as Ezekiel’s antitype in his witnessing against Israel’s rejection of the word of God in Christ (note how 4:16 is a prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction in AD70). ‘In the same way as God made a concession to Ezekiel about this command to eat unclean food’, Peter reasoned, ‘so

neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. ¹⁵ Then He said to me, Behold, I have given you cow's dung for man's dung, and you shall prepare your bread thereon. ¹⁶ Moreover He said to me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight, and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure, and in dismay: ¹⁷ that they may want bread and water, and be dismayed one with another, and pine away in their iniquity.

CHAPTER 5 Sep. 9

Ezekiel Shaves His Hair

You, son of man, take a sharp sword. You shall use it like a barber's razor on yourself, and shall cause it to pass on your head and on your beard. Then take balances to weigh, and divide the hair. ² A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and you shall take a third part, and strike with the sword around it; and a third part you shall scatter to the wind - and I will draw out a sword after them. ³ You shall take of it a few in number, and bind them in your skirts. ⁴ Of these again you shall take, and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; from it shall a fire

come forth into all the house of Israel. ⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the peoples and countries which are around her. ⁶ She has rebelled against My ordinances in doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are around her; for they have rejected My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they have not walked in them. ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you are rebellious more than the nations that are around you and have not walked in My statutes, neither have kept My ordinances, neither have done after the ordinances of the nations that are around you; ⁸ therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I, even I, am against you; and I will execute judgments in the midst of you in the sight of the nations. ⁹ I will do in you that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all your abominations. ¹⁰ Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of you, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments on you; and the whole remnant of you will I scatter to all the winds. ¹¹ Therefore as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your

perhaps my Lord will do for me'. But the Lord was to teach him even greater things than Ezekiel.

4:15 God is open to dialogue with His children, and is willing to make concessions to human weakness and foibles; just as we should be to others.

5:11 *Will I also diminish you* – The implication was that they had diminished God. It may be purposefully putting it in arresting terms, but all the same it's ultimately true that if we don't give God the glory we are intended to, then we are diminishing Him of

detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore will I also diminish you; neither shall My eye spare, and I also will have no pity. ¹² A third part of you shall die with the plague and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of you; and a third part shall fall by the sword around you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds, and will draw out a sword after them. ¹³ Thus shall My anger be accomplished, and I will cause My wrath toward them to rest, and I shall be comforted. They shall know that I, Yahweh, have spoken in My zeal, when I have accomplished My wrath on them. ¹⁴ Moreover I will make you a desolation and a reproach among the peoples that are around you, in the sight of all that pass by. ¹⁵ So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment, to the peoples that are around you, when I shall execute judgments on you in anger and in wrath and in furious rebukes. I, Yahweh, have spoken it. ¹⁶ They shall see, when I shall send on them the evil arrows of famine that are for

destruction, which I will send to destroy you: when I will increase the famine on you, and will break your staff of bread. ¹⁷ I will send on you famine and wild animals, and they shall bereave you; and pestilence and blood shall pass through you; and I will bring the sword on you: I, Yahweh, have spoken it.

CHAPTER 6 Sep. 10

Prophecy about the Mountains of Israel

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ² Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy to them, ³ and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Yahweh: Thus says the Lord Yahweh to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places. ⁴ Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. ⁵ I will lay the dead bodies of the children of Israel before their

what is potentially and rightfully His. This is the degree to which He has come down to our level in His interaction with men.

5:13 The very existence of “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” is in order to “make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy” (Rom. 9:22,23 Gk.). After the experience of Divine judgment, “you shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem” (14:22); and yet these are exactly the words used here in 5:13 to describe how God will be ‘comforted’ after the judgments. We will come to share God’s perspective through our experience of the judgment process. It will teach us to be like Him, to see things from His viewpoint. As a result of it, the struggles we have over “why...?” so many things happened will be resolved. The purpose of the judgment is not only to convict us of our sinfulness, but also to make us appreciate our own righteousness for what it was and is. The faithful almost argue back with the Lord when He points out to them their righteous acts; they were done within a spirit of service that simply didn’t see them as He does (Mt. 25:38).

idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars. ⁶ In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. ⁷ The slain shall fall in the midst of you, and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁸ Yet will I leave a remnant: you shall have some that escape the sword among the peoples, when you shall be scattered through the nations. ⁹ Those of you that escape shall remember Me among the nations where they shall be carried captive because I have been broken with their lewd heart which has departed from Me, and with their eyes, which play the prostitute after their idols. They shall loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed in all their

abominations. ¹⁰ They shall know that I am Yahweh: I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them. ¹¹ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Strike with your hand and stamp with your foot and say, Alas! Because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, they shall fall by the sword, by the famine and by the plague. ¹² He who is far off shall die of the plague; and he who is near shall fall by the sword; and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the famine. Thus will I accomplish My wrath on them. ¹³ You shall know that I am Yahweh, when their slain men shall be among their idols around their altars on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains and under every green tree and under every thick oak, the places where they offered pleasant aroma to all their idols. ¹⁴ I will stretch out My hand on them, and make the land desolate and waste, from the wilderness toward Diblah,

6:7 *You shall know that I am Yahweh* – This is as a refrain throughout Ezekiel. Ultimately, the wicked will come to know Yahweh through their experience of His judgment, but then it will be too late. We are to “know” Him now, rather than too late in the process of condemnation.

6:9 *I have been broken* – The God who is Almighty and so more powerful than us has become so involved with humanity that His heart was broken by Israel; and if it was broken in Ezekiel’s time, we cannot imagine what His feelings were at the crucifixion of His Son. To truly love makes us weak and vulnerable, and the awesome extent of God’s love has in a sense done the same to Him. Not that we are righteous of ourselves, but it’s worth reflecting how our feeble efforts to love Him are therefore so thrilling to Him.

Their lewd heart... their eyes, which play the prostitute – This is the language of sexual addiction, and it applies to God’s woman, Israel. No wonder they so broke His loving heart.

6:13 The bodies of Israel lay strewn around their idols because in fact the idols they worshipped were the idols of their enemies, who would’ve sacrificed the corpses of the Israelites to *their* gods. It’s so bizarre that Israel should’ve worshipped the idols of their victorious enemies, but this is how bizarre sin is.

throughout all their habitations. They shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 7 Sep. 11

God's Anger Means the End Has Come

Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ² You, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh to the land of Israel, An end: the end has come on the four corners of the land. ³ Now is the end on you, and I will send My anger on you, and will judge you according to your ways; and I will bring on you all your abominations. ⁴ My eye shall not spare you, neither will I have pity; but I will bring your ways on you, and your abominations shall be in the midst of you. You shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: An evil, a one-time evil; behold, it comes. ⁶ An end has come, the end has come; it awakes against

you; behold, it comes. ⁷ Your doom has come to you, inhabitant of the land. The time has come, the day is near, a day of tumult, and not of mere echoing on the mountains. ⁸ Now will I shortly pour out My wrath on you and accomplish My anger against you, and will judge you according to your ways; and I will bring on you all your abominations. ⁹ My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. I will bring on you according to your ways; and your abominations shall be in the midst of you; and you shall know that I, Yahweh, do strike. ¹⁰ Behold, the day, behold, it comes: your doom is gone forth; the rod has blossomed, pride has budded. ¹¹ Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness. None of them shall remain, neither of their multitude, nor of their wealth. There shall be nothing of value among them. ¹² The time has come, the day draws near:

7:9 *According to your ways* – Here God says that He will punish Israel at the hand of the Babylonians according to their sins, proportionate to them. But when Israel *were* punished by the Babylonians, Ezra (9:13) realized that they had *not* been punished proportionate to their sins. Yet in Is. 40:2, again in the context of Judah's punishment by the Babylonians, God says that their judgment had been double what it ought to have been; and yet Ezra says it was *less* than the promised proportionate recompense for their sins. Here we have the utter, humanly inconsistent grace of God; almost taking guilt for punishing them too much, then for not punishing them enough, and yet saying He will punish them in exact proportion to their sin (see too 5:11; 8:18,19; 9:10). All we can say is that God is passionate and emotional. He hates punishing His children for their sins, just as any loving parent does, even if He speaks at times in the fire of His wrath. And when He did punish Judah, it seems He almost rushes to take it back and say it was far too much. This isn't to say that God is in any sense fickle; the paradox can perhaps only dimly be understood by the analogy to human parenting dilemmas. All we can say is that His love and passion for His wayward children is real and felt, and He will not hold Himself to His word of judgment in a legalistic, literalistic sense – quite simply because love, not least *His* love, is beyond such limitation.

7:12 *The time has come* – And yet God says elsewhere that it is still to come (:10). God is outside of time as we know it. The future is as if it's happened. Because of this,

don't let the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all its multitude. ¹³ For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, even if they be still alive. The vision is touching the whole multitude of it, none shall return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life. ¹⁴ They have blown the trumpet, and have made all ready, but none goes to the battle; for My wrath is on all its multitude. ¹⁵ The sword is outside, and the pestilence and the famine within. He who is in the field shall die with the sword; and he who is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him. ¹⁶ But those of the ones who escape shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, every one in his iniquity. ¹⁷ All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. ¹⁸ They shall also clothe themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be on all faces, and baldness on all their heads. ¹⁹ They shall throw their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be as an unclean thing; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of Yahweh. They shall

not satisfy their souls, neither fill their stomachs; because it has been the stumbling block of their iniquity. ²⁰ As for the beauty of His ornament, He set it in majesty; but they made the images of their abominations and their detestable things therein; therefore have I made it to them as an unclean thing. ²¹ I will give it into the hands of the gentiles for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall profane it. ²² My face will I turn also from them, and they shall profane My secret place; and robbers shall enter into it, and profane it. ²³ Make the chain; for the land is full of bloodshed, and the city is full of violence. ²⁴ Therefore I will bring the worst of the nations, and they shall possess their houses. I will also make the pride of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be profaned. ²⁵ Destruction comes; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. ²⁶ Mischief shall come on mischief, and rumour shall be on rumour; and they shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders. ²⁷ The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of

God can speak of the dead as if they are alive, although they are not; and can speak of people as if they were alive before birth. He can speak of a day coming as if it has come (Is. 3:8). We need to bear this in mind in interpreting His word.

7:20 *Therein* – Amazingly, there were idols made in Yahweh's temple...

7:23 The Hebrew word *mishpat* means [and is translated] both "crime" (7:23) and "judgment" (5:7,16,20). Every sin is its own judgment, and brings us immediately as it were before the judgment throne of God. And yet *mishpat* is also translated "ordinance", in speaking about the commands of God (11:20). Acts of obedience are also acts of judgment; they too bring us positively before the judgment of God. The Greek and Hebrew words translated 'judge' mean both the process of discerning / summing up, and also the execution of judgment.

the land shall be troubled. I will do to them after their way, and according to their own judgments will I judge them; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 8 Sep. 12

Temple Idolatry

In the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house and the elders of Judah sat before me, the hand of the Lord Yahweh fell there on me. ² Then I saw, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of His waist and downward, fire; and from His waist and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as it were glowing metal. ³ He put forth the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the sky and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the gate of the inner court that looks toward the north; where there was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy. ⁴ The glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the appearance that I saw in the plain. ⁵ Then He said to me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now to the road that

leads toward the north. So I lifted up my eyes toward the northern road, and behold, northward of the gate of the altar this image of jealousy was in the entry. ⁶ He said to me, Son of man, do you see what they do, even the great abominations that the house of Israel do commit here, so that I should go far away from My sanctuary? But you shall again see other, greater abominations. ⁷ He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. ⁸ Then He said to me, Son of man, dig now through the wall; and when I had dug through the wall, behold, a door. ⁹ He said to me, Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they do here. ¹⁰ So I went in and saw; and behold, every form of creeping thing and abominable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed around on the wall. ¹¹ There stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel; and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, every man with his censer in his hand; and the odour of the cloud of incense went up. ¹² Then He said to me, Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, every

8:3 *Which provokes to jealousy* – Any form of idolatry provokes God to jealousy. The vast extent of His love for us means that any unfaithfulness provokes His feelings of jealousy; love and jealousy are in this sense part of the same thing.

8:12 See on 2:4-6. It seems that righteousness goes unrewarded and sin goes unpunished. Those who thought in their hearts that “Yahweh doesn’t see” likely never said that in so many words. But their persistence in sin, like ours today, arose from a disbelief in practice that God does in fact see and know all things. They thought that “the Lord will not do good, nor will He do ill” (Zeph. 1:12); “my way is hidden from the Lord” (Is. 29:15; 40:27). This of course is the attitude with which we daily live. The question is, will we perceive it as the prophets did, and live with the belief that God is in fact intently watching us, 24/7?

man in his rooms of images? They say, 'Yahweh doesn't see us; Yahweh has forsaken the land'. ¹³ He said also to me, You shall again see more, greater abominations which they do. ¹⁴ Then He brought me to the door of the gate of Yahweh's house which was toward the north; and see, there sat the women weeping for Tam-muz. ¹⁵ Then He said to me, Have you seen this, son of man? You shall again see greater abominations than these. ¹⁶ He brought me into the inner court of Yahweh's house; and there, at the door of Yahweh's temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs toward Yahweh's temple, and their faces toward the east; and they were worshipping the sun toward the east. ¹⁷ Then He said to me, Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have turned again to provoke Me to anger; and behold, they put the branch to their nose. ¹⁸ Therefore

will I also deal with them in anger; My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

CHAPTER 9 Sep. 13

Death to the Idolaters

Then He cried in my ears with a loud voice saying, Cause those who are in charge of the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. ² Behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate which looks toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in their midst clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. They went in, and stood beside the bronze altar. ³ The glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub upon which it rested, to the threshold of the house: and He called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side. ⁴ Yahweh said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of

8:13 Amongst God's people, some sins are "greater abomination" than others. Even amongst the Gentiles, God sees some as sinning more than others (7:24). This doesn't mean that the 'smaller' ones don't count. But it reflects God's great sensitivity to human behaviour. The varying scale of sacrifices for various sins reflects this too. The Lord Jesus spoke of the man with "greater sin" (Jn. 19:11), and of other men who owed varying amounts to the Father. God's eye did not spare or pity Israel, *because* they thought that sin was a light thing to Him (:17,18). They thus insulted His essential nature.

9:2 *One man... with a writer's inkhorn by his side* – Ezekiel was seeing himself in the vision.

9:4 *Foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations* – In some ways we can do nothing about the state of things in the world or amongst the people of God, because we cannot change other people. But what marks us out as God's people is that in our deepest minds [symbolized by the forehead], we weep for it all. This was the characteristic which saved Lot when Sodom was destroyed (2 Pet. 2:8).

the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in its midst. ⁵ To the others He said in my hearing, Go through the city after him, and strike. Don't let your eye spare, neither have pity; ⁶ kill utterly the old man, the young man and the virgin, and little children and women; but don't come near any man on whom is the mark. Begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the old men that were before the house. ⁷ He said to them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the dead. Go forth! They went forth, and struck in the city. ⁸ It happened, while they were smiting, and I was left, that I fell on my face and cried, and said, Ah Lord Yahweh! Will You destroy all who remain of Israel in Your pouring out of Your wrath on Jerusalem? ⁹ Then He said to me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perversion; for they say, Yahweh has forsaken the land, and Yahweh doesn't see. ¹⁰ As for Me also, My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will bring their behaviour on their heads. ¹¹ Behold, the man clothed in linen, who had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as You have commanded me.

CHAPTER 10 Sep. 14

The Glory of God in the Living Creatures Departs

Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the head of the cherubim there appeared above them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. ² He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, Go in between the whirling wheels, even under the cherub, and fill both your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. He went in as I watched. ³ Now the cherubim stood on the right side of the house when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. ⁴ Then the glory of Yahweh was lifted up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of Yahweh's glory. ⁵ The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of God Almighty when He speaks. ⁶ It came to pass, when He commanded the man clothed in linen saying, Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim, that he went in and stood beside a wheel. ⁷ The cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that

9:5 This is reminiscent of the Passover Angel sealing the faithful Israelites against the destruction of the "Destroyer" Angel (1 Cor. 10:10). But now, unfaithful Israel were no better than the Egyptians.

9:8 Ezekiel's intercession was after the pattern of Abraham pleading for Sodom, and Moses for Israel. Their examples inspired Ezekiel in prayer, as they should us. But it wasn't heard at this time; for in the end, wilful sin just has to be punished, and no mediator or intercession can change things.

was between the cherubim and took of it, and put it into the hands of him who was clothed in linen, who took it and went out. ⁸ There appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings. ⁹ I looked and behold, four wheels were beside the cherubim, one wheel beside one cherub, and another wheel beside another cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like a beryl stone. ¹⁰ As for their appearance, the four of them had one likeness, like a wheel within a wheel. ¹¹ When they went, they went in their four directions. They didn't turn as they went, but to the place where the head looked they followed it; they didn't turn as they went. ¹² Their whole body and their backs and their hands and their wings and the wheels were full of

eyes all around, even the wheels that the four of them had. ¹³ As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, 'the whirling wheels'. ¹⁴ Each one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third face the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. ¹⁵ The cherubim mounted up: this is the living creature that I saw by the river Chebar. ¹⁶ When the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels also didn't turn from beside them. ¹⁷ When they stood, these stood; and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them; for the spirit of the living creature was in them. ¹⁸ The glory of Yahweh went

10:8 Ezekiel had to put his hand under the wings of the cherubim; and then there appeared permanently in the Cherubim visions "the form of a man's hand [i.e. Ezekiel's] under their wings" (:2,8). I take this to be indicative of how humanity can be so deeply a part of God's work; we are identified with Him and His Angels. The visions involved the whole system held up as it were upon a human hand; and God in the image of a man crowning it all in the Heavens. Truly God isn't far from any of us; and in a sense, "God is in need of man".

10:14 The four faces are likely to be connected with the four standards of the tribes of Israel (Lion = Judah, Man = Reuben, Ox = Ephraim, Eagle = Dan). Each of those tribes had two other tribes assigned to them in the encampment procedures of Num. 2. There is extra-Biblical tradition that the cherubim in Solomon's temple had the same four faces which Ezekiel saw on the cherubim – lion, ox, man and eagle. Those to whom Ezekiel related his vision would have immediately understood the point – that the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of the Heavenly, and that above that was a huge Angelic system operating, which also represented God's people – them. But that huge system was to remove to Babylon, and then the final visions of Ezekiel show that glory returning. Ezekiel, as the representative "son of man", was caught up within that system and transported at ease between Babylon and Jerusalem – and those who wanted to opt in with God and His Angels could likewise be taken to Babylon and returned. Those who chose to remain in Babylon were therefore resisting being part of an awesome system of God manifestation and Angelic operation. We have that same choice in things great and small today.

forth from over the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹ The cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight when they went forth, and the wheels beside them. They stood at the door of the east gate of Yahweh's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. ²⁰ This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim. ²¹ Every one had four faces, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. ²² As for the likeness of their faces, they were the faces which I saw by the river Chebar, their appearances and themselves; they went each one straight forward.

CHAPTER 11 Sep. 15

Judah's Leaders Condemned

Moreover the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of Yahweh's house which looks eastward. At the door of the gate were twenty-five men; and I saw in their midst Jaazaniah the son of Az-zur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. ² He said to me, Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked advice in this city; ³ who say,

The time is not near to build houses: this is the cauldron, and we are the meat. ⁴ Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, son of man. ⁵ The Spirit of Yahweh fell on me, and He said to me, Speak, Thus says Yahweh: 'Thus you have said, house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind. ⁶ You have multiplied your slain in this city, and you have filled its streets with the slain. ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Your slain whom you have laid in its midst, they are indeed the meat, and this is the cauldron; but you shall be brought out of its midst. ⁸ You have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword on you, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁹ I will bring you out of its midst and deliver you into the hands of foreigners, and will execute judgments among you. ¹⁰ You shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ¹¹ This shall not be your cauldron, neither shall you be the meat in its midst; I will judge you in the border of Israel; ¹² and you shall know that I am Yahweh: for you have not walked in My statutes, neither have you executed My ordinances, but have behaved like the nations that are around you'. ¹³ It happened, when I prophesied,

11:1 The wheels of the cherubim represented God's people Israel on earth. If they had kept in step with the Spirit-Angel, following Him both to Babylon and back to Judah at His bidding, they would have been in step with God's plan for them, and all would have prospered. This passage appears to be behind Paul's appeal to us to walk in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Ezekiel himself was the great example of this, for he was "lifted up" by the Spirit just as the wheels were lifted up, and went wherever he was taken, backwards and forwards between Babylon and Judah (8:3; 11:1). He became part of the Cherubic system.

that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down on my face and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord Yahweh! will you make a full end of those remaining of Israel? ¹⁴ The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ¹⁵ Son of man, the people who live in Jerusalem are talking about you and those of your nation who are with you in exile. They say, The exiles are too far away to worship Yahweh. He has given us possession of the land.

Judah's Return Promised

¹⁶ Therefore say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Whereas I have removed them far off among the nations, and whereas I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they have come. ¹⁷ Therefore say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scat-

tered, and I will give you the land of Israel. ¹⁸ They shall return, and they shall take away all the detestable things of it and all its abominations. ¹⁹ I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes, and keep My ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose heart walks after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their way on their own heads, says the Lord Yahweh. ²² Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, and the wheels were beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. ²³ The glory of Yahweh went up from the midst of the city, and stood on the mountain which is on the east side of the city. ²⁴ The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to

11:15 *I will judge you in the border of Israel* – Babylon and Assyria were located at the borders of the land promised to Abraham.

11:19 Sitting there in captivity, God offered His people a new covenant (:19,20,25 cp. Heb. 10:16); they could have one mind between each other, and a heart of flesh. But Israel would not, and the whole offer was rescheduled and reapplied, so that it is now accepted by those who turn to Jesus Christ. Their being of “one heart” after baptism (Acts 4:32) was a direct result of their acceptance of this same new covenant which Judah had rejected. In our hearing of the offer of the new covenant, we are essentially in the position of those of the captivity, hearing Ezekiel’s words, and deciding whether or not to believe it – or just continue to be obsessed with just trying to make the best of a rather dumb life.

11:22-24 When the cherubim lifted up, so was Ezekiel lifted up. Judah should have left Jerusalem when the Spirit told them to; and they should have upped and left Babylon when the Spirit told them to. But they were out of step with the Spirit, despite Ezekiel’s acted parable of literally being lifted up and going where the Cherubim went. The equivalent of this for us is surely our sense of doing all for God’s glory, of having this as the final deciding factor in all our decisions.

them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. ²⁵ Then I repeated to those of the captivity all the things that Yahweh had shown me.

CHAPTER 12 Sep. 16

Judah's Exile

The word of Yahweh also came to me saying, ² Son of man, you dwell in the midst of the rebellious people, who have eyes to see, and don't see, who have ears to hear, and don't hear; for they are rebellious people. ³ Therefore, you son of man, prepare what you need for a journey into exile and move by day in their sight. You shall move from your place to another place in their sight: perhaps they will consider, though they are rebellious people. ⁴ You shall bring forth your belongings by day in their sight, as belongings for exile; and you shall go forth at evening in their sight, as when men go forth into exile. ⁵ Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry your belongings out that way. ⁶ In their sight you shall carry it on your shoulder, and carry it forth in the twilight; you shall cover your face, so that you don't see the land; for I have set you for a sign to the house of Israel. ⁷ I did as I was commanded: I brought

forth my belongings by day, as if for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my hand; I brought it forth in the dark, and carried it on my shoulder in their sight.

⁸ In the morning came the word of Yahweh to me, saying, ⁹ Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' ¹⁰ Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh: This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem, and all the people of Israel who are in it'. ¹¹ Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity. ¹² The prince who is among them shall carry his belongings on his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby. He shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes. ¹³ My net also will I spread on him, and he shall be taken in My snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. ¹⁴ I will scatter toward every wind all who are around him to help him, and all his armies; and I will draw out the sword after them. ¹⁵ They shall know that I am Yahweh, when I disperse them among the nations, and scatter them

12:3 See on 3:7.

Perhaps they will consider – The Hebrew word *ulay*, 'perhaps', is significant in revealing how much God has given us freewill; for we are invited to understand that maybe God limits His foreknowledge so that He didn't 'know' whether they would "consider" or not. He speaks the same way in Is. 47:12; Jer. 26:2,3; 36:3,7. This 'uncertainty' of God as to how His people will respond to His word reflects the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to our kind of time. It has huge implications for us. With what eagerness must God Almighty look upon us as we sit down to read His word daily! 'Are they going to listen? How are they going to respond...?'

through the countries. ¹⁶ But I will preserve a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they come; and they shall know that I am Yahweh. ¹⁷ Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹⁸ Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and with fearfulness; ¹⁹ and tell the people of the land, Thus says the Lord Yahweh concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with fearfulness, and drink their water in dismay, that her land may be desolate, and all that is therein, because of the violence of all those who dwell therein. ²⁰ The cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be a desolation; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ²¹ The word of Yahweh came

to me, saying, ²² Son of man, what is this proverb that you have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every prophetic vision fails? ²³ Tell them therefore, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but tell them, The days are at hand, and the fulfilment of every prophetic vision. ²⁴ For there shall be no more any false vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. ²⁵ For I am Yahweh. I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall be performed. It shall be no more deferred; for in your days, rebellious house, will I speak the word, and will perform it, says the Lord Yahweh. ²⁶ Again the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ²⁷ Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies of times

12:22-25 The desolation of Israel by the invaders was repeatedly foretold by the prophets. The message was continually mocked by the false prophets, who claimed inspiration from God to claim that the day of judgment had been endlessly delayed. They also belittled the predictions made by true prophets like Ezekiel, spreading their ideas until it became a common joke that Yahweh's prophets kept speaking of a coming day of the Lord that never came. But God's reply here was clear. The similarities with the last days leading up to AD70 are clear – the prophetic word was likewise mocked with the taunt “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet. 3:4). The true word of God regarding the coming day of the Lord was mocked; a belief that “the days are prolonged” led to the conclusion that “every prophetic vision fails”, as the thought that “my Lord delays his coming” (Mt. 24:48) resulted in a lack of faith in the word of promise. Christ's statement that “all shall be fulfilled” at His coming (Lk.21:32) matches the assurance given here that “every vision” *would* be fulfilled when the day came. Those within the people of God at Ezekiel's time who were expressing such doubt were matched by some within the body of Christ in the first century. Clearly they must have their latter day counterparts.

12:25 ‘Yahweh’ can mean ‘I who will be’. Because He is, and He *will be*, therefore the words of the ‘I will be’, really will be. His very Name is the utter guarantee that His word for us will be fulfilled.

that are far off. ²⁸ Therefore tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: None of My words shall be deferred any more, but the word which I shall speak shall be performed, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 13 Sep. 17

Judgment on the False Prophets

The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, Hear the word of Yahweh: ³ Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit, though they have seen nothing! ⁴ Israel, your prophets have been like foxes in the desert places. ⁵ You have not gone up into the gaps, neither built up the wall for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of Yahweh. ⁶ They have seen falsehood and lying divination, they who say, Yahweh says; but Yahweh has not sent them; and they have

made men to hope that the word would be confirmed. ⁷ Haven't you seen a false vision, and haven't you spoken a lying divination in that you say, Yahweh says; but I have not spoken? ⁸ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you have spoken falsehood and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁹ My hand shall be against the prophets who see false visions, and who preach lies. They shall not be in the council of My people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁰ Because, even because they have seduced My people, saying, Peace; and there is no peace; and when one builds up a wall, behold, they plaster it with whitewash. ¹¹ Tell those who plaster it with whitewash, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing storm; and on you great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it.

13:5 God is so sensitive to prayerfulness. He condemns the leaders of Israel for not stopping the gaps or building the wall, i.e. interceding, for Israel. If only there had been a prayerful minority, God would have changed the whole course of His dealings with Israel. But petty materialism and small-mindedness was what stopped those leaders from doing their job.

13:9 *Neither shall they enter into the land of Israel* – Ezekiel seems to be writing this in the context of the first wave of captives taken to Babylon. The false prophets amongst them were saying that all would be well with Jerusalem (:16); whereas Ezekiel spoke on God's behalf in revealing the sins going on there, and saying that because of them, the rest of Judah would be taken captive. Although it was God's purpose to restore the captives to Judah, these false prophets would die in Babylon and not return there. This kind of thing has gone on from the time of the serpent in Eden – questioning God's word, and saying what others would like to hear as if it is from God.

13:11 *You, great hailstones, shall fall* – Note the sudden change of pronoun. This is an example of how God personally addresses the natural creation. He may be speaking to the Angels who control it, and yet there is also the sense within the Bible that God

¹² Behold, when the wall has fallen, shall it not be said to you, Where is the plaster with which you have plastered it? ¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will even tear it with a stormy wind in My wrath; and there shall be an overflowing storm in My anger, and great hailstones in wrath to consume it. ¹⁴ So will I break down the wall that you have plastered with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation shall be uncovered; and it shall fall, and you shall be consumed in its midst: and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ¹⁵ Thus will I accomplish My anger on the wall, and on those who have plastered it with whitewash; and I will tell you, The wall is no more, neither those who plastered it; ¹⁶ namely, the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁷ You, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy against them, ¹⁸ and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Woe to the women who sew magic wristbands for people and make magic scarves for everyone to wear on their heads, so that they can have power over other people's lives. You want to possess the power of life and death over My people and to use it for your own gain.

¹⁹ You have profaned Me among My people in order to get handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to kill the people who should not die, and to save the people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies. ²⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: I hate the wristbands that you use in your attempt to control life and death. I will rip them off your arms and set free the people that you were controlling. ²¹ I will rip off your scarves and let My people escape from your power once and for all; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ²² Because with lies you have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive: ²³ therefore you shall no more see false visions, nor practise fortune telling. I will deliver My people out of your hand; and you shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 14 Sep. 18

Judgment on Idolaters

Then came certain of the elders of Israel to me, and sat before me. ² The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ³ Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumbling block of their wickedness before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

is somehow in conscious, active dialogue with the natural creation, and hasn't merely left it ticking on mindless clockwork.

13:18 Any attempt to manipulate or get power over other people within God's family, be it done consciously or unconsciously, should be outlawed for us by the simple consideration that they are in fact *God's* people and not ours.

⁴ Therefore speak to them, and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Every man of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his wickedness before his face, and comes to the prophet; I Yahweh will answer him according to the multitude of his idols; ⁵ that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from Me through their idols. ⁶ Therefore tell the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Return and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. ⁷ For each one of the house of Israel or of the foreigners who live in Israel who separates himself from Me, and takes his idols into his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet to inquire for himself of Me; I Yahweh will answer him by myself. ⁸ I will set My face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb,

and I will cut him off from the midst of My people; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁹ If the prophet is deceived when he speaks a word, I, Yahweh, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand on him, and will destroy him from the midst of My people Israel. ¹⁰ They shall bear their wickedness: the wickedness of the prophet shall be even as the wickedness of him who seeks him; ¹¹ that the house of Israel may go no more astray from Me, neither defile themselves any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be My people, and I may be their God, says the Lord Yahweh.

Intercession Now Powerless

¹² The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹³ Son of man, when a land sins against Me by committing a trespass and I stretch out My hand on it, and break the staff of its bread and send famine on it and cut off from it man and animal; ¹⁴ though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and

14:7 People who were worshipping idols in their hearts still wanted to come and hear God's word from the prophet. Like those people, we are tempted to worship the true God as well as idols, rather than making a clean break. People come to God's word as it now is in the Bible, but they are confused by God in the message they hear from it because they come to His word with idols in their hearts. Mere Bible reading won't make us righteous; the attitude of mind we bring to it is all important. If we come with idols in our hearts, then reading God's word will lead us yet further from God.

14:9 Clearly God is capable of deceiving people, and at times He even uses His word as the medium through which He does so. We can never be passive in our relationship with God, nor stand still in our journey with Him. He is constantly active through His word to lead us either closer to Him or further away from Him.

14:14 *Noah, Daniel, and Job* – Each of these men delivered others by their intercession and personal righteousness. Noah delivered his family, Daniel his people, and Job his friends. God is willing to save people for the sake of a third party, but there clearly has to be some base level of spirituality in the person. By Ezekiel's time, there wasn't even that.

Job, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁵ If I cause evil animals to pass through the land and they ravage it and it be made desolate, so that no man may pass through because of the animals; ¹⁶ though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only should be delivered, but the land should be desolate. ¹⁷ Or if I bring a sword on that land and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off from it man and animal; ¹⁸ though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only should be delivered themselves. ¹⁹ Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out My anger on it in blood, to cut off from it man and animal; ²⁰ though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness. ²¹ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: How much more when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and savage

animals, and the plague, to cut off from it man and animal! ²² Yet, behold, therein shall be left a few who shall be carried forth, both sons and daughters. They shall come forth to you, and you shall see their way and their doings; and you shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought on Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought on it. ²³ They shall comfort you, when you see their way and their doings; and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 15 Sep. 19

A Useless Vine

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ² Son of man, what is the vine plant more than any tree, the vine-branch which is among the trees of the forest? ³ Shall wood be taken of it to make any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? ⁴ See, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire has devoured both its ends, and its midst is burned. Is it profitable for any work? ⁵ Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work. How much less, when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned,

14:22 See on 5:13.

The evil that I have brought – God and not some cosmic ‘Satan’ being is the One who brings “evil” in the sense of calamity against people. See on Is. 45:5-7.

15:5 There in Babylon they were as the vine tree, burned up and fit for no work; and yet, still used to perform God’s work, by grace alone. And these men were truly types of us. Even before they were burnt up, the vine tree of God’s people wasn’t good for any work (:3), and had no superiority over the other trees (:2). God’s people aren’t better, of themselves, than the peoples around them; we’re not good at works, even if we think we are; the way God uses us is a reflection of pure grace, and how He delights in using the humanly worthless and useless to do His work.

shall it yet be of any use! ⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: As the vine plant among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ⁷ I will set My face against them; they shall go forth from the fire, but the fire shall devour them; and you shall know that I am Yahweh, when I set My face against them. ⁸ I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 16 Sep. 20

Judah's Unfaithfulness

Again the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations ³ and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh to Jerusalem: Your birthplace is in the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was your father, and your mother was a Hittite. ⁴ As for your birth, in the day you were born your navel was not tied neither were you washed in water to cleanse you; you weren't salted at all, nor swaddled at all. ⁵ No eye pitied you to do

any of these things to you, to have compassion on you; but you were cast out in the open desert, because your existence was despised in the day that you were born. ⁶ When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you, Though you are in your blood, live; yes, I said to you, Though you are in your blood, live. ⁷ I caused you to multiply as that which grows in the field, and you increased and grew great, and you attained to excellent beauty; your breasts were fashioned, and your hair was grown; yet you were naked and bare. ⁸ Now when I passed by you and looked at you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over you, and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore to you, and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord Yahweh, and you became Mine. ⁹ Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. ¹⁰ I clothed you also with embroidered work, gave you shoes of sealskin, dressed you with fine linen, and cov-

16:3 Israel are reminded that ethnically they're not so different from the surrounding nations, seeing that Abraham their ancestor was originally from Ur. The basis of being 'Jewish' and part of God's people was therefore God's grace rather than anything ethnic.

16:5 This is very much the language of Isaac's half brother Ishmael, ancestor of many of Israel's enemies (Gen. 21:10-16). Israel were no better than the Gentile world, just as they are today not inherently better than their Arab cousins, and as we in essence are no better than the world around us. It's God's calling, which is by grace alone, which makes all the difference.

16:8 God found Israel in the wilderness, covered them with a cloud (cp. His 'skirt') at Sinai, and there entered a covenant with them.

16:10 This alludes to the materials used for the tabernacle and priestly clothing. The intention of all that legislation, as with all God's Law, is to make us beautiful in His eyes.

ered you with silk. ¹¹ I beautified you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a chain on your neck.

¹² I put a jewel on your forehead, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your clothing was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; you ate fine flour, honey and oil; and you were exceedingly beautiful, and you prospered to become a kingdom.

¹⁴ Your renown went forth among the nations for your beauty; for it was perfect on account of My majesty which I had put on you, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁵ But you trusted in your beauty and played the prostitute because of your renown, and poured out your prostitution on everyone who passed by; his it was. ¹⁶ You took of your garments and made for yourselves high places decorated with various colours, and played the prostitute on them: such things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

¹⁷ You also took your beautiful jewels of My gold and of My silver which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men and played the prostitute with them; ¹⁸ and you took your embroidered garments and put them on the images, and set My oil and My incense before them.

¹⁹ My bread also which I gave you,

fine flour, and oil, and honey, with which I fed you, you even set it before them for a pleasant aroma; and thus it was, says the Lord Yahweh.

²⁰ Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters whom you have borne to Me, and you have sacrificed these to them to be devoured.

Was your prostitution a small matter, ²¹ that you have slain My children and delivered them up, in causing them to pass through the fire to them?

²² In all your abominations and your prostitution you have not remembered the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, and were wallowing in your blood. ²³ It has happened after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! says the Lord Yahweh), ²⁴ that you have built for yourselves a vaulted place, and have made yourselves a high place in every street. ²⁵ You have built your lofty place at the head of every street, and have made your beauty an abomination, and have opened your feet to everyone who passed by and multiplied your prostitution. ²⁶ You have also committed sexual immorality with the Egyptians your lustful neighbours, and have multiplied your prostitution, to provoke Me to anger.

²⁷ See therefore, I have stretched out My hand over you and have diminished your allotted portion of food,

16:13 *You ate fine flour, honey and oil* – A reference to the priests eating these offerings. The whole people of Israel are spoken of here as if they were priests; it was God's intention that the whole nation should become priests (Ex. 19:6). We as the modern people of God are likewise all intended to be priests (1 Pet. 2:9), taking spiritual responsibility for others rather than leaving it to a dedicated minority of the community.

16:20 Our children are born to God; we're not therefore free to raise them as we wish, but as He wishes, because they are His children.

and delivered you to the will of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd way. ²⁸ You have played the prostitute also with the Assyrians because you were insatiable; yes, you have played the prostitute with them, and yet you weren't satisfied. ²⁹ You have moreover multiplied your prostitution to the land of merchants, to Chaldea; and yet you weren't satisfied with this. ³⁰ How weak is your heart, says the Lord Yahweh, since you do all these things, the work of an impudent prostitute; ³¹ in that you build your vaulted place at the head of every street, and make your high place in every street, and have not been as a prostitute, in that you scorn pay. ³² A wife who commits adul-

tery! Who takes strangers instead of her husband! ³³ They give gifts to all prostitutes; but you give your gifts to all your lovers and bribe them that they may come to you on every side for your prostitution. ³⁴ You are different from other women in your prostitution, in that no one follows you to play the prostitute; and whereas you give hire, and no hire is given to you, therefore you are different. ³⁵ Therefore, prostitute, hear the word of Yahweh: ³⁶ Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your prostitution with your lovers; and because of all the idols of your abominations, and for the blood of your children that you gave to them; ³⁷ therefore

16:37 The metaphors used to describe the anger of God with Israel are pretty awful. Her children to be slain with thirst, she was to be stripped naked by her husband (Hosea 2), gang raped by her lovers, having her nose cut off and left a battered, bleeding mess in the scrubland (Ez. 16,23), to have her skirt pulled up over her head and her nakedness revealed (Jer. 13:20-27), wishing to pluck off her own breasts for shame (23:34). Jerusalem is to be raped, violated and humiliated, according to Ezekiel. Indeed, Ezekiel's images verge at times on what some would consider pornographic. He speaks of the woman Israel's pubic hair, breasts, menstrual cycle (:7,9,10); the gang rape by her enemies which God would bring about, leaving her mutilated and humiliated (:37; 23:22-49); about the size of her lovers' sexual organs and coital emissions, and how she let them fondle her breasts (23:8,20). This is shocking language, which perhaps we skip over in our Bible reading from sheer embarrassment – and we are modern readers brutalized by exposure to this kind of stuff in the media. For early Israel, it would all have been even more shocking. It all seemed out of proportion to having 'merely' made a few political alliances with Egypt and Assyria. Was that really like a wife letting other men fondle her breasts and have sex with her, admiring their bodies as she did so? Did it all have to end in such brutality and vulgarity? Today, sex and violence are what attract attention. From lyrics of songs to advertising and movies, that's clear enough. And the prophets are using the same tactics to arrest Israel's attention, all the more so because nudity and sex were things simply not up for public discussion. There's an anxiety which any talk about sex seems to arouse in us, and it was the prophets' intention to make us likewise get on the edge of our seats, anxious, rapt, sensitive for the next word... realizing that really and truly, this is what human sin does to God. The outrageous sex talk was to bring out how outrageous and

see, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you have taken pleasure, and all those who you have loved, with all those who you have hated; I will even gather them against you on every side, and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness.³⁸ I will judge you, as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.³⁹ I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your vaulted place, and break down your lofty places; and they shall strip you of your clothes, and take your beautiful jewels; and they shall leave you naked and bare.⁴⁰ They shall also bring up a company against you, and they shall stone you with stones and thrust you through with their swords.⁴¹ They shall burn your houses with fire, and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; and I will cause you to cease from playing the prostitute, and you shall also give no hire any more.⁴² So will I cause My wrath toward you to rest, and My jealousy shall depart from you, and I will be quiet and will be no more angry.⁴³ Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but

have raged against Me in all these things; therefore, behold, I also will bring your way on your head, says the Lord Yahweh: and you shall not commit this lewdness with all your abominations.⁴⁴ Behold, everyone who uses proverbs shall use this proverb against you, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.⁴⁵ You are the daughter of your mother, who loathes her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite.⁴⁶ Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells at your left hand, she and her daughters; and your younger sister, who dwells at your right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.⁴⁷ Yet have you not walked in their ways, nor done after their abominations; but, as if that were a very little thing, you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.⁴⁸ As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters.⁴⁹ Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor

obscene are our sins and unfaithfulness to the covenant we cut with God in baptism. The shocking sexual language and imagery of the prophets was in order to help Israel see that this was how far they had outraged God. It was and is a rhetoric that cannot be forgotten, shrugged off, re-interpreted. The rhetoric pushes relentlessly for a response in our consciences.

16:49 Note how pride, ignoring the poor and self-indulgence are highlighted as Sodom's essential sins; the sin of homosexuality is no worse nor better than these sins.

This was the iniquity... fullness of bread – The “fullness of bread” was itself a sin. Hoarding wealth when others are poor and needy is “iniquity”.

and needy. ⁵⁰ They were proud and committed sexual abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw good. ⁵¹ Neither has Samaria committed half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all your abominations which you have done. ⁵² You also bear you your own shame, in that you have given judgment for your sisters; through your sins that you have committed more abominable than they, they are more righteous than you: yes, be also confounded, and bear your shame, in that you have justified your sisters. ⁵³ I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of your captives in their midst; ⁵⁴ that you may bear your own shame, and may be ashamed because of all that you have done, in that you are a comfort to them. ⁵⁵ Your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate; and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate; and you and your

daughters shall return to your former estate. ⁵⁶ For your sister Sodom was a byword to you in the day of your pride, ⁵⁷ before your wickedness was uncovered, as at the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria, and of all who are around her, the daughters of the Philistines, who do despite to you all around. ⁵⁸ You have borne your lewdness and your abominations, says Yahweh. ⁵⁹ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will also deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant. ⁶⁰ Nevertheless I will remember My covenant made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish to you an everlasting covenant. ⁶¹ Then you shall remember your ways, and be ashamed, when you shall receive your sisters, your elder sisters and your younger; and I will give them to you for daughters, but not by your covenant. ⁶² I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall know that I am Yahweh; ⁶³ that you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I have forgiven

16:50 The abomination of their sexual perversion is placed last in the list of their sins, as if to emphasize that all the other sins were just as much sin. Likewise Paul writes to the Corinthians about their failures, but he doesn't start where I would have started – with their drunkenness at the memorial meeting. Instead he starts off with their disunity. Those things which we may consider as lesser sins, the Bible continually lists together with those things we have been conditioned into thinking are the greater sins. Clearest of all is the way Paul lists schism and hatred in his lists of sins that will exclude from the Kingdom. The worldviews of many societies have taught that sexual sin is so infinitely far worse than a bit of argument within a church, or ignoring others' poverty. But is this really right...?

16:51 This statement that Judah (the two tribe Kingdom) sinned more than Israel (the ten tribes) needs some meditation upon; God really did lavish grace upon the weakest of the weak.

you all that you have done, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 17 Sep. 21

A Vine and Two Great Eagles

The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel; ³ and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: A great eagle with great wings and long feathers, full of feathers of various colours, came to Lebanon, and took off the top of the cedar. ⁴ He cropped off the highest of its young twigs and carried it to a land of commerce where he set it in a city of merchants. ⁵ He also took the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful soil. He placed it beside many waters and set it as a willow tree. ⁶ It grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and its roots were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and young shoots. ⁷ There was also another great eagle with great wings

and many feathers. This vine bent its roots toward him, and shot forth its branches toward him, from the beds of its plantation, that he might water it. ⁸ It was planted in a good soil by many waters that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. ⁹ Say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up its roots, and cut off its fruit, that it may wither; that all its fresh springing leaves may wither? and not by a strong arm or many people can it be raised from its roots. ¹⁰ Yes, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? Shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind touches it? It shall wither in the beds where it grew. ¹¹ Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

Babylon and Egypt

¹² Say now to the rebellious people, Don't you know what these things mean? Tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took its king, and its princes, and

17:3 *Great eagle* – Nebuchadnezzar; *Full of feathers* – Many subject peoples; *Various colours* – Various nations within the Babylonian army and confederacy.

17:4 *The topmost of the young twigs* – The princes of Judah taken to Babylon.

17:5 *The seed of the land* – Zedekiah. *Planted it in a fruitful soil* – Set up as King of Judah, supported by Babylon.

17:6 *A vine of low stature* – Judah under Babylonian control could never become a high nation; her roots tended towards Nebuchadnezzar for all support.

17:7 *Another great eagle* – Pharaoh-hophra, king of Egypt. *This vine bent its roots toward him* – Judah broke their agreement with Nebuchadnezzar and sent to Egypt for help to rebel against Babylon.

17:8 *That it might be a goodly vine* – If Judah had accepted their domination by Babylon as a just punishment for their rebellion against Yahweh, God potentially had set up a situation whereby this could have been fruitful for His people. Wiggling out of our sins never brings the blessing God has prepared for those who accept their sins and the consequences of them.

17:9 *Cut off its fruit* – Zedekiah's children killed. *The leaves* – Judah's leadership.

brought them to him to Babylon.

¹³ He took of the seed royal, and made a covenant with him. He also brought him under an oath, and took away the mighty of the land; ¹⁴ that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping his covenant it might stand.

¹⁵ But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors to Egypt that they might give him horses and many people. Shall he prosper? Shall he who does such things escape? Shall he break the covenant, and yet escape? ¹⁶ As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. ¹⁷ Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company help him in the war, when they cast up mounds and build forts, to cut off many people. ¹⁸ For he has despised the oath by breaking the covenant; and behold, he had given his hand, and yet has done all these things; he shall not escape. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: As I live, surely My oath that he has despised,

and My covenant that he has broken, I will even bring it on his own head.

²⁰ I will spread My net on him, and he shall be taken in My snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and will enter into judgment with him there for his sins that he has committed against Me. ²¹ All his fugitives in all his bands shall fall by the sword, and those who remain shall be scattered toward every wind: and you shall know that I, Yahweh, have spoken it. ²² Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will also take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar. Under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shade of its branches shall they dwell. ²⁴ All the trees of the field shall know that I, Yahweh, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, Yahweh, have spoken and have done it.

17:15 *Shall he break the covenant, and yet escape?* – God’s people are held to be honest to the agreements they make with unbelievers, as well as their covenant with God.

17:22 *A tender one* – Messiah, the Lord Jesus (Is. 53:2), one of the twigs of the Jewish nation as Zedekiah had been, a Jew of our human nature.

17:23 The great tree speaks of Christ’s Kingdom, under which people from all nations would find refuge (Mk. 4:32).

17:24 The low tree which is exalted speaks of Christ; the dry tree which will flourish was understood by Jesus as a reference to Himself on the cross (Lk. 23:31). There, as also explained in Is. 53, He appeared to be a “dry tree”, a man dying without any children; but through that death, He flourished into many children, in us who have believed in Him and been born anew as God’s children.

CHAPTER 18 Sep. 22***The Justice of God's Ways***

The word of Yahweh came to me again, saying, ² What do you mean, that you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge?

³ As I live says the Lord Yahweh, you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. ⁴ Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins, he shall die. ⁵ But if a man is just, and does that which is lawful and right, ⁶ and has not eaten on the mountains, neither has lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither has defiled his neighbour's wife, neither has come near to a woman in her impurity, ⁷ and has not wronged any but has restored to the debtor his pledge, has taken nothing by robbery, has given his bread to the hungry and has covered the naked with a garment; ⁸ he who has not given forth on interest neither has taken any increase, who has withdrawn his hand from iniquity, has executed true justice between man and man, ⁹ has walked in My statutes, and has kept My commandments, to deal truly: he is just,

he shall surely live, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁰ If he fathers a son who is a robber, a shedder of blood, and who does any one of these things, ¹¹ and who does not any of those obligations, but even has eaten on the mountains and defiled his neighbour's wife, ¹² has wronged the poor and needy, has taken by robbery, has not restored the pledge and has lifted up his eyes to the idols, has committed abomination, ¹³ has given forth on interest, and has taken increase: shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominations. He shall surely die; his blood shall be on him. ¹⁴ Now, behold, if he fathers a son, who sees all his father's sins which he has done, and sees, and does not such like; ¹⁵ who has not eaten on the mountains, neither has lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, has not defiled his neighbour's wife, ¹⁶ neither has wronged any, has not taken anything to pledge, neither has taken by robbery, but has given his bread to the hungry and has clothed the naked; ¹⁷ who has not oppressed the poor, who has not received interest nor increase, has kept My commandments, has walked in My statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of

18:4 The Jews of Ezekiel's time felt they weren't bad people, but were unjustly suffering the effects of their fathers' sins. The Hebrew word translated "soul" here has a wide range of meaning, but generally it refers to the human person. The person who sins will die. The soul therefore isn't something inherently immortal. This is a pagan idea which has sadly been accepted by some Christian traditions.

18:14 Note the double usage of the word "sees". He sees the sins, and then he really sees them, and doesn't do them. This is how we must be in our registering of the fact that sin really brings death. We can know that sin brings death as theory; and we can *really* know it.

his father, he shall surely live. ¹⁸ As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother, and did that which is not good among his people, see, he shall die in his iniquity. ¹⁹ Yet you say, Why doesn't the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son has done that which is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes, and has done them, he shall surely live. ²⁰ The soul who sins, he shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be on him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be on him. ²¹ But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all My statutes and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. ²² None of his transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he has done he shall live. ²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? says the Lord Yahweh; and not rather that he

should return from his way, and live? ²⁴ But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die. ²⁵ Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not fair. Hear now, house of Israel: Is My way not fair? Aren't your ways unfair? ²⁶ When the righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and dies therein; in his iniquity that he has done shall he die. ²⁷ Again, when the wicked man turns away from his wickedness that he has committed and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. ²⁸ Because he considers and turns away from all his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not fair. House of Israel, aren't My

18:20 This simple truth demonstrates that the idea of suffering because of the sins of another person in another life is simply not true; we are judged for our own sins and not those of others. This can also psychologically free a person from the tendency to apply to ourselves 'guilt by association' for others' sins. However, it's also true that we can suffer the *effects* of others' sins, and the Bible contains examples of this, not least our suffering the effect of Adam's sin. But we are personally judged only for our own sins. We need to draw this line very clearly in our self-examination; between the suffering we experience as a result of others' dysfunctions and sins, and that which is in response to our personal sins.

18:22 *Remembered against him* – An implication that in some sense, at the day of judgment, there will be a 'going through' with the wicked of all their sins; whereas for the righteous, these will not be remembered and instead their good works will be recounted to them (:24). The parable of Mt. 25:36-44 says as much.

18:29 Working through the logic here, the answer to the 'God's not fair!' syndrome is to reflect deeper upon our own sinfulness, and the simple fact that sin nets death.

ways fair? Aren't your ways unfair?³⁰ Therefore I will judge you, house of Israel, each one according to his ways, says the Lord Yahweh. Return, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.³¹ Cast away from you all your transgressions in which you have transgressed; and make yourself a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, house of Israel?³² For I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, says the Lord Yahweh: therefore turn yourselves, and live.

CHAPTER 19 Sep. 23

Lamentation for Judah's Princes

Moreover, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel² and say, What was your mother? A lioness: she couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she nourished her cubs.³ She brought up one of her cubs: he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.⁴ The nations also heard of him; he was caught in their pit; and they brought him with hooks

to the land of Egypt.⁵ Now when she saw that she had waited and her hope was lost, then she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion.⁶ He went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.⁷ He knew their palaces and laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and its fullness, because of the noise of his roaring.⁸ Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces; and they spread their net over him; he was caught in their pit.⁹ They put him in a cage with hooks and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into strongholds, that his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel.¹⁰ Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard planted by the waters. It was fruitful and full of branches because of the many waters.¹¹ It had strong rods for the sceptres of those who bore rule, and their height was exalted among the thick boughs, and they were seen in their height with the multitude of

18:32 God has no pleasure in punishing the wicked; rather do they punish themselves. He's not some capricious deity who takes pleasure in using His omnipotence to make His opponents suffer. His dislike of punishing the wicked is proof enough that "hell" doesn't refer to any concept of eternal, conscious torment of the wicked; Biblically, *sheol* (the word translated "hell" in some Bibles) is the same word translated "the grave". Death is the punishment for sin, not eternal torment.

19:2 The lioness represents Judah or Jerusalem.

19:3 *She brought up one of her cubs* – Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, whose father was conquered and killed by Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt.

19:5 *Took another of her cubs* – Jehoiakim, after Jehoahaz had been taken to Egypt (:4).

19:6 *He went up and down among the lions* – Jehoiakim acted like the leaders ["lions"] around him in the Gentile world.

19:11 A reference to Zedekiah and his sons; but Zedekiah became proud, was broken down by the Babylonians and Jerusalem was burnt (:12). Zedekiah comes over in

their branches. ¹² But it was plucked up in fury, it was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong rods were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them. ¹³ Now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. ¹⁴ Fire is gone out of the rods of its branches, it has devoured its fruit, so that there is in it no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

CHAPTER 20 Secp. 24

Judah and Their Rebellion

It happened in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of Yahweh and they sat before me. ² The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ³ Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Is it to inquire of Me that you have come? As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, I will not be inquired of by you. ⁴ Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Cause

them to know the abominations of their fathers; ⁵ and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: In the day when I chose Israel, and swore to the seed of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them saying, I am Yahweh your God; ⁶ in that day I swore to them, to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. ⁷ I said to them, Throw away every man the abominations of his eyes, and don't defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God. ⁸ But they rebelled against Me, and would not listen to Me; they didn't throw away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said I would pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. ⁹ But I worked for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among which they were, in whose

Jeremiah as a weak man when it came to doing the right thing; it seems he wanted to obey God's word through Jeremiah, but feared the opinion of the princes and that the Babylonians might abuse him (Jer. 38:19-24). However, this verse fills out the picture – his fear of the opinion of others was due to his pride. We may appear humble, but if we are only so because we are image conscious – then in fact we are proud.

20:3 *Is it to inquire of Me?* – We can come to God's word in the Bible or bow in prayer before Him, but have our minds already made up, and not actually be seeking Him and His perspective at all. To truly "seek" God as we are often exhorted is not at all easy.

20:8 The degree to which righteousness is imputed to us is hard to feel. Dt. 32:12 states that there was no strange God with Israel – but here we read that they took the idols of Egypt with them, as confirmed in Acts 7:43. God counted wayward Israel as righteous after their Red Sea baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2); at that time, as Balaam said, God did not see iniquity in Israel, nor behold the perversity that was in Jacob (Num. 23:21).

sight I made Myself known to them in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.¹⁰ So I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.¹¹ I gave them My statutes and showed them My ordinances, which if a man does, he shall live in them.¹² Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies them.¹³ But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They didn't walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances, which if a man keep, he shall live in them; and My Sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I said I would pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to consume them.¹⁴ But I worked for My name's sake that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I brought them out.¹⁵ Moreover also I swore to them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands;¹⁶ because they rejected My ordinances, and didn't walk in My statutes, and profaned My Sabbaths: for their heart went after their

idols.¹⁷ Nevertheless My eye spared them and I didn't destroy them, neither did I make a full end of them in the wilderness.¹⁸ I said to their children in the wilderness, Don't walk in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols.¹⁹ I am Yahweh your God. Walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them;²⁰ and make My Sabbaths holy; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am Yahweh your God.²¹ But the children rebelled against Me; they didn't walk in My statutes, neither kept My ordinances to do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them: they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I said that I would pour out My wrath upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness.²² Nevertheless I withdrew My hand, and worked for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I brought them forth.²³ Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations, and disperse them through the countries;²⁴ because they had not executed My ordinances but had re-

20:9 *I made Myself known to them in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt* – Our exodus from the world at baptism, which is our Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1,2), is a witness to the world around us. Our conversion to Christ therefore cannot be unnoticed by the world, there must be a visible element to it.

20:12 *A sign between Me and them* – The Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel, not between God and Gentile believers today.

20:22 God swore that He would destroy Israel in the wilderness (:21); but God 'withdrew His hand', He took back this promise. Likewise God said He would destroy Israel in Egypt (:8). But He didn't (:9). Clearly enough God is willing to change His intended judgments of His people, so sensitive is He to their repentance and spirituality.

jected My statutes and had profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. ²⁵ Moreover also I gave them statutes that were not good, and ordinances in which they should not live; ²⁶ and I polluted them in their own gifts, because they caused their children to pass through the fire, that I might make them desolate; to the end that they might know that I am Yahweh. ²⁷ Therefore son of man speak to the house of Israel and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: In this, moreover, have your fathers blasphemed Me, in that they have committed a trespass against Me. ²⁸ For when I had brought them into the land which I swore to give to them, then they saw every high hill and every thick tree, and they offered there their sacrifices and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there also they made their pleasant aroma, and they poured out there their drink offerings. ²⁹ Then I said to them, What does the high place where you go mean? So its name is called Bamah to this day.

Restoration

³⁰ Therefore tell the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Do

you pollute yourselves in the way of your fathers? and do you play the prostitute after their abominations? ³¹ When you offer your gifts, when you make your sons to pass through the fire, do you pollute yourselves with all your idols to this day? Shall I be inquired of by you, house of Israel? As I live says the Lord Yahweh, I will not be inquired of by you; ³² and that which comes into your mind shall not be at all, in that you say, We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. ³³ As I live says the Lord Yahweh, surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out will I be king over you. ³⁴ I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; ³⁵ and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶ Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, says the Lord Yahweh. ³⁷ I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you

20:25 An example of how God confirms people in the downward spiral they choose. Likewise :26 implies that God led His people into idolatry in order to make them desolate.

20:34 The mighty hand and stretched out arm of God was available to bring Judah out of Babylon – but most of them preferred to stay there. The wonderful possibility of a new covenant (:37) went unrealized – to be deferred until the true Israel of God are gathered home in our last days.

20:37 *The bond of the covenant* – The Hebrew translated “bond” is literally a fetter, a tie that binds, that restricts. To be in covenant relationship therefore means that we are

into the bond of the covenant;³⁸ and I will purge out from among you the rebels and those who disobey against Me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they live, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am Yahweh.

³⁹ As for you, house of Israel, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Go, serve each one his idols, and hereafter also, if you will not listen to Me; but My holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and with your idols.

⁴⁰ For in My holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them, serve Me in the land. There will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first fruits of your offerings, with all your holy things.

⁴¹ As a pleasant aroma will I accept you when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the

countries in which you have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you in the sight of the nations.⁴² You shall know that I am Yahweh when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country which I swore to give to your fathers.⁴³ There you shall remember your ways and all your doings, in which you have polluted yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that you have committed.⁴⁴ You shall know that I am Yahweh when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, you house of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh.

Against the South

⁴⁵ The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁴⁶ Son of man, set your face toward the south and direct your word toward the south, and proph-

not free to do as we like; there is an element of regulation in our lives, but of course it has a purpose – to bring us to God's Kingdom and keep us within the sphere of relationship with Him. But a covenant is a two way thing. This tie that binds applies to God too; hence the wonderful, oft-repeated idea of His *chesed*, His covenant faithfulness to us His people. He likewise carries a kind of responsibility to us.

20:38 *They shall not enter into the land of Israel* – Ezekiel told the captives during the early stages of their captivity that the false prophets and “rebels” amongst them would receive the condemnation and judgment of not returning to the land (also in 13:9). And yet when the command came to return to the land, most of the people chose to remain in Babylon – and therefore they chose their own condemnation. They were a “rebellious house” (2:3). For they were aware from Ezekiel's words that not returning to the land was God's condemnation. Those who will not be in the Kingdom will be those who chose not to be there – all who truly love the Lord's appearing will be accepted (2 Tim. 4:8).

20:40 *There will I accept them* – As in :41. This ‘acceptance’ was to be when Judah returned from captivity, and the same word is found in 43:27 where a temple was to be built and sacrifices offered, “and I will accept you”. The intention clearly was that the temple was to be built upon Judah's return from captivity; but they failed to live up to the wonderful potential enabled.

esy against the forest of the field in the south;⁴⁷ and tell the forest of the south, Hear the word of Yahweh: Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree. The flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burnt thereby.⁴⁸ All flesh shall see that I, Yahweh, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.⁴⁹ Then I said, Ah Lord Yahweh! they say of me, Isn't he a speaker of parables?

CHAPTER 21 Sep. 25

The Sword of Babylon

The word of Yahweh came to me saying,² Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and drop your word toward the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel;³ and tell the land of Israel, Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, and will draw forth My sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked.⁴ Seeing then that I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall My sword go forth out of its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north:⁵ and all flesh shall know that I, Yahweh, have drawn forth My sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more.⁶ Sigh therefore, you son of man; with the breaking of your thighs and with bitterness you will sigh before their eyes.⁷ It shall be, when they

tell you, 'Why do you sigh?' that you shall say, Because of the news, for it is coming. Every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, every spirit shall faint and all knees shall be weak as water. It is coming, and it shall be done, says the Lord Yahweh.⁸ The word of Yahweh came to me saying,⁹ Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says Yahweh: Say, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also polished.¹⁰ It is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is polished that it may be as lightning. Shall we then laugh? The rod of My son condemns every tree.¹¹ It is given to be polished, that it may be ready for use: the sword, it is sharpened, yes, it is polished, to give it into the hand of the killer.¹² Cry and wail, son of man; for it is on My people, it is on all the princes of Israel: they are delivered over to the sword with My people; strike therefore on your thigh.¹³ For I am putting My people to the test, and if they refuse to repent, all these things will happen to them, says the Lord Yahweh.¹⁴ You therefore, son of man, prophesy and strike your hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the deadly wounded: it is the sword of the great slaughter which surrounds them.¹⁵ I have set the threatening sword against all their gates, that their hearts may tremble, and their ruins be multiplied: ah! it is made as lightning, it is pointed for slaughter.¹⁶ Gather

20:49 The fact that his audience disregarded and mocked his message was so hard for Ezekiel to endure. No true preacher of the Gospel hasn't had the same feeling at times.

yourselves together, go to the right, set yourselves in array, go to the left, wherever your face is set. ¹⁷ I will also strike My hands together, and I will cause My wrath to rest: I, Yahweh, have spoken it. ¹⁸ The word of Yahweh came to me again saying, ¹⁹ Also, you son of man, appoint two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come; they both shall come forth out of one land. Mark out a place, mark it out at the head of the way to the city. ²⁰ You shall appoint a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the fortified. ²¹ For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use fortune telling. He shook the arrows back and forth, he consulted the images, he looked in the liver. ²² In his right hand was the forecast for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the battle cry, to

set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build forts. ²³ It shall seem to them as a false forecast in their opinion. They have sworn solemn oaths, but he brings their guilt to remembrance, that they may be caught. ²⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you have made your wickedness to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered so that in all your doings your sins appear; because you have come to memory, you shall be taken with the hand. ²⁵ You, deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the iniquity of the end, ²⁶ thus says the Lord Yahweh: Remove the mitre and take off the crown; this shall be no more the same; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. ²⁷ I will overturn, overturn, overturn it. This also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

21:26 *The mitre... the crown* – The implication is that the King to be deposed was a King-Priest, as if the priestly and kingly lines had crossed in his genealogy. This points forward to the Lord Jesus.

Mary understood that through her conception, God had put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted *them* of low station in this life (Lk. 1:52). This clearly alludes to Ez. 21:26, where the princes are to be put down and *him* that is low is to be exalted, i.e. Messiah. But Mary felt that she had been exalted; thus she shared Messiah's exaltation because He was in her and she in Him. We too are in Him, and we should feel something of the pride and joy, along with the suffering, that comes from that identification. She parallels *her* lowly estate with *them* of low station in this life (Lk. 1:48,52) – perhaps referring to her and Jesus? Yet despite all her undoubted spiritual perception in her song of praise, she didn't have totally pure understanding. It seems from her allusion in Lk. 1:52 to Ez. 21:26 [the mighty being put down from their thrones and the humble one exalted] that she thought that Ezekiel's prophesy about Messiah's restoration of the Kingdom had already been fulfilled in her conception of Jesus. It could be that she was so sure that her child would one day do this that she saw the time of the coming of "Him whose right it is" as being right there and then; and yet we know that it is in fact still future.

Against Ammon

²⁸ You, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh concerning the children of Ammon, and concerning their reproach; and say, A sword, a sword is drawn, for the slaughter it is polished, to cause it to devour, that it may be as lightning; ²⁹ while they see for you false visions, while they forecast lies to you, to lay you on the necks of the wicked who are deadly wounded, whose day has come in the time of the iniquity of the end. ³⁰ Cause it to return into its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your birth, will I judge you. ³¹ I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath; and I will deliver you into the hand of cruel men, skilful to destroy. ³² You shall be for fuel to the fire; your blood shall be in the midst of the land; you shall be remembered no more: for I, Yahweh, have spoken it.

CHAPTER 22 Sep. 26***The Sins of Israel and Jerusalem***

The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² You, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the city of blood? So now cause her to know all her abominations. ³ You shall say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: The city sheds blood in the midst of her so that her time of judgment may come, and makes idols against herself to defile herself! ⁴ You have become guilty in the blood that you have shed, and are defiled in your idols which you have made; and you have caused your days to draw near, and have come even to your year of judgment. Therefore have I made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. ⁵ Those who are near and those who are far from you shall mock you, you infamous one and full of tumult. ⁶ Behold, the princes of Israel, each according to his power, have been in you to shed blood. ⁷ In you have they set light by father and mother;

21:27 The throne of the kings of Judah was to be no more until Christ, the rightful King of Israel, returns. He is the One who was low who has been exalted on high (:26). The triple ‘overturning’ could refer to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, the Roman destruction in AD70, and a final overturning of the city in our times, just prior to Christ’s return as King of Israel. Alternatively, the triple ‘overturning’ refers to the three invasions of Judah made by Babylon. The future Kingdom of Christ is to be a re-establishment of the Kingdom of God as it once was, based around Jerusalem. The return of Christ is spoken of as the restoration of that Kingdom in Acts 1:6, where the disciples are basically asking when this prophecy of Ez. 21:27 will be fulfilled.

22:2 *Judge the city of blood... cause her to know all her abominations* – The purpose of judgment is to reveal sin to those being judged. We must face up to our sins, know them for what they are – either now, or in the process of rejection at the final day of judgment.

22:3 *So that her time of judgment may come, and makes idols against herself to defile herself* – Notice how the judgment and defiling were brought about by her own behaviour. Those who are condemned have condemned themselves (see :31).

in the midst of you have they dealt by oppression with the foreigner; in you have they wronged the fatherless and the widow. ⁸ You have despised My holy things, and have profaned My Sabbaths. ⁹ Slanderous men have been in you to shed blood; and in you they have eaten on the mountains: in the midst of you they have committed lewdness. ¹⁰ In you have they uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in you have they humbled her who was unclean in her impurity. ¹¹ One has committed abomination with his neighbour's wife, another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter. ¹² In you have they taken bribes to shed blood. You have taken interest and increase, you have greedily gained from your neighbours by oppression and have forgotten Me, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹³ Behold, therefore, I have struck My hand at your dishonest gain which you have made, and at the blood which has been shed in the midst of you. ¹⁴ Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong,

in the days that I shall deal with you? I, Yahweh, have spoken it, and will do it. ¹⁵ I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries; and I will consume your filthiness out of you. ¹⁶ You shall be profaned in yourself, in the sight of the nations; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ¹⁷ The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹⁸ Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me: all of them are brass, tin, iron and lead in the midst of the furnace; they are the dross of silver. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰ As they gather silver, brass, iron, lead and tin into the midst of the furnace to blow the fire onto it to melt it; so will I gather you in My anger and in My wrath, and I will lay you there, and melt you. ²¹ Yes, I will gather you, and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst. ²² As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so you will be melted in its midst; and you will

22:9 Because gossip is such an epitome of the flesh, it is ranked here along with sins like fornication, idolatry and murder. Other scripture teaches that to hate your brother in your heart was and is as bad as murdering him (Mt. 5:22; 1 Jn. 3:15). Here, the connection is made between gossip and murder. To gossip against our brother is to hate him.

22:15 *I will consume your filthiness out of you* – This suggests that as the day of the second coming approaches, Israel will be progressively purged and moved closer and closer towards repentance. It is our duty to show them the Gospel so that they can make sense of their sufferings and see what those sufferings are intended by God to lead them towards.

22:22 This wrath of God was still ultimately constructive – because through the heat of the fire of His wrath, God intended to purge out the dross from His people, so that they might be saved. A very common tragedy in human experience is when people suffer terribly, and yet still don't make the changes God intends. So much suffering, especially of Israel, has in this sense been in vain.

know that I, Yahweh, have poured out My wrath on you. ²³ The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ²⁴ Son of man, tell her, You are a land that is not cleansed nor rained on in the day of indignation. ²⁵ There is a conspiracy of her prophets in its midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey: they have devoured souls; they take treasure and precious things; they have made her widows many in its midst. ²⁶ Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things: they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the unclean and the clean and have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. ²⁷ Her princes in its midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood and to destroy people so that they may get dishonest gain. ²⁸ Her prophets have plastered for them with whitewash, seeing false visions and foretelling lies to them, saying, Thus says the Lord Yahweh, when Yahweh has not spoken. ²⁹ The people of the land have used oppression and committed robbery; yes, they have troubled the poor and needy and have oppressed the foreigner wrongfully. ³⁰ I sought for a man among them, who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that

I should not destroy it; but I found none. ³¹ Therefore have I poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath. Their own way have I brought on their heads, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 23 Sep. 27

Samaria and Jerusalem — Sisters in Prostitution

The word of Yahweh came again to me saying, ² Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: ³ and they played the prostitute in Egypt; they played the prostitute in their youth; there were their breasts pressed, and there were fondled the breasts of their virginity. ⁴ Their names were Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister: and they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem Oholibah. ⁵ Oholah played the prostitute when she was Mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours, ⁶ who were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. ⁷ She bestowed her prostitution on them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and on whoever she doted, with all their idols she defiled herself. ⁸ Neither has she left her prostitution since

22:26 See on 42:20.

22:30 Even at this dire time of Judah's weakness, God would have changed His entire program of judgment for the sake of just one man. But there was none, it seems Ezekiel himself wasn't passionate enough even. Thus God says He has consumed them in His wrath (:31), whereas Moses 'turned' God from executing His wrath as He planned (Ps. 78:38; 106:23).

the days of Egypt; for in her youth they lay with her, and they fondled the breasts of her virginity; and they poured out their prostitution on her.⁹ Therefore I delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians on whom she doted.¹⁰ These uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters and her they killed with the sword, and she became a byword among women; for they executed judgments on her.¹¹ Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet was she more corrupt in her doting than she, and in her prostitution which was more than the prostitution of her sister.¹² She doted on the Assyrians, governors and rulers, her neighbours, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men.¹³ I saw that she was defiled; they both took one way.¹⁴ She increased her

prostitution; for she saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion,¹⁵ dressed with girdles on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them princes to look on, after the likeness of the Babylonians in Chaldea, the land of their birth.¹⁶ As soon as she saw them she doted on them, and sent messengers to them into Chaldea.¹⁷ The Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their prostitution, and she was polluted with them, and her soul was alienated from them.¹⁸ So she displayed her prostitution, and uncovered her nakedness: then My soul was alienated from her, like as My soul was alienated from her sister.¹⁹ Yet she multiplied her prostitution, remembering the days of her youth, in which she had played the prostitute in the land

23:8 *Neither has she left her prostitution since the days of Egypt* – A reference to how Israel took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (16:8,9), just as we can take this world's idols with us through the waters of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

23:11 Judah (the two tribe Kingdom) are portrayed here as more sinful than Israel (the ten tribe Kingdom), although the historical records in Kings and Chronicles suggest that Judah had more spiritual Kings than did Israel. We must conclude that occasional good leadership doesn't therefore affect the entire community. Seeing relationship with God is so intensely personal, good leadership can only be of limited value, and it therefore shouldn't be over-emphasized as the reason why a community are righteous or not.

23:14 *Men portrayed on the wall* – The context suggests this was some kind of visual pornography. There's a lot of language in these verses which speak of her attraction to them visually. The impression is given of a totally superficial woman who became sexually obsessed – when married to God Himself. This is how we can become, unless we understand our covenant relationship with God to utterly preclude any other relationship.

23:19 *Remembering the days of her youth* – Israel's memories and perception of their time in Egypt were very warped. It was a furnace of suffering for them, and yet they remembered fondly the food which the Egyptians ate (Num. 11:5), and the gods they worshipped. We need to understand our life before baptism for what it was, and not keep hankering after it.

of Egypt. ²⁰ She doted on their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of donkeys, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. ²¹ Thus you called to memory the lewdness of your youth, in the fondling of your bosom by the Egyptians for the breasts of your youth. ²² Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will raise up your lovers against you, from whom your soul is alienated, and I will bring them against you on every side: ²³ the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and rulers all of them, princes and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. ²⁴ They shall come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons, and with a company of peoples; they shall set themselves against you with buckler and shield and helmet all around; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgments. ²⁵ I will set My jealousy against you, and they shall deal with you in fury; they shall take away your nose and your ears; and your residue shall fall by the sword. They shall take your sons and your daughters; and your residue shall be devoured by the fire. ²⁶ They

shall also strip you of your clothes, and take away your beautiful jewels. ²⁷ Thus will I make your lewdness to cease from you, and your prostitution brought from the land of Egypt; so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them, nor remember Egypt any more. ²⁸ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will deliver you into the hand of those whom you hate, into the hand of those from whom your soul is alienated; ²⁹ and they shall deal with you in hatred, and shall take away all your labour, and shall leave you naked and bare; and the nakedness of your prostitution shall be uncovered, both your lewdness and your prostitution. ³⁰ These things shall be done to you because you have played the prostitute after the nations, and because you are polluted with their idols. ³¹ You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore will I give her cup into your hand. ³² Thus says the Lord Yahweh: You will drink of your sister's cup, which is deep and large; you will be ridiculed and held in derision; it contains much. ³³ You shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of your sister Samaria. ³⁴ You shall even drink it and

23:22 *Your lovers... from whom your soul is alienated* – No illicit relationship can ever last, and the supposed love always turns to hate or alienation. Israel are the classic case – it was the nations whose gods she worshipped who came and destroyed her without mercy.

23:27 *Your prostitution brought from the land of Egypt* – It is repeatedly emphasized that Israel took Egypt's idols with them (16:8,9 and elsewhere in this chapter). Yet Ezekiel is writing centuries afterwards. The faithless attitude Israel had when they left Egypt influenced their spiritual walk afterwards. How we start our walk with God is so important; and we should be very aware of this in raising children and in our attitude to new converts within the church.

drain it out, and you shall gnaw the broken pieces of it, and shall tear off your breasts; for I have spoken it, says the Lord Yahweh. ³⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you have forgotten Me, and cast Me behind your back, therefore you also shall bear your lewdness and your prostitution. ³⁶ Yahweh said moreover to me: Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. ³⁷ For they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands; and with their idols have they committed adultery; and they have also caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to their idols to be devoured. ³⁸ Moreover this they have done to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned My Sabbaths. ³⁹ For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into My sanctuary to profane it; and behold, thus have they done in the midst of My house. ⁴⁰ Furthermore you have sent for men who come from far, to whom a messenger

was sent, and behold, they came; for whom you did wash yourself, paint your eyes, and decorate yourself with ornaments, ⁴¹ and sat on a stately bed, with a table prepared before it, whereupon you set My incense and My oil. ⁴² The voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with men of the common sort were brought drunkards from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on both their hands, and beautiful crowns on their heads. ⁴³ Then I said of her who was an adulteress of old, Now will they play the prostitute with her, and she with them. ⁴⁴ They went in to her, as they go in to a prostitute: so went they in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women. ⁴⁵ Righteous men, they shall judge them with the judgment of adulteresses, and with the judgment of women who shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. ⁴⁶ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will bring up a company against them, and will give them to be tossed back and forth and robbed. ⁴⁷ The company shall stone them with stones,

23:34 Ezekiel speaks of how every act of idolatry was seen by God as the fickle wife of a faithful husband deceitfully liaising with another, worthless, man. And there is a similar shocking terror associated with our infidelities to the Lord who bought us for His own. The self-hatred of repentant Israel before they accept the new covenant is described with a purposefully terrible idiom: *a woman plucking off her own breasts*. These words must be seen in the context of Israel offering these parts of her body to the hands of the Gentiles (:3,8). And now, with her own hands, Israel would fain pluck off her breasts in realization of her degradation. This self-loathing must be part of every true repentance; for we too, in advance of Israel, ought to have repented a like repentance, and entered the very same covenant. Just reflect upon the self-loathing in repentance of 6:9; 20:43; Job 40:4; 42:6. This is how sin is serious. Alternatively, we can read this self-hatred as an Old Testament form of what Jesus repeatedly warned about – the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” which will be experienced by those rejected at the judgment seat (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

and dispatch them with their swords; they shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. ⁴⁸ Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. ⁴⁹ They shall recompense your lewdness on you, and you shall bear the sins of your idols; and you shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 24 Sep. 28

The Cauldron

Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, write the name of the day, this self-same day: the king of Babylon came close to Jerusalem this day. ³ Utter a parable to the rebellious house and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Set on the cauldron, set it on, and also pour water into it. ⁴ Gather its pieces into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. ⁵ Take the choice of the flock, and also a pile of wood for the bones under the cauldron; make it boil well; yes, let its bones be boiled in its midst. ⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Woe to the city of blood, to

the cauldron whose rust is therein, and whose rust is not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece; no lot is fallen on it. ⁷ For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it on the bare rock; she didn't pour it on the ground, to cover it with dust. ⁸ So that it may cause wrath to come up to take vengeance, I have set her blood on the bare rock, that it should not be covered. ⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Woe to the city of blood! I also will make the pile great. ¹⁰ Heap on the wood, make the fire hot, boil well the flesh, make thick the broth, and let the bones be burned. ¹¹ Then set it empty on its coals, that it may be hot and its brass may be hot, so that its filthiness may be molten in it, that its rust may be consumed. ¹² She has wearied herself with lies; yet her great rust doesn't go forth out of her; her rust doesn't go forth by fire. ¹³ In your filthiness is lewdness: because I have cleansed you and you weren't cleansed, you shall not be cleansed from your filthiness any more, until I have caused My wrath toward you to rest. ¹⁴ I, Yahweh, have spoken it: it shall happen, and I will do it: I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I relent; according to your ways and according to your doings

24:7 *She set it on the bare rock* – But :8 says that *God* made her do this with her blood, so that she would incite His wrath. Here we have an example of how God confirms people in the sin they choose to commit. There's both a downward spiral and an upward one, we can never take a break from our spiritual journey, constantly we are being confirmed in the direction we choose.

24:12 *Wearied herself with lies* – The wearying with lies suggests that it was due to their listening to false prophets rather than the true word of God that the fire did not cleanse them.

shall they judge you, says the Lord Yahweh.

he Death of Ezekiel's Wife

¹⁵ Also the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹⁶ Son of man, behold, I will take away from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke: yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, neither shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead; bind your headdress on you, and put your shoes on your feet, don't cover your lips nor eat men's bread. ¹⁸ So I spoke to the people in the morning; and at evening my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. ¹⁹ The people said to me, Won't you tell us what these things are to us, that you do so? ²⁰ Then I said to them, The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ²¹ Speak to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pities; and

your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind shall fall by the sword. ²² You shall do as I have done: you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. ²³ Your ornaments shall be on your heads, and your shoes on your feet: you shall not mourn nor weep; but you shall pine away in your iniquities, and groan one toward another. ²⁴ Thus Ezekiel shall be a sign to you; according to all that he has done, you will do. When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord Yahweh. ²⁵ You, son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart, their sons and their daughters, ²⁶ that in that day he who escapes shall come to you, to cause you to hear it with your ears? ²⁷ In that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped, and you shall speak, and be no more mute. So you will be a sign to them; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

24:16 *The desire of your eyes* – The implication is that Ezekiel dearly loved his wife and found her very attractive. Yet just as he so loved her, so Judah loved Yahweh's temple (:21). We must realize that Judah weren't atheists, they hadn't rejected Yahweh. On one hand they loved Him, but they loved their other gods too.

24:23 The emphasis is very much on the psychological suffering of the condemned Israel. Ezekiel wasn't allowed to weep, which is the natural expression of grief. It therefore bottled up within him, causing deep psychological pain; in order to present Israel with an illustration of how they would feel under God's judgment. The punishment of the rejected at the final judgment will be "gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 24:51), which is again a picture of anger with oneself and internal torment at what might have been, the eternal future which they chose to miss. The wicked will not be punished with literal fire or torture; the internal psychological pain will be far worse. These pictures of condemnation are frequent in the Bible; not to scare us into submission, but to bring before us the eternal consequence of the decisions we take in this life, for the flesh or for the Spirit.

24:27 See on 29:21.

CHAPTER 25 Sep. 29***Against Ammon***

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ² Son of man, set your face toward the people of Ammon, and prophesy against them: ³ and tell the people of Ammon, Hear the word of the Lord Yahweh: Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Because you said, Aha, against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was made desolate; and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity: ⁴ therefore behold, I will deliver you to the people of the east for a possession, and they shall set their encampments in you, and make their dwellings in you; they shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. ⁵ I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the people of Ammon a resting place for flocks: and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁶ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you have clapped your hands, stamped with the feet and rejoiced with all the despite of your soul against the land of Israel; ⁷ therefore behold, I have stretched out My hand upon you and will deliver you for a spoil to the nations; and I will cut you off from the

peoples, and I will cause you to perish out of the countries. I will destroy you; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁸ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because Moab and Seir say, Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations; ⁹ therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kirjathaim, ¹⁰ to the people of the east, to go against the children of Ammon; and I will give them for a possession, that the people of Ammon may not be remembered among the nations. ¹¹ I will execute judgments on Moab; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

Against Edom

¹² Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance and has greatly offended and revenged himself on them; ¹³ therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, I will stretch out My hand on Edom, and will cut off man and animal from it; and I will make it desolate: from Teman even to Dedan shall they fall by the sword. ¹⁴ I will lay My vengeance

25:11 *They shall know that I am Yahweh* – God judged nations in order that men might know Him as Yahweh (see too 28:22; 30:19). But did they? Often God states His intentions and wishes for people's faith as if they have been realized. In this we can see the hopefulness of God, like the shepherd who searches for the lost sheep with the attitude that he will search until he finds it (Lk. 15:4). We should have this hopefulness in all our witnessing to others.

25:14 *By the hand of My people Israel* – The Law of Moses had commanded Israel not to hate Edomites (Dt. 23:7); so they were intended to carry out this judgment with no personal hatred, just as at times we have to. Despite Josephus claiming that the Maccabees fulfilled this prophecy, Obadiah 21 speaks of how this judgment will be fulfilled in the last days around the second coming of Christ (cp. Is. 63:1).

ance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel; and they shall do in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; and they shall know My vengeance, says the Lord Yahweh.

Against the Philistines

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with despite of soul to destroy for the old enmity; ¹⁶ therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold, I will stretch out My hand on the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the rest of the sea coast. ¹⁷ I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes; and they shall know that I am Yahweh, when I shall lay My vengeance on them.

CHAPTER 26 Sep. 30

Against Tyre

It happened in the eleventh year in the first day of the month that

the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken! The gate of the peoples is now is turned to me; I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste: ³ therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold, I am against you, Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. ⁴ They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her and make her a bare rock. ⁵ She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it, says the Lord Yahweh; and she shall become a spoil to the nations. ⁶ Her daughters who are in the field shall be slain with the sword; and they shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁷ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will bring on Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, from the north, with horses, with chariots,

25:15 *For the old enmity* – A reference to the Jacob:Esau hatred, which will finally be resolved in Jacob's favour – by God's grace alone.

25:16 *The rest of the sea coast* – The Hebrew word for 'Philistine' is the same as that now used for 'Palestinian'; the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip are in exactly the geographical location spoken of here.

26:7 This speaks of how Babylon will surround and destroy Tyre. But this never happened in recorded history – it was done by Alexander and the Greeks much later. 29:17-20 explains that because the King of Babylon laboured so hard to take Tyre (even though he never actually succeeded) God would give him the land of Egypt as a reward. This doesn't mean that the word of prophecy failed. Rather does it mean that God is open to a rethinking of plans and futures in accord with human response. Although all the conditions for Tyre's fall and Babylon's victory against her aren't given, evidently there must have been such unrecorded conditions; and they weren't fulfilled, hence Tyre was spared destruction by the Babylonians, and yet they were 'rewarded' for their part in the situation. Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant, but God changed the terms and conditions of his labour. He would not conquer Tyre, but he was given Egypt instead. Is it that God changes His mind? Did someone (of whom

with horsemen and a company, and many people. ⁸ He shall kill your daughters in the field with the sword; and he shall make forts against you, and cast up a mound against you, and raise up the buckler against you. ⁹ He shall set his battering engines against your walls, and with his axes he shall break down your towers. ¹⁰ By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover you. Your walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wagons, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into your gates, as men enter into a city in which is made a breach. ¹¹ With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all your streets; he shall kill your people with the sword; and the pillars of your strength shall go down to the ground. ¹² They shall make a

spoil of your riches, and make a prey of your merchandise; and they shall break down your walls, and destroy your pleasant houses; and they shall lay your stones and your timber and your dust in the midst of the waters. ¹³ I will cause the noise of your songs to cease; the sound of your harps shall be no more heard. ¹⁴ I will make you a bare rock; you shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall be built no more: for I Yahweh have spoken it, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh to Tyre: shall not the islands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when the slaughter is made in the midst of you? ¹⁶ Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and strip off their

there is no record) plead successfully for Tyre, like Lot did unsuccessfully for Sodom? Or did Tyre like Nineveh get to hear of this prophecy, and repent, so it didn't happen? Or is Tyre yet to fall in some last days scenario? Or is it that God tells us something, only a piece of the future at a time, and then we get a fuller picture later on? We do not need to question God's prophesies. We can believe Him each time, and believe the changes He makes as well. Ezekiel has a lot of conditional prophecies – not least the last nine chapters with their description of the temple situation which could have come about if Judah had returned from exile and rebuilt the temple as God intended.

Another approach would be to reconsider our philosophy of history. In this age where science is assumed to have all the answers, the assumption is likewise made that the science of history is somehow complete. But primary sources for ancient history are limited; there are large gaps in ancient history, and primary sources may exist for some incidents which aren't very significant on the larger canvass; and likewise major incidents are at times unnoticed in the sources currently available. So it's possible that Nebuchadnezzar did do to Tyre as required by this prophecy, it's just not recorded; and Alexander also destroyed the city later (this would require special attention to our note on 26:21 about the meaning of the phrase "no more be rebuilt").

26:8, 9 The references to making mounds against Tyre's walls show that the "Tyre" referred to here isn't any island fortification as claimed by some.

26:12 *Lay your stones and your timber and your dust in the midst of the waters* – Alexander the Great broke down Tyre and carefully laid the rubble in the water in order to build a causeway with which to reach the island castle of Tyre which still held out against him.

embroidered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit on the ground and shall tremble every moment, being astonished at you.¹⁷ They shall take up a lamentation over you and tell you, How you are destroyed, who was inhabited by mariners, the renowned city, who was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, who caused their terror to be on all who lived there!

¹⁸ Now shall the islands tremble in the day of your fall; yes, the islands that are in the sea shall be dismayed at your departure.¹⁹ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: When I shall make you a desolate city like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep on you and the great waters shall cover you;²⁰ then will I bring you down with those who descend into the pit, to the people of old time, and will make you to

dwell in the lower parts of the earth, in the places that are desolate of old, with those who go down to the pit, that you be not inhabited; and I will set glory in the land of the living.²¹ I will make you a terror, and you shall no more be rebuilt; though you are sought for, yet you will never be found again, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 27 Oct. 1

Lamentation over Tyre

The word of Yahweh came again to me saying,² You, son of man, take up a lamentation over Tyre,³ and tell Tyre: You who dwell at the entry of the sea, who are the merchant of the peoples to many islands, thus says the Lord Yahweh: You, Tyre, have said, I am perfect in beauty.⁴ Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders have perfected your beauty.⁵ They have made all

26:21 *No more be rebuilt* – This also may have been part of a conditional prophecy – see on :7. It could be that the Biblical Tyre wasn't on the same spot as the city now known as "Tyre". The Hebrew can bear the translation 'Not be built any more', meaning that the building which was then ongoing would end. The same grammatical construction is found in passages like Ex. 9:29, where Moses says that 'As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord ... there will be hail no longer...'. This doesn't mean that there would never be any hail ever again; it means that the current hailstorm would stop. Another example is in Neh. 2:17.

27:3 *Perfect in beauty* – Arrogant self-confidence, opulence, human beauty, human wisdom, praise and respect from others, power... all the things which people so strive after in our society were all obtained to their fullness by Tyre, and yet these are the very things which they were condemned for. Note how the prophets pointed out to Gentile nations their sins and failures before the God of Israel; sin is still felt by God as sin, even if it is committed by those not responsible to His final judgment. It must be so hard for God, feeling all this offence against Him. However, it was Jerusalem which was the city seen by God as "perfect in beauty" (Ps. 50:2); Tyre wasn't simply boastful, but consciously wanted to take over from Jerusalem as God's chosen city. They thought that their wealth and human advantage could buy for them status with God – as people do today. It was Tyre's aspiration to replace Israel as God's people which He found so upsetting – see notes on chapter 28.

your planks of fir trees from Senir; they have taken a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. ⁶ Of the oaks of Bashan have they made your oars; they have made your benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood from the islands of Kittim. ⁷ Of fine linen with embroidered work from Egypt was your sail, that it might be to you for a banner; blue and purple from the islands of Elishah was your awning. ⁸ The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers. Your wise men, Tyre, were in you; they were your pilots. ⁹ The old men of Gebal and the wise men of it were in you, your repairers of ship seams. All the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you to deal in your merchandise. ¹⁰ Persia, Lud and Put were in your army, your men of war. They hung the shield and helmet in you; they set forth your beauty. ¹¹ The men of Arvad with your army were on your walls all around, and heroic men were in your towers; they hung their shields on your walls all around; they have perfected your beauty. ¹² Tarshish was your merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin and lead they traded for your wares. ¹³ Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were your traffickers; they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass for your merchandise. ¹⁴ They of the house

of Togarmah traded for your wares with horses and war horses and mules. ¹⁵ The men of Dedan were your traffickers; many islands were the market under your control. They brought you in exchange horns of ivory and ebony. ¹⁶ Syria was your merchant by reason of the multitude of your handiworks. They traded for your wares with emeralds, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies. ¹⁷ Judah and the land of Israel, they were your traffickers. They traded for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, and confections, honey, oil and balm. ¹⁸ Damascus was your merchant for the multitude of your handiworks, by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches, with the wine of Helbon and white wool. ¹⁹ Vedan and Javan traded with yarn for your wares: bright iron, cassia and calamus were among your merchandise. ²⁰ Dedan was your trafficker in precious cloths for riding. ²¹ Arabia and all the princes of Kedar, they were the merchants of your hand. In lambs, rams, goats, in these were they your merchants. ²² The traffickers of Sheba and Raamah, they were your traffickers. They traded for your wares with the chief of all spices and with all precious stones and gold. ²³ Haran and Canneh and Eden, the traffickers of Sheba, Asshur and Chilmad,

27:17 *Judah and the land of Israel* – Ezekiel would've reflected that this list of good things from his own land was produced at a time of blessing on the land (Dt. 8:8; 32:14); for at his time, the land was desolate and not trading with Tyre. As a young Jew in Babylon, Ezekiel likely knew nothing of Tyre personally, and so the detailed list in this chapter is an example of Divine inspiration giving the Bible writers information which was beyond them personally to amass.

were your traffickers. ²⁴ These were your traffickers in choice wares, in wrappings of blue and embroidered work and in chests of rich clothing, bound with cords and made of cedar, among your merchandise. ²⁵ The ships of Tarshish were your caravans for your merchandise, and you were replenished, and made very glorious in the heart of the seas. ²⁶ Your rowers have brought you into great waters. The east wind has broken you in the heart of the seas. ²⁷ Your riches, your wares, your merchandise, your mariners, your pilots, your repairers of ship hulls and the dealers in your merchandise, and all your men of war who are in you, with all your company which is in the midst of you, shall fall into the heart of the seas in the day of your ruin. ²⁸ At the sound of the cry of your pilots the suburbs shall shake. ²⁹ All who handled the oar, the mariners and all the pilots of the sea shall come down from their ships. They shall stand on the land, ³⁰ and shall cause their voice to be heard over you, and shall cry bitterly and shall cast up dust on their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes; ³¹ and they shall make themselves bald for you, and clothe them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for you in bitterness of soul with bitter mourning. ³² In their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for you and lament over you, saying, Who is there like Tyre, like her who is brought to silence in the midst of the sea? ³³ When your wares went forth out of the seas, you filled many

peoples; you enriched the kings of the earth with the multitude of your riches and of your merchandise. ³⁴ In the time that you were broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, your merchandise and all your company fell in your midst. ³⁵ All the inhabitants of the islands are astonished at you, and their kings are horribly afraid; they are troubled in their face. ³⁶ The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; you are become a terror, and you shall never again have any being.

CHAPTER 28 Oct. 2

Tyre: The Anointed Cherub

The word of Yahweh came again to me saying, ² Son of man, tell the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because your heart is lifted up, and you have said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet you are man, and not God, though you set your heart as the heart of God. ³ Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that is hidden from you. ⁴ By your wisdom and by your understanding you have become rich, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasures. ⁵ By your great wisdom and by your traffic you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches. ⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because you have set your heart as the heart of God, ⁷ therefore, behold, I will bring strangers on you, the terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the

beauty of your wisdom, and they shall defile your brightness. ⁸ They shall bring you down to the pit; and you shall die the death of those who are slain, in the heart of the seas. ⁹ Will you yet say before him who kills you, I am God? But you are man and not God in the hand of him who stabs you. ¹⁰ You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹¹ Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ¹² Son of man, take up a lamentation

over the king of Tyre and tell him, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: You seal up the imitation, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz, emerald, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and beryl. Gold workmanship of tambourines and of pipes was yours. In the day that you were created they were prepared. ¹⁴ I put a terrifying messenger there to guard you. You lived on My holy mountain and walked among

28:13-15 It is wrongly assumed that this refers to Satan once having been in Eden. But the words “devil” and “satan” do not occur in this chapter, nor in the rest of Ezekiel. The context shows this is a prophecy about the King of Tyre; the preceding chapter 27 is an oracle against Tyre, and now chapter 28 speaks specifically about the King of Tyre. Ezekiel chapters 27 and 28 clearly hold together as a literary unit. The city of Tyre and the King of Tyre are described in similar terms, e.g. “perfect in beauty” (compare 27:3 and 28:12; 27:16,17 with 28:13; 27:33 with 28:16). The passage plainly speaks of the King of Tyre, not anything that happened at the beginning of the world. It is commonly believed that Satan was thrown out of heaven into Eden, but this passage says that this person was in Eden before he sinned and was cast out when he sinned. The garden of Eden was on the earth, not in heaven (its boundaries are given in Gen. 2:8-14), therefore the casting out was not out of heaven. The person was to “die the death of the uncircumcised” (:10), but angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35-36). That a man is referred to is confirmed by :9 “you are man”. Verse 2 defines him as the “prince of Tyre”. The Hebrew word for “perfect” is applied to Noah, Abraham, Job and David (Gen. 6: 9; 17:1; Job 1:1; Ps. 18:23 & 25); it doesn’t imply a supernatural being. “You were in Eden” refers to where the king of Tyre was in place, not in time. Pharaoh and Assyria are similarly described as being like trees in Eden, and having these trees in awe of them (31:2,3,8,9,16,18). The trees in Eden are not to be taken literally, they represent the nations whom Pharaoh and Assyria conquered, possibly referring to the fact that they were all within the old geographical boundaries of the garden of Eden. Eden was a geographical area on earth known to Ezekiel’s readers – this is how it is used elsewhere in Ezekiel (27:23; 31:8,9; Is. 51:3; Gen. 13:10). ‘Eden’ was not understood as a historical reference to the garden of Eden in early Genesis, but rather to a known nation / region of Ezekiel’s time. The sin of the King of Tyre is defined in :16-18 as dishonest accumulation of wealth. The sin in view wasn’t some Angelic rebellion against God. The language of precious stones in :13,14 is an allusion to the stones set in the breastplate of the high priest of Israel (Ex. 39:10-14). Tyre was “on the holy mountain of God” (:14) – but this holy mountain is Mount Zion, Jerusalem here on earth (20:40). The prophecy of the fall of Tyre is being consciously

sparkling gems.¹⁵ You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.¹⁶ By the abundance of your trading they filled the

midst of you with violence, and you have sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane out of the mountain of God; and the angel who guarded you drove you away from the midst

framed to mirror the fall of man, e.g. in :2 “you are man”; “man” is *Adam* in Hebrew, as if God is saying to the prince of Tyre, “You are like Adam in this parable”. Verse 17 tells how he will be brought to the ground – as Adam had to return to the dust. The passage is often skim read, leading to the assumption that the King of Tyre is being likened to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, or to some Satan figure who fell from Heaven at that time. But careful reading shows that the King of Tyre is being likened to Adam in Eden, not to the serpent. Verses 14,16 sound like a reference to the King of Tyre as Adam: “I put a terrifying angel there to guard you... the angel who guarded you drove you away” (:14,16 – this is also the reading of the G.N.B. and T.E.V.)

Another approach is suggested by archaeological discoveries in Tyre. A large cherub-sphinx with a king’s head and animal’s body set on a base of sculptured mountains was discovered, evidently a deification of a king of Tyre. With Hiram’s knowledge of the true God, it seems that subsequent Kings of Tyre came to put themselves in the position of God, seated between the cherubim on Mount Zion, in the same way as the king of Assyria effectively aspired to the same thing – Phoenician inscriptions have been uncovered calling the king of Tyre “Lord of the Heavens”. Even more amazingly, the jewels described in :13 were all found embedded in this sphinx-cherubim. The three jewels of the breastplate missing from the list in :13 were also missing from the sphinx. Inscriptions also describe Tyre as the “garden of God”, and reliefs of cherubim guarding Tyre as they did Eden have been found. Thus the king of Tyre had set up a blasphemous system of worship copying that of the temple and of Eden, with himself as God in the midst of it. “The king of Tyre” (:12) may be a reference to the Tyrian god Melkart (“King of the city”). Perhaps Tyre had installed a system of Yahweh worship similar to that which was in Jerusalem (perhaps a result of Hiram’s relationship with Solomon and assistance in building Yahweh’s temple) – but this had become mixed with the worship of Melkart. “You seal up the imitation” (:12) show how God was aware that this replica of His system of worship had been pushed by the king of Tyre as far as it could go. According to the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary: “This feeling of superhuman elevation in the king of Tyre was fostered by the fact that the island on which Tyre stood was called “the holy island” [Sanconiathon], being sacred to Hercules and Melkart, so much so that the colonies looked up to Tyre as the mother city of their religion”. The city was thought of as rising from the waters like the rock-throne of God. This would explain why the King of Tyre is criticized for saying “I am a god, I sit in the seat of God” (:2). It would also explain all the allusions to Israelite worship – he was setting himself up as a rival to Zion, dressing himself in clothing featuring all the jewels in the High Priestly breastplate (Ex. 28:15-20); the word used for his “workmanship” with those jewels in :13 is used in Ex. 31:3,5; 35:31 of the workmanship of the tabernacle and associated garments. The King of Tyre claimed to be “perfect in beauty” (:12) – just as Zion was described earlier in Ezekiel in the same terms (16:14).

of the stones of fire. ¹⁷ Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I have cast you to the ground; I have laid you before kings, that they may see you. ¹⁸ By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trading, you have profaned your sanctuaries; therefore have I brought forth a fire from the midst of you; it has devoured you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all those who see you. ¹⁹ All those who know you among the peoples shall be astonished at you. You have become a terror, and your life shall end evermore.

Against Sidon

²⁰ The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ²¹ Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against it ²² and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against you Sidon. I will be glorified in the midst of you; and they shall know that I am Yahweh when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. ²³ For I will send plague into her and blood into her streets. The wounded shall fall in the midst of her, with the sword on her on every side; and they shall know that I am Yahweh. ²⁴ There shall be no more a pricking brier to the house of Israel, nor a hurting thorn of any that are around them, that scorned them; and they shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh. ²⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the

peoples among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the nations, then shall they dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. ²⁶ They shall dwell securely therein; yes, they shall build houses, and plant vineyards, and shall dwell securely, when I have executed judgments on all those who do them despite all around them; and they shall know that I am Yahweh their God.

CHAPTER 29 Oct. 3

Against Pharaoh and All Egypt

In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. ³ Speak and say, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great monster that lies in the midst of his rivers, that has said, 'My river is My own, and I have made it for Myself'. ⁴ I will put hooks in your jaws, and I will make the fish of your rivers stick to your scales; and I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, with all the fish of your rivers which stick to your scales. ⁵ I'll cast you forth into the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers. You'll fall on the open field. You won't be bound together, nor gathered. I have given you for food to the animals of the earth and to the birds of the sky. ⁶ All the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am Yahweh, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of

Israel. ⁷ When they took hold of you by your hand, you broke, and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke, and paralyzed all of their thighs. ⁸ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will bring a sword on you, and will cut off man and animal from you. ⁹ The land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste; and they shall know that I am Yahweh. Because you have said, ‘The river is mine, and I have made it;’ ¹⁰ therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from the tower of Seveneh even to the border of Ethiopia. ¹¹ No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of animal shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. ¹² I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of the countries that are desolate; and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be a desolation forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. ¹³ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the peoples where they were scattered; ¹⁴ and I will bring back the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into

the land of their birth; and they shall be there a base kingdom. ¹⁵ It shall be the most base of the kingdoms; neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations; and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. ¹⁶ It shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing iniquity to remembrance, when they turn to look after them; and they shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁷ It came to pass in the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ¹⁸ Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was worn; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyre, for the service that he had served against it. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off her multitude and take her a spoil and take her a prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. ²⁰ I have given him the land of Egypt as his recompense for which he served, because they worked for Me, says the Lord Yahweh. ²¹ In that day will I cause a horn to bud forth to the house of Israel, and I will give you the opening

29:12 This prophecy of forty years could have been a provisional prophecy – see on 26:7,21. See too the note on 26:7 about the fact that ancient history has blank areas – perhaps this prophecy was fulfilled but there is no record of it.

29:17-20 See on 26:7.

29:21 *I will give you the opening of the mouth in their midst* – In the midst of the surrounding nations. But at the time of Christ’s return, when Israel repent and enter the new covenant with Him, they will remember all their past sins and never open their

of the mouth in their midst; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 30 Oct. 4

Lamentation over Egypt

The word of Yahweh came again to me saying, ² Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Wail, Alas for the day! ³ For the day is near, even the day of Yahweh is near; it shall be a day of clouds, a time of the nations. ⁴ A sword shall come on Egypt and anguish shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt; and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. ⁵ Ethiopia, Put and Lud, and all the mixed people, and Cub, and the children of the land that is allied with them, shall fall with them by the sword. ⁶ Thus says Yahweh: They also who uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Seveneh shall they fall in it by the sword, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁷ They shall be desolate in the

midst of the countries that are desolate; and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted.

⁸ They shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and all her helpers are destroyed. ⁹ In that day shall messengers go forth from before Me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid; and there shall be anguish on them, as in the day of Egypt; for, behold, it comes. ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ¹¹ He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought in to destroy the land; and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. ¹² I will make the rivers dry, and will sell the land into the hand of evil men; and I will make the land desolate, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I, Yahweh, have spoken it. ¹³ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will also destroy the idols and I will cause the images

mouth any more because of their shame (16:63). They will be so ashamed that they *will feel as if* they can never open their mouth. But Yahweh will open their mouth, and they will witness. In some anticipation of this, Ezekiel as the “son of man” prophet, a representative of his people just as the Lord Jesus was to be, had his mouth shut in dumbness, and he only had his mouth opened when Israel came to know [to some degree] that “I am Yahweh” (24:27). In all these evident connections something marvelous presents itself. Those who feel as if they just cannot open their mouths in witness are the very ones whom the Father will use; He will open their mouths and use them exactly because they are ashamed of their sins! And so it should be with us.

30:2 The wailing and lamentation for the fate of Gentile nations, even those who had been enemies of God’s people, really shows how neither God nor Ezekiel had the slightest pleasure in the punishment of the wicked. God’s desire is to positively manifest and develop His Name; this is His focus, rather than hitting back against those who rebel against Him.

30:13 *I will put a fear in the land of Egypt* – God often punishes people by sending attitudes of mind upon them.

to cease from Memphis; there shall be no more a prince from the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ I will make Pathros desolate, will set a fire in Zoan and will execute judgments on No. ¹⁵ I will pour My wrath on Sin, the stronghold of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No. ¹⁶ I will set a fire in Egypt; Sin shall be in great anguish, No shall be broken up and Memphis shall have adversaries in the daytime. ¹⁷ The young men of Aven and of Pibeseth shall fall by the sword; and these cities shall go into captivity. ¹⁸ At Tehaphnehes also the day shall withdraw itself, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt, and the pride of her power shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. ¹⁹ Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt; and they shall know that I am Yahweh. ²⁰ It happened in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of Yahweh came to me,

saying, ²¹ Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and behold, it has not been bound up, to apply healing medicines, to put a bandage to bind it that it be strong to hold the sword. ²² Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong arm, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. ²³ I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. ²⁴ I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand: but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. ²⁵ I will hold up the arms of the king of Babylon; and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am Yahweh, when I shall put My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out on the land of Egypt. ²⁶ I will scatter the Egyptians

30:18 *The day shall withdraw itself* – A reference to the collapse of the meaning of time as we know it around the period of Christ's return? This verse speaks of the time when Egypt comes to know the Lord through His judgments (:19) – and this must have some reference to the last days.

30:21 *I have broken the arm of Pharaoh* – One arm of Pharaoh had already been broken when Babylon defeated Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish (Jer. 46:2) and took away from Egypt all her territory from the Nile to the Euphrates (2 Kings 24:7). This breaking of Pharaoh's arms one by one is likely because God wished them to repent after the first arm was broken. God doesn't afflict just to be cruel, but because He has a purpose, to His glory.

30:23, 24 The language of scattering amongst the nations after being attacked by a Babylon empowered by God is exactly the sort of thing the prophets said would happen to Israel. There is a Biblical theme that God's people suffer the same judgments as the world, Egypt, if they act like the world. Hence we are warned to beware lest we be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32). In our hearts and actions, there must be a chasmic difference between us and this world.

among the nations, and disperse them through the countries; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 31 Oct. 5

The Assyrian a Cedar in Lebanon

It happened in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt and his multitude: Whom are you like in your greatness? ³ Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with beautiful branches, and with a forest-like shade and of high stature; and its top was among the thick boughs. ⁴ The waters nourished it, the deep made it to grow. Its rivers ran all around its plantation; and it sent out its channels to all the trees of the field. ⁵ Therefore its stature was exalted above all the trees of the field; and its boughs

were multiplied, and its branches became long by reason of many waters, when it shot them forth. ⁶ All the birds of the sky made their nests in its boughs; and under its branches all the animals of the field brought forth their young; and all great nations lived under its shadow. ⁷ Thus was it beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its root was by many waters. ⁸ The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; the fir trees were not like its boughs, and the plane trees were not as its branches; nor was any tree in the garden of God like it in its beauty. ⁹ I made it beautiful by the multitude of its branches, so that all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God envied it. ¹⁰ Therefore thus said the Lord Yahweh: Because you are exalted in stature and he has set your top among the thick boughs and his heart

31:1 This was a month before Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonians. Judah were desperately hoping that Egypt would come to their rescue, and in this prophecy there is the clear message that Egypt like Assyria before them, like all human strength, is doomed to not ultimately save us. Judah were intended to learn from history – the apparently invincible Assyrian had fallen, so would Egypt. But our human tendency to live in an eternal present means that we tend not to learn the lessons of history; yet God’s word is full of history for us to learn from. Note how Is. 52:4 likewise parallels Egypt and Assyria.

31:3 God’s people Israel are likened to such a cedar (17:3), spreading out roots to the waters (Ps. 80:11). The implication is that Assyria wished to usurp Israel as God’s people and appropriated such language and imagery to themselves. It is *God’s Kingdom* which gives “a forest-like shade” (Mk. 4:32); but the kingdoms of men appear as fake imitations of God’s Kingdom; and it is our wisdom to perceive the difference.

31:6 *Under its shadow* – The smaller nations lived under the shadow of the superpowers like Egypt and Assyria, but they had eventually fled from under the shadow of Assyria (:12). Judah like us today are asked not to dwell under the shadow of such superpowers – in our day, perhaps insurance policies, savings, home ownership – but to dwell under the shadow of God’s invisible Angel-cherubim wings (Ps. 17:8; 91:4). For a small nation like Judah wedged at the time between the superpowers of Babylon and Egypt, this was a radical demand – to dwell at peace under the shadow of God’s care.

is lifted up in his height, ¹¹ I will even deliver him into the hand of the mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with him. I have driven him out for his wickedness. ¹² Gentiles, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off and have left him: on the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth are gone away from his shadow, and have left him. ¹³ On his ruin all the birds of the sky shall dwell, and all the animals of the field shall be on his branches; ¹⁴ so that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves in their stature, neither set their top among the thick boughs. Their mighty ones shall not stand up on their height, even all who drink water; for they are all delivered to death, to the lower parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with those who go down to the pit. ¹⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: In the day when he went down to Sheol I caused a mourning. I covered the deep for him, and I restrained its rivers; and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. ¹⁶ I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to Sheol with those who descend into the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water,

were comforted in the lower parts of the earth. ¹⁷ They also went down into Sheol with him to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were his arm, that lived under his shadow in the midst of the nations. ¹⁸ To whom are you thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the lower parts of the earth: you shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 32 Oct. 6

More Lamentation over Egypt

It happened in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and tell him, You were likened to a young lion of the nations: yet you are as a monster in the seas; and you broke out with your rivers, and troubled the waters with your feet and fouled their rivers. ³ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will spread out My net on you with a company of many peoples; and they shall bring you up in My net. ⁴ I will leave you on the land, I will cast you forth on the open field and will cause all the birds of the sky to settle on you, and I will satisfy the animals of the whole earth with you. ⁵ I will lay

32:2 *Take up a lamentation* – Ezekiel and the faithful are being invited to as it were attend Egypt's funeral and participate in the laments – rather than trust in her. We too, living as we do at the end of human history, can do the same – laying to eternal rest, in our own minds and faith, the pomp and the power and the pride of this world.

your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your height. ⁶ I will also water with your blood the land in which you swim, even to the mountains; and the watercourses shall be full of you. ⁷ When I shall extinguish you, I will cover the sky and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give its light. ⁸ All the bright lights of the sky will I make dark over you and set darkness on your land, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁹ I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I shall bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries which you have not known. ¹⁰ Yes, I will make many peoples amazed at you, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for you, when I shall brandish My sword before them; and they shall tremble every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of your fall. ¹¹ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come on you. ¹² By the swords of the mighty will I cause your multitude to fall; they are all the terrible of the nations; and they shall bring to nothing the pride of Egypt, and all its multitude shall be destroyed. ¹³ I will destroy also all its animals from beside many waters; neither shall the foot of man

trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of animals trouble them. ¹⁴ Then will I make their waters clear, and cause their rivers to run like oil, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁵ When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate and waste, a land destitute of that of which it was once full, when I shall strike all those who dwell therein, then shall they know that I am Yahweh. ¹⁶ This is the lamentation with which they shall lament, with which the daughters of the nations shall lament therewith; over Egypt and over all her multitude shall they lament therewith, says the Lord Yahweh.

Lamentation over Egypt's Supporters

¹⁷ It happened also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹⁸ Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, to the lower parts of the earth, with those who go down into the pit. ¹⁹ Whom do you pass in beauty? Go down, and be laid with the uncircumcised. ²⁰ They shall fall in the midst of those who are slain by the sword, she is delivered to the sword; draw her away and all her multitudes. ²¹ The strong among the

32:10 The prophesied judgment upon Egypt [a symbol of the world] included that the sun was to be made dark, and people would be “amazed” at her. This is just what happened when Christ was crucified (Is. 52:14). The judgment of Egypt / the world had some elements of fulfilment in the ‘judgment of this world’ which occurred through the cross (Jn. 12:31). The crucifixion of Christ declared all worldly strength to now be nothing compared to the power of God’s love toward us.

32:18 *Cast them down* – This was the power of the word of prophecy. What Ezekiel said on God’s behalf was as good as done.

mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Sheol with those who help him. They are gone down, they lie still, even the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.²² Assyria is there and all her company; her graves are all around her; all of them slain, fallen by the sword.²³ Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the pit, and her company is around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who caused terror in the land of the living.²⁴ There is Elam and all her multitude around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who are gone down uncircumcised into the lower parts of the earth. They who caused their terror in the land of the living have now borne their shame with those who go down to the pit.²⁵ They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude; her graves are around her; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for their terror was caused in

the land of the living, and they have borne their shame with those who go down to the pit. He is put in the midst of those who are slain.²⁶ There is Meshech, Tubal, and all their multitude; their graves are around them; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for they caused their terror in the land of the living.²⁷ They shall not lie with the mighty who are fallen of the uncircumcised who are gone down to Sheol with their weapons of war, and have laid their swords under their heads, and their iniquities are on their bones; for they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.²⁸ But you shall be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shall lie with those who are slain by the sword.²⁹ There is Edom, her kings and all her princes, who in their might are laid with those who are slain by the sword. They shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with those who go down

32:26 *Meshech, Tubal* – At the time of this prophecy, these nations had already passed off the scene. They were Scythian tribes who were much feared in the area. Yet we read of them in 38:2 as coming to invade Israel and being destroyed by dramatic Divine intervention. This seems to be a prophecy of the last days, suggesting that the political and military situation around Israel at the time of the Babylonian invasion will be seen again in the last days. The current trends in the Middle East show this coming about. Another possibility is that the sequence of events intended in chapters 37-40 simply didn't happen because of Israel's failure [restoration of Israel, invasion by the Scythian tribes, the destruction of that invasion by Divine intervention and the establishment of God's Kingdom based around a renewed temple in Jerusalem]. The Scythian tribes like Meshech and Tubal passed off the scene, but not in the dramatic way envisaged in chapter 38; instead the prophecy will be fulfilled in the last days.

32:26-30 gives a picture of the mighty warriors of the nations around, lying in their graves. This refers to the custom of burying warriors with their weapons, and resting the head of the corpse upon its sword. Yet this is a description of Sheol, the word translated in some Bibles "hell" – the grave. These mighty men lying still in hell (i.e. their graves) hardly supports the idea that hell is a place of fire. Physical things (e.g. swords) go to the same "hell" as people, showing that hell is not an arena of spiritual

to the pit.³⁰ There are the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who are gone down with the slain; in the terror which they caused by their might they are put to shame. They lie uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.³¹ When Pharaoh sees them, he will take comfort in his hordes. Pharaoh and all his army will die violently, says the Lord Yahweh.³² For I have put his terror in the land of the living; and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his hordes, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 33 Oct. 7

The Responsibilities of Ezekiel the Watchman

The word of Yahweh came to me saying,² Son of man, speak to the children of your people and tell them, When I bring the sword on a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them and set him for their watchman;³ if, when he sees the sword come on the land, he blows the trumpet and warns the

people;⁴ then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and doesn't take warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be on his own head.⁵ He heard the sound of the trumpet and didn't take warning; his blood shall be on him; whereas if he had taken warning, he would have delivered his soul.⁶ But if the watchman sees the sword come and doesn't blow the trumpet and the people aren't warned, and the sword comes and takes away any person from among them; he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.⁷ So you, son of man, I have set you a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me.⁸ When I tell the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, if you don't speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at your hand.⁹ Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he doesn't turn from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.¹⁰ You, son of man, tell the house of Israel: Thus

torment. Note how Sheol is often paralleled in this chapter with "the pit", clearly referring here to the mass graves of the once mighty soldiers.

33:4 *If the sword come* – Yet the context speaks as if the sword will surely come. But if the watchman warns the people, there arises an element of possibility – "if the sword come". The implication is that God is willing to change the intended judgment if people repent (:11), as happened with Nineveh.

33:8 If we do not warn the wicked of their way, "his blood will I require at your hand". Some will have to give an account on judgment day of their specific lack of witness. Yet we can live day after day, saying nothing to our fellows, as if it doesn't really matter, because nobody notices... Not only our salvation but that of others can be limited by our exercise of freewill. If others' salvation is not to some extent dependent upon our preaching, then there is no meaning to the very concept of preaching.

you speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are on us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live? ¹¹ Tell them, As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, house of Israel? ¹² You, son of man, tell the children of your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not save him in the day of his disobedience; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turns from his wickedness; neither shall he who is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sins. ¹³ When I tell the righteous that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he has committed, therein shall he die. ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, You shall surely die; if he turn from his sin and do that which is lawful and right; ¹⁵ if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, committing no

iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. ¹⁷ Yet the children of your people say, The way of the Lord is not fair; but as for them, their way is not fair. ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall even die therein. ¹⁹ When the wicked turns from his wickedness and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. ²⁰ Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not fair. House of Israel, I will judge every one of you after his ways.

Explanation of Judah's Demise

²¹ It happened in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped out of Jerusalem came to me saying, The city has been struck. ²² Now the hand of the Yahweh had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and He had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning. So my mouth was opened, and I was no

33:10, 11 Like so many an addict, so many a Christian, like Judas and Achan, like you and me, they had the sense of desire to come back to God, the detailed realization of wherein they had failed; but not enough real strength of purpose to seriously repent.

33:13 *If he trust to his righteousness and commit iniquity* – This is a warning to the righteous, that they will fall into sin if they trust their own righteousness. Good living believers fall into sin once they start trusting their righteousness. As Paul explains throughout Romans 1-8, we are saved by our faith in righteousness being imputed to us. God has arranged our salvation this way so that our belief in the fact that we aren't righteous (for all our good living appearances compared to the surrounding world) will keep us humbly trusting in His righteousness being counted to us – and this is the mentality which leads us to not sin in practice.

longer dumb. ²³ The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ²⁴ Son of man, they who inhabit those waste places in the land of Israel speak, saying, ‘Abraham was one, and he inherited the land; but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance’. ²⁵ Therefore tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: You eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood. Shall you possess the land? ²⁶ You rely on your sword, you work abomination, and every one of you defiles his neighbour’s wife. Shall you possess the land? ²⁷ You shall tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him who is in the open field will I give to the animals to be devoured; and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. ²⁸ I will make the land a desolation and an astonishment; the pride of her power shall cease and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, so that none shall pass through. ²⁹ Then shall they know that I am Yahweh, when I

have made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed. ³⁰ As for you, son of man, the children of your people talk of you by the walls and in the doors of the houses, speaking one to another, each one to his brother saying, Please come and hear what is the word that comes forth from Yahweh. ³¹ They come to you as the people come, and they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but don’t do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their gain. ³² Behold, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they don’t do them. ³³ When this comes to pass (behold, it comes!), then shall they know that a prophet has been among them.

CHAPTER 34 Oct. 8

Woe to the Shepherds of Israel

The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel,

33:31 Ezekiel’s audiences loved to come and hear God’s words at his mouth – and in response to them, “with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goes after their gain”. Materialism stopped them from really accepting those words, even though they theoretically assented to their inspiration. Only in their condemnation would they know “that a prophet *has* been among them” (:33). And so there is a chilling choice: to *really* accept the power of inspiration now; or have to learn it through the process of condemnation when judgment comes.

33:32 *They hear your words* – God prophesied that those to whom Ezekiel witnessed would not hear His words (3:11). And yet they came and sat before him, desiring to hear God’s word. They wanted to hear, they heard, and yet they didn’t really hear. The prophets were like buskers singing songs in the subway, which we may listen to with half an ear, even admire them for a few moments, and then walk on in our busy lives. But the prophets were speaking forth the words of passionate love of God Almighty for His people...

prophesy and tell them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Shouldn't the shepherds feed the sheep? ³ You eat the fat and you clothe yourself with the wool, you kill the fatlings; but you don't feed the sheep. ⁴ You haven't strengthened the diseased, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you caused to return that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with rigour you have ruled over them. ⁵ They were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food to all the animals of the field and were scattered. ⁶ My sheep

wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill. Yes, My sheep were scattered on all the surface of the earth; and there was none who searched or sought them. ⁷ Therefore you shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh: ⁸ As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, surely because My sheep became a prey, and My sheep became food to all the animals of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did My shepherds search for My sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves, and didn't feed My sheep; ⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh. ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the

34:4 *Cause to return* – The great restoration prophecies of Jer. 23:1-8 and Ez. 34:1-31 speak of the flock of Israel going astray due to bad shepherds, being saved by the good shepherd, being delivered / gathered, and then returning to the land. The Hebrew word *shub* means both 'to return' in the sense of returning to the land, and 'turning' in the sense of repentance (see :4,16 and frequently in Ezekiel). But these restoration prophecies are packed with allusion to the great shepherd Psalm 23. Here, David says that the good shepherd 'causes me to repent' (Ps. 23:3 Heb.). This is matched in Ez. 36 by the idea of God *giving* Israel a new heart. And the parable of the good shepherd (Lk. 15:1-7) brings together Ps. 23 and also these restoration passages, in speaking of how He goes out and finds the lost sheep and brings it back home. The sheep is found, and accepts being found – there is no actual mention of repentance. Thus the 'return' of Judah to their land was intended as a work of God – He would make them return, He would give them repentance [note how Acts 11:18 speaks of God granting men repentance]. This is all such wonderful grace. The even more incredible thing, though, is that Judah refused to accept this grace; they didn't 'return' to the land because they saw no need to 'return' to God. They willingly forgot that they were only in Babylon because of their sins; to 'return' to the land was a 'return' to God, which He had enabled. But they were like the lost sheep refusing to sit on the shepherd's shoulders, preferring to sit in a hole and die... and this is the warning to us. For truly, absolutely all things have been prepared for us to enter the Kingdom. It's only those who don't want to be there who won't be.

34:5 *Scattered because there was no shepherd* – Good leadership produces unity; disunity amongst the sheep is therefore a reflection of poor shepherding. They scatter because they aren't fed by the shepherds and go elsewhere for food (:9).

sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver My sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them.

¹¹ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I Myself, even I, will search for My sheep, and will seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out My sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. ¹³ I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture; on the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be. There shall they lie down in a good fold; on fat pasture shall they feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I Myself will be the shepherd of My sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁶ I will seek that which was lost, and will cause to return that which was driven away. I will bind

up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice. ¹⁷ As for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord Yahweh: See, I judge between sheep and sheep, the rams and the male goats. ¹⁸ Does it seem a small thing to you to have fed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the remainder of your pasture; to have drunk of the clear waters, but you must foul what remains with your feet? ¹⁹ As for My sheep, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. ²⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh to them: Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you thrust with side and with shoulder and push all the diseased with your horns, until you have scattered them abroad; ²² therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³ I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

34:11 *I Myself, even I, will search for My sheep* – The passage in John 10 where Jesus speaks of Himself as the good shepherd who seeks out God's sheep is full of allusion to this chapter. When He says "I and My Father are one" (Jn. 10:30), He is speaking in this context of His being the shepherd on God's behalf. This principle of agency, of operating on behalf of God in His Name, doesn't mean that Jesus was God Himself in person, but rather that He manifested the Father, so that God's shepherding was achieved through the person and work of Jesus.

34:20 *Between the fat sheep and the lean sheep* – The shepherds are here likened to fat sheep. Shepherds or pastors are themselves sheep and in that sense no different from those they are shepherding. This should result in an appropriate humility in all pastoral work.

²⁴ I, Yahweh, will be their God, and My servant David prince among them; I, Yahweh, have spoken it. ²⁵ I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause dangerous animals to cease out of the land; they shall dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶ I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing; I will cause the shower to come down in its season, there shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷ The tree of the field shall yield its fruit and the earth shall yield its increase and they shall be secure in their land; and they shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them out of the hand of those who made slaves of them. ²⁸ They shall no more be a prey to the nations, neither shall the animals of the earth devour them; but they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. ²⁹ I will raise up to them a plantation for renown, and they shall be no more consumed with famine in the land, neither bear the shame of the nations any more. ³⁰ They shall know that I, Yahweh their God, am with them; and that they, the house of Israel, are My people, says the Lord Yahweh. ³¹ You My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 35 Oct. 9

More against Edom

Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it ³ and tell it, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out My hand against you, I will make you a desolation and an astonishment. ⁴ I will lay your cities waste and you shall be desolate; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁵ Because you have had a perpetual hatred, and have given over the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, at the time when the punishment of their iniquity had an end; ⁶ therefore, as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you. Since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you. ⁷ Thus will I make Mount Seir an astonishment and a desolation; and I will cut off from it the one who passes through and the one who returns. ⁸ I will fill its mountains with its slain. In your hills and in your valleys and in all your watercourses shall they fall who are slain with the sword. ⁹ I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall not be inhabited; and you shall know that

35:5 "Esau is Edom" (Gen. 25:30; 36:1). The reference here is to the hatred between Jacob and Esau which played itself out between their descendants. Bitter argument between family members of one generation can continue over many generations; one aspect of the sin of division and enmity is that it tends to continue after our time, or after the protagonists have resolved with each other, as Jacob and Esau did. And each generation, according to this prophecy, is held responsible for their part in any hatred against their brother.

I am Yahweh. ¹⁰ Because you have said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas Yahweh was there. ¹¹ Therefore, as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, I will do according to your anger, and according to your envy which you have shown out of your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them, when I shall judge you. ¹² You shall know that I, Yahweh, have heard all your insults which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they have been given us to devour. ¹³ You have magnified yourselves against Me with your mouth, and have multiplied your words against Me, which I have heard. ¹⁴ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: When the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. ¹⁵ As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do to you. You shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, even all of it; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 36 Oct. 10
A Prophecy about the Mountains of Israel

You, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, You

mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh. ² Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because the enemy has said against you, Aha! and, The ancient high places are ours in possession; ³ therefore prophesy and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh. Because, even because they have made you desolate and swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became the talk and evil gossip of the nations; ⁴ therefore, you mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Yahweh. Thus says the Lord Yahweh to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the cities that are forsaken, which are become a prey and a mockery to the other nations that are all around; ⁵ therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Surely in the fire of My jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the nations, and against all Edom, that have appointed My land to themselves for a possession with the joy of all their heart, with despite of soul, to cast it out for a prey. ⁶ Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and tell to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I have spoken in My zeal and in My wrath, because

35:10 The two nations refer to Israel [the ten tribes] and Judah [the two tribe kingdom]. As God “*was there*” in the land of Israel in their past, so when the Kingdom is re-established it will again be known that “*Yahweh is there*” (48:35). The future Kingdom on God on earth will be a re-establishment of God’s Kingdom as it earlier was in the form of Israel and Judah.

35:12 *I, Yahweh, have heard* – The extent of God’s knowledge is amazing. He consciously is aware of every thought, intention, implication and actual spoken word of every single person in the world, including Gentiles like Edom.

you have borne the shame of the nations: ⁷ therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: I have sworn saying, Surely the nations that are around you, they shall bear their shame. ⁸ But you, mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for they are at hand to return. ⁹ For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and you shall be cultivated and sown; ¹⁰ and I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, even all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited, and the waste places shall be built. ¹¹ I will multiply on you man and animal; and they shall increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited after your former manner, and I will do better to you than at your beginnings; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ¹² Yes, I will cause men to

walk on you, even My people Israel; and they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no more henceforth bereave them of children. ¹³ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Because they say to you, You are a destroyer of men, and have caused bereavement in your nation; ¹⁴ therefore you shall destroy men no more, neither cause bereavement in your nation any more, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁵ Neither will I let you hear any more the shame of the nations, neither shall you bear the reproach of the peoples any more, neither shall you cause your nation to stumble any more, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁶ Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me saying, ¹⁷ Son of man, when the people of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings.

36:13 *You are a devourer of men* – This prophecy is given to the physical land of Israel. It seems the captives in Babylon didn't want to return after the 70 years because they felt the land itself was somehow evil and would devour them. This is a similar mistake made by Israel in the wilderness, who slandered God's land rather than accepting it was a land of blessing. Being influenced by worldly superstitions and fears can lead God's people to reject the hope of His Kingdom, and prefer to remain in the world rather than taking possession of the good Kingdom prepared for them. But God worked with Judah in their misunderstanding – He promises that from now on, the land will not be like that (:14). This is rather like how in New Testament times, Jesus worked with the wrong ideas people had about demons, and demonstrated that even if this was what they feared, they were actually of no power compared to the inbreaking of God's Kingdom power which was possible for those who believed.

36:15 *Neither shall you cause your nation to stumble any more* – The Jews blamed the high places of the land of Israel for having bereaved them of their children (:13) and having made them stumble; but it was in fact they who had chosen to go up to the high places, build altars there for false gods, and sacrifice their children to them. God doesn't specifically correct them, although He privately explains the real situation to Ezekiel (:17,18); rather He works through that wrong idea, supposing for a moment it were true, but assuring the people that this will no longer be the case – just as Jesus did by using the language of demons when He did healing miracles, without specifically stating the basic truth that demons in fact don't exist.

Their way before Me was as the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. ¹⁸ Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had poured out on the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols; ¹⁹ and I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. According to their way and according to their doings I judged them. ²⁰ When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name; in that men said of them, These are the people of Yahweh, and are gone forth out of His land. ²¹ But I had respect for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. ²² Therefore tell the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I don't do this for your sake, house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. ²³ I will sanctify My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, says the Lord Yahweh, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. ²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the

countries, and will bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. ²⁶ I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My laws and do them. ²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will save you from all your uncleanness, and I will call for the grain and will multiply it, and lay no famine on you. ³⁰ I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, that you may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you shall remember your evil ways and your doings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. ³² Not for your sake do I this, says the Lord Yahweh, be it known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, house of Israel. ³³ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: In the day that I cleanse you

36:27 *Cause you to walk in My statutes* – Entering the new covenant which God here proposed to His people involved Him promising to make them be obedient to His ways. We who have entered this same new covenant (Heb. 8:8-13) are likewise party to this same operation of God on human hearts – if we want it.

36:27-29 A new spirit was potentially given to the exiles who returned from Babylon, God put in the heart of men like Nehemiah to revive the work (Neh. 2:12 same Hebrew word). But this didn't force them to be obedient. They chose not to be, and so the promised kingdom blessings of corn etc. were replaced by famines in the times of Nehemiah, Haggai and Malachi.

36:33 This says that although Judah had profaned God's Name in Babylon, yet He

from all your wickedness, I will cause the cities to be inhabited and the waste places shall be built. ³⁴ The land that was desolate shall be cultivated whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all who passed by. ³⁵ They shall say, This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited. ³⁶ Then the nations that are left around you shall know that I, Yahweh, have built the ruined places and planted that which was desolate. I, Yahweh, have spoken it, and I will do it. ³⁷ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: For this also will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. I will increase them with men like a flock. ³⁸ As the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts, so shall the wasted cities

be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 37 Oct. 11

The Valley of Dry Bones Comes to Life

The hand of Yahweh was on me and He brought me out in the Spirit of Yahweh, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. ² He caused me to pass by them all around: and, there were very many in the open valley; and, they were very dry. ³ He said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? I answered, Lord Yahweh, You know. ⁴ Again He said to me, Prophecy over these bones, and tell them, you dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh. ⁵ Thus says the Lord Yahweh to these bones: I will cause spirit to enter into you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay

would sprinkle their hearts by grace and make the new covenant with them; and *then*, “In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited”. But in recorded history, there was no apparent connection between Judah’s forgiveness and the rebuilding of the land. God enabled the exiles to return and rebuild the cities even though they didn’t repent; such was His grace and urgent desire to give His spiritually weak people the Kingdom He had potentially prepared for them. We can take strong encouragement from this.

37:5 *I will cause spirit to enter into you* – This is an amplification of 36:27, where God explained His plan to make a new covenant with the returning exiles from Babylon. His Spirit would enter them and He would “cause” them to be obedient to His covenant, and they would return to the land and rebuild it. The dry bones represent Israel and Judah in their captivity, spiritually dead and thinking they were too far gone for God to revive them. God’s plan was to revive them and return them to His land and for them to rebuild God’s Kingdom there. But only a few returned from exile, and they were more interested in building up their own kingdom and houses than God’s Kingdom and house. The return from exile therefore featured some small fulfilment of the potential which is outlined as possible in chapters 36 and 37. The return of Israel to their land, arising as it were out of the death camps of Europe to rebuild and make fertile the neglected land of Israel, was likewise a small fulfilment of these prophecies – perhaps in the 1940s and 50s, as at the return from exile, there could also have been the fuller fulfilment of this chapter. But again, there wasn’t the all important turning to God in spirit and truth. It seems we must await yet further persecution to lead

sinews on you, and will bring up flesh on you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. As I prophesied, there was a noise, and an earthquake; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I saw, and, there were sinews on them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then He said to me, Prophecy to the wind, prophesy, son of man, and tell the wind, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Come from the four winds, breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹ Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the

whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are totally cut off. ¹² Therefore prophesy and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ You shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have opened your graves, My people, and caused you to come up out of your graves. ¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; and you shall know that I, Yahweh, have spoken it and performed it, says Yahweh.

Unity and United Rule

¹⁵ The word of Yahweh came again to me, saying, ¹⁶ You, son of man, take one stick and write on it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his

Israel to return to their land in repentance and faith in Christ, and then the promised Kingdom conditions will come about.

37:7 The sound of the cherubim Angels which Ezekiel heard was like the noise of an earthquake (3:12). Those two Hebrew words, for “noise” and “earthquake”, occur here in 37:7, when he hears the “noise” of “shaking” or earthquake as the bones of Israel in exile come together by the spirit / Angelic operation of Yahweh. The Spirit came from four places (:9) – just as there were four cherubim. As the sound of the cherubim was as of a great army (1:24), so revived Israel stood up as a great army (:10). The Angel cherubim would work with God’s disillusioned and broken people to revive them, so that they would become like the guardian Angels of Israel above them. The point was that the Angel cherubim system which Ezekiel had seen at work amongst the captives was able to gather them together, and give life to the nation. And yet that didn’t happen to those exiles – because they didn’t walk in step with the spirit.

The Hebrew word for “noise” here is the same word used in Ezra 1:1 about the “proclamation” of Cyrus for Judah to return to the land. Most of God’s people didn’t return; the majority preferred to stay in Babylon. Therefore the prophecy was deferred in fulfillment until our times; the tragedy is that so much was potentially enabled at the time of Cyrus’ decree, and Judah made such little use of it.

37:11 These were the very sentiments of Jeremiah in Lamentations, and those who wept by the waters of Babylon when they remembered Zion.

companions. Then take another stick and write on it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions. ¹⁷ Join them yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ When the children of your people shall speak to you saying, Will you not show us what you mean by these? ¹⁹ tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand. ²⁰ The sticks whereon you write shall be in your hand before their eyes. ²¹ Say to them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations where they are gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land. ²² I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. ²³ Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling places in which they have sinned and will cleanse them. So shall they be My people, and I will be their God. ²⁴ My servant David shall be king

over them; and they all shall have one shepherd. They shall also walk in My ordinances and observe My statutes and do them. ²⁵ They shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they shall dwell therein, they and their children and their children's children, forever: and David My servant shall be their prince for ever. ²⁶ Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them and will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷ My tent also shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ²⁸ The nations shall know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in their midst forevermore.

CHAPTER 38 Oct. 12

Against Gog, of the Land of Magog

The word of Yahweh came to me saying, ² Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ³ and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. ⁴ I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and will bring you out with all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armour, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them han-

38:2 Gog is an individual, not a nation; he is portrayed as the singular leader of a confederacy of Scythian tribes, several of whom have been mentioned previously in Ezekiel and were known at the time.

ding swords; ⁵ Persia, Ethiopia and Libya with them, all of them with shield and helmet; ⁶ Gomer, and all his hordes; the house of Togarmah in the uttermost parts of the north and all his hordes; even many peoples with you. ⁷ Be prepared, yes, prepare yourself, you, and all your companies who are assembled to you, and be a guard to them. ⁸ After many days you shall be visited. In the latter years you shall come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, on the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought forth out of the peoples, and they shall dwell securely all of them. ⁹ You shall ascend, you shall come like a storm, you shall be like a cloud to cover the land, you, and

all your hordes, and many peoples with you. ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: It shall happen in that day, that thoughts shall come into your mind, and you shall devise an evil plan. ¹¹ You shall say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to those who are at rest, who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls and having neither bars nor gates; ¹² to take the spoil and to take the wealth; to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered out of the nations, who have gotten livestock and goods, who dwell in the middle of the land. ¹³ Sheba, Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all her young lions, shall say to you: Have you come to take the spoil? Have you assembled

38:5 *Persia, Ethiopia and Libya* – These areas don't exactly correspond to the areas bearing those names today. But clearly they refer to a group of people from what is now Iran and north Africa.

38:8 The invasion is to come against Israel after the Jews have returned to the land from many nations and are dwelling there confidently and in material prosperity (:11,12). In the prophetic schema which God had made potentially possible, the exiles were intended to return in faith and repentance, rebuild the land and temple and receive great material blessing from God. If that had happened, there would then have been this invasion outlined in chapter 38, dramatic Divine intervention (chapter 39) and then the re-establishment of God's Kingdom based around a rebuilt temple and the returned glory of God in Zion as detailed in chapters 40-48. But Israel failed in all this, and so the prophecies will have a re-scheduled and re-applied fulfilment in the last days before Christ returns. The nations and tribes mentioned are from the areas today occupied by the Islamic enemies of Israel. The fact there is a nation of Jews in Israel is also an encouragement that the Middle East situation is moving towards the time of fulfilment of this prophecy.

38:11 This dwelling securely sounds like the time of Messiah's Kingdom described in 37:24-27. Psalm 2 predicts a scenario where Christ is King in Jerusalem, surrounded by His enemies, whom He then goes out and destroys. There is no suggestion in Ezekiel 38 that the invasion is successful

38:13 "Young lions" is a term elsewhere used in Ezekiel to refer to leaders or princes (19:2,6; 32:2). The Hebrew of this verse could imply that these three nations notice that the seven others are going to take spoil from Israel, and decide to join in with

your company to take the wealth? To carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great spoil? ¹⁴ Therefore, son of man, prophesy and tell Gog, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: In that day when My people Israel dwells securely, shall you not know it? ¹⁵ You shall come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you, and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army; ¹⁶ and you shall come up against My people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land. It shall happen in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, that the nations may know Me, when I shall be sanctified in you, Gog, before their eyes. ¹⁷ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Are you he of whom I spoke in old time by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them? ¹⁸ It shall happen in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh, that My wrath shall come up into My nostrils. ¹⁹ For in My anger and in the fire of My wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; ²⁰ so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the

animals of the field and all creeping things which creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the surface of the earth, shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall and every wall shall fall to the ground. ²¹ I will call to all My mountains for a sword against him, says the Lord Yahweh. Every man's sword shall be against his brother. ²² With pestilence and with blood will I enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his hordes and on the many peoples who are with him, an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire, and sulphur. ²³ I will magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself, and I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.

CHAPTER 39 Oct. 13

The Destruction of Gog

You, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech, and Tubal: ² and I will turn you around, and will lead you on, and will cause you to come up from the uttermost parts of the north; and I will bring you on the mountains of Israel; ³ and I will strike your bow out of your

them. This would bring the number of Israel's invaders in this prophecy to ten – which is the number of horns of the beast which desecrates the land of Israel in the last days, and the number of surrounding nations who attack Israel according to Psalm 83.

39:1 The emphasis of the prophecies is upon the individual leader of the confederacy. It seems there will be one specific, charismatic anti-Christ figure who leads the world's opposition to Christ in the last days.

39:3 This speaks of the failure of military technology – a scenario we can well imagine in our times.

left hand, and will cause your arrows to fall out of your right hand. ⁴ You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you, and all your hordes, and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to the birds of prey of every sort, and to the animals of the field to be devoured. ⁵ You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken it, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁶ I will send a fire on Magog, and on those who dwell confidently along the sea coasts; and they shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁷ My holy name will I make known in the midst of My people Israel; neither will I allow My holy name to be profaned any more: and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ Behold, it has come, and it is done, says the Lord Yahweh; this is the day about which I have spoken. ⁹ Those who dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall make fires of the weapons and burn them, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the war clubs, and the spears, and they shall make fires of them seven years. ¹⁰ They shall take

no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall make fires of the weapons; and they shall plunder those who plundered them, and rob those who robbed them, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹¹ It shall happen in that day, that I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the valley of those who pass through on the east of the sea; and it shall stop those who pass through. There shall they bury Gog and all his multitude; and they shall call it The valley of Hamon Gog. ¹² Seven months shall the house of Israel be burying them, that they may cleanse the land. ¹³ Yes, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them for a renown in the day that I shall be glorified, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁴ After the seven months are over, men will be chosen to travel through the land in order to find and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, so that they can cleanse the land. ¹⁵ They shall go up and down the land; and when anyone sees a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, until the undertakers have

39:4 *On the mountains of Israel* – Here we see God's grace; because the mountains of Israel were the high places where Israel had built altars to other gods and sacrificed their children to them. But in these very places, God would show Himself strong for His people.

39:6 *Those who dwell confidently along the seacoasts* – Maybe referring to the Palestinian enemies of Israel dwelling in the Gaza strip, confident because of some international body guaranteeing their safety?

39:9 The burning of wooden weapons and the cleansing of the land from dead bodies (:12 – :16) was likely part of the scenario which was intended by God at the time of the return from exile, but Judah's lack of commitment made this possible scenario not come true; the essence but maybe not the details of the prophecy will be fulfilled in the last days, when God finally intervenes to save His repentant people from their invaders and establish His Kingdom on earth.

buried it in the valley of Hamon Gog.¹⁶ Hamonah shall also be the name of a city. Thus shall they cleanse the land.¹⁷ You, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Speak thus to the birds of prey, and to every animal of the field: Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood.¹⁸ You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.¹⁹ You shall eat fat until you be full, and drink blood until you are drunk, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.²⁰ You shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, says the Lord Yahweh.²¹ I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid on them.²² So the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day and forward.²³ The nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; be-

cause they trespassed against Me, and I hid My face from them: so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they fell all of them by the sword.²⁴ According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions did I to them; and I hid My face from them.²⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.²⁶ They shall bear their shame, and all their trespasses by which they have trespassed against Me, when they shall dwell securely in their land, and none shall make them afraid;²⁷ when I have brought them back from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations.²⁸ They shall know that I am Yahweh their God, in that I caused them to go into captivity among the nations, and have gathered them to their own land; and I will leave none of them any more there;²⁹ neither will I hide My face any more from them; for I have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh.

39:17-20 This gathering of the birds of prey at Gog's destruction is alluded to in Rev. 19:17, which draws a parallel between Gog and the confederacy he controls and the latter day false prophet and "the beast" (Rev. 19:19). The confederacy of tribes which bordered Israel spoken of in Ez. 39 therefore become "the beast" of the latter day prophecies. We can therefore expect this "beast" to refer to Israel's neighbouring Islamic enemies in the last days.

39:29 *For I have poured out My Spirit* – Clearly the meaning is "I will pour out My Spirit". Here we have one of many examples of where God speaks of future events as if they've already occurred, so certain is His word toward us (Rom. 4:17). Verse 8 outlined the same principle: "Behold, it has come, and it is done".

CHAPTER 40 Oct. 14***The New Temple Area Described***

In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was struck, on that very day, the hand of Yahweh was on me and He brought me there. ² In the visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south. ³ He brought me there; and, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. ⁴ The man said to me, Son of man, see with your eyes and hear with your ears, and set your heart on all that I shall show you; for you are brought here with the intent that I may show these things to you: declare all that you see to the people of Israel. ⁵ See, a wall on the outside of the house all around, and in the man's hand a measuring reed six cubits long, of a cubit and a hand-

breadth each: so he measured the thickness of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed. ⁶ Then he came to the gate which looks toward the east, and went up its steps: and he measured the threshold of the gate, one reed broad; and the other threshold, one reed broad. ⁷ Every lodge was one reed long, and one reed broad; and the space between the lodges was five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate toward the house was one reed. ⁸ He measured also the porch of the gate toward the house, one reed. ⁹ Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and its posts, two cubits; and the porch of the gate was toward the house. ¹⁰ The lodges of the gate eastward were three on this side and three on that side; these three were of the same measure: and the posts had the same measure on this side and on that side. ¹¹ He measured the breadth of the opening of the gate, ten cubits; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits; ¹² and a border before the lodges of one cubit on this side, and a border of one

40:1 The return of the exiles from Babylon could have led to the re-establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, replete with a Messiah figure and a temple according to the pattern showed to Ezekiel in Ez. 40 – 48. Parts of many of the prophets looked forward to this time, as did the restoration prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah 40-66. All of these could have had their fulfilment in the return under Ezra, but this was disabled by the poor response to the call to return. Under Nehemiah and then even in Malachi's time, these Kingdom prophecies could have had their fulfilment, but time and again Judah failed to live up to the necessary preconditions. In all this lies abundant exhortation for us; so much *could* happen but doesn't, because of our failure to live out and fulfil prophecy... instead, like Judah, we tend to assume that the time for fulfilment will inexorably arrive some day, regardless of our effort. The details of the temple are to the micro detail. They were commands rather than predictions, for Judah to fulfil. Ezekiel 40-48 was intended as an architectural record of the 'old' temple upon which a new one was to be reconstructed.

cubit on that side; and the lodges, six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. ¹³ He measured the gate from the roof of the one lodge to the roof of the other, a breadth of twenty-five cubits; door against door. ¹⁴ He made also posts, sixty cubits; and the court reached to the posts, around the gate. ¹⁵ From the forefront of the gate at the entrance to the forefront of the inner porch of the gate were fifty cubits. ¹⁶ There were closed windows to the lodges, and to their posts within the gate all around, and likewise to the arches; and windows were around inward; and on each post were palm trees.

The Outer Court of the Temple

¹⁷ Then brought he me into the outer court; and behold, there were rooms and a pavement, made for the court all around: thirty rooms were on the pavement. ¹⁸ The pavement was by the side of the gates, answerable to the length of the gates, even the lower pavement. ¹⁹ Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate to the forefront of the inner court outside, one hundred cubits, both on the east and on the north.

The Gate Which Is toward the North

²⁰ The gate of the outer court whose prospect is toward the north, he measured its length and its breadth. ²¹ The lodges of it were three on this side and three on that side; and its posts

and its arches were after the measure of the first gate: its length was fifty cubits, and the breadth twenty-five cubits. ²² The windows of it, and its arches, and the palm trees of it, were after the measure of the gate whose prospect is toward the east; and they went up to it by seven steps; and its arches were before them. ²³ There was a gate to the inner court over against the other gate, both on the north and on the east; and he measured from gate to gate one hundred cubits.

The Gate Which Is toward the South

²⁴ He led me toward the south; and behold, a gate toward the south: and he measured its posts and its arches according to these measures. ²⁵ There were windows in it and in its arches all around, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth twenty-five cubits. ²⁶ There were seven steps to go up to it, and its arches were before them; and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, on its posts. ²⁷ There was a gate to the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south a hundred cubits.

The Inner Court Gates

²⁸ Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; ²⁹ and its lodges, and its posts, and its arches, according to

40:29 Nehemiah did his very best to bring the potential Kingdom of God about by urging the people to repentance and conformity to God's will, such was his perception

these measures: and there were windows in it and in its arches all around; it was fifty cubits long, and twenty-five cubits broad.³⁰ There were arches all around, twenty-five cubits long, and five cubits broad.³¹ The arches of it were toward the outer court; and palm trees were on its posts: and the ascent to it had eight steps.³² He brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures;³³ and its lodges, and its posts, and its arches, according to these measures: and there were windows therein and in its arches all around; it was fifty cubits long, and twenty-five cubits broad.³⁴ The arches of it were toward the outer court; and palm trees were on its posts, on this side, and on that side: and the ascent to it had eight steps.³⁵ He brought me to the north gate: and he measured it according to these measures;³⁶ its lodges, its posts, and its arches: and there were windows therein all around; the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth twenty-five cubits.³⁷ The posts of it were toward the outer court; and palm trees were on its posts, on this side, and on that side: and the ascent to it had eight steps.

The Sacrifice Preparation Rooms

³⁸ A room with its door was by the posts at the gates; there they washed

the burnt offering.³⁹ In the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to kill thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering.⁴⁰ On the one side outside, as one goes up to the entry of the gate toward the north, were two tables; and on the other side, which belonged to the porch of the gate, were two tables.⁴¹ Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they killed the sacrifices.⁴² There were four tables for the burnt offering, of cut stone, a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high; whereupon they laid the instruments with which they killed the burnt offering and the sacrifice.⁴³ The hooks, a handbreadth long, were fastened within all around: and on the tables was the flesh of the offering.

The Priests' Rooms

⁴⁴ Outside of the inner gate were rooms for the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate; and their prospect was toward the south; one at the side of the east gate having the prospect toward the north.⁴⁵ He said to me, This room, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the duty of the house;⁴⁶ and the

of what was going on; that the re-establishment of God's Kingdom was being limited by the apathy of his own people. No fewer than 24 times in Ez. 40–48 are we told that the temple was to be built by 'measure' (e.g. 40:3,5,10,21,22,24,28,29); and the same word occurs frequently in describing how Nehemiah gave various groups of Jews their own 'measure' in the work of rebuilding Jerusalem (Neh. 3:11,19,20,22,24,27). See on 48:31.

room whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, who from among the sons of Levi come near to Yahweh to minister to Him. ⁴⁷ He measured the court, one hundred cubits long, and a hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar was before the house.

The Temple Porch and Details

⁴⁸ Then he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. ⁴⁹ The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; even by the steps by which

they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

CHAPTER 41 Oct. 15

Measurements of the Temple Building

He brought me to the temple and measured the doorposts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the structure. ² The breadth of the entrance was ten cubits; and the sides of the entrance were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured its length, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits. ³ Then he went inside and measured each post of the entrance, two cubits; and the

40:46 It could have been possible for the Messianic Kingdom to have been established at the time of the restoration, and these temple prophecies would fit perfectly into this context. Thus Ezekiel emphasised that the sons of Zadok were to organize priestly work in the temple (see too 43:19; 44:15; 48:11); Ezra, the leader of the initial restoration, was one of the sons of Zadok (Ezra 7:2). He was in a position to fulfil those prophecies, although the bulk of his brethren seem to have precluded this. Ezra was enabled to beautify the temple (Ezra 7:27), the very same Hebrew word used in Is. 60:7,9,13 about how God would “glorify” His temple with merchandise from throughout the Babylonian empire – all of which was willingly offered by Cyrus and Darius. Ez. 40-48 stress the “gates” dozens of times; and Nehemiah’s account likewise stresses many times the attention he paid to setting up the “gates”, as if he saw his work as fulfilling Ezekiel’s words. :42 speaks of the vessels to be used in the temple with the same Hebrew word used for the temple vessels which were brought out of Babylon back to Judah, in fulfilment of several of Isaiah’s ‘Kingdom’ passages (Ezra 1:6-11; 8:25-33 cp. Is. 52:11; 66:20).

The keepers of the charge – Judah were to keep the charges of God relating to His house. Nehemiah, seeking for Israel’s obedience to Ezekiel’s vision, tried to get them to “keep the charges” (s.w. Neh. 7:3; 12:9,45; 13:20). But soon, Judah complained that there was no benefit to them from having kept the charges (Mal. 3:14 s.w.). Partial obedience discouraged them from any further effort, because the fullness of blessing can only come from a way of life conformed to God’s Kingdom vision and life. This is why people get disillusioned with religion and lose even the true faith – because they seek for immediate benefit as a result of keeping a few highly specific aspects of God’s law, rather than willingly devoting their way of life to the realisation of His vision.

entrance, six cubits; and the breadth of the entrance, seven cubits. ⁴ He measured its length, twenty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple. He said to me, This is the most holy place. ⁵ Then he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of every side room, four cubits, all around the house on every side. ⁶ The side rooms were in three floors, one over another, and thirty on each floor. The outer wall on each floor was thinner than on the floor below, so that the rooms could rest on the wall without being anchored into it. ⁷ The walls of the house, when seen from the outside, seemed to have the same thickness all the way to the top. Against the house's outer wall, on the outside of the rooms, two wide stairways were built, so that it was possible to go from the lower story to the middle and the upper stories. ⁸ I saw also that the house had a raised base all around: the foundations of the side rooms were a full reed of six great cubits. ⁹ The thickness of the wall, which was for the side rooms, on the outside, was five cubits: and that which was left was the place of the side rooms that belonged to the house. ¹⁰ Between the rooms was a breadth of twenty cubits around the house on every side. ¹¹ The doors of the side rooms were toward the

place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the free space that was left was five cubits all around. ¹² The building that was before the separate place at the side toward the west was seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its length ninety cubits. ¹³ So he measured the house, one hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with its walls, one hundred cubits long; ¹⁴ also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, one hundred cubits. ¹⁵ He measured the length of the building before the separate place which was at its back, and its galleries on the one side and on the other side, one hundred cubits; and the inner temple, and the porches of the court; ¹⁶ the thresholds, and the closed windows, and the galleries around on their three stories, over against the threshold, with wood ceilings all around, and from the ground up to the windows, (now the windows were covered), ¹⁷ to the space above the door, even to the inner house, and outside, and by all the wall all around inside and outside, by measure. ¹⁸ It was made with cherubim and palm trees; and a palm tree was between cherub and cherub, and each cherub had two fac-

41:5 These rooms around the temple were in Christ's mind when He spoke of how in God's house or temple, there are many rooms; and He has prepared one for each of us by His death on the cross (Jn. 14:2). It could be that He understood the temple as a spiritual house, and that the vision of 40-48 was going to be fulfilled in a more abstract, spiritual manner.

41:8 *A full reed of six great cubits* – See on 45:1.

es; ¹⁹ so that there was the face of a man toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side. Thus was it made through all the house all around: ²⁰ from the ground to above the door were cherubim and palm trees made: thus was the wall of the temple. ²¹ As for the temple, the door posts were squared; and as for the face of the sanctuary, the appearance of it was as the appearance of the temple. ²² The altar was of wood, three cubits high, and its length two cubits; and its corners, and its length, and its walls, were of wood: and he said to me, This is the table that is before Yahweh. ²³ The temple and the sanctuary had two doors. ²⁴ The doors had two leaves apiece, two turning leaves: two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other. ²⁵ There were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubim and palm trees, like as were made on the walls; and there was a threshold of wood on the face of the porch outside. ²⁶ There were closed windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the

porch: thus were the side rooms of the house, and the thresholds.

CHAPTER 42 Oct. 16

More on the Priests' Rooms

Then he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the room that was opposite the separate place, and which was opposite the building toward the north. ² The length of the building whose door faced north was a hundred cubits, and the breadth was fifty cubits. ³ Over against the twenty cubits which belonged to the inner court, and over against the pavement which belonged to the outer court, was gallery against gallery in the third story. ⁴ Before the rooms was a walk of ten cubits' breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors were toward the north. ⁵ Now the upper rooms were shorter; for the galleries took away from these, more than from the lower and the middle, in the building. ⁶ For they were in three stories, and they had no pillars like the pillars of the courts. Thus the upper chambers were set back from the

41:26 There are many links between Solomon's temple and that described by Ezekiel. The repeated stress on the cherubim / palm tree decor in both the records of Solomon's temple and also Ezekiel's encourages the idea that the prophesied temple was to be seen as a re-establishment of Solomon's (1 Kings 6:29,32,35; 7:36 cp. Ez. 40:16,22,26,31,34,37; 41:18-20, 25,26). There were "thick planks" upon the porch of Solomon's temple; and the same word is only used elsewhere in describing how this would feature in Ezekiel's temple too (1 Kings 7:6 cp. Ez. 41:25,26). Even the "windows of narrow lights" (1 Kings 6:4) were to be replicated (Ez. 40:16; 41:16,26). Solomon's system of "chambers" was likewise copied (1 Kings 6:5,8,16 cp. Ez. 41:5-11 same Hebrew word). The glory of Yahweh was to fill Ezekiel's temple as it had done Solomon's (Ez. 43:5 cp. 1 Kings 8:10). Both temples were to be ready for operation on "the eighth day" after their consecration (Ez. 43:27 cp. 1 Kings 8:66). Ezekiel's temple was to be of a similar size to that of Solomon's; see on 45:1.

ground more than the lower and the middle ones.⁷ The wall that was outside by the side of the rooms, toward the outer court before the rooms, its length was fifty cubits.⁸ For the length of the rooms that were in the outer court was fifty cubits: and see, before the temple were one hundred cubits.⁹ From under these rooms was the entry on the east side, as one goes into them from the outer court.¹⁰ In the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, before the separate place, and before the building, there were rooms.¹¹ The way before them was like the appearance of the way of the rooms which were toward the north; according to their length so was their breadth: and all their exits were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors.¹² According to the doors of the rooms that were toward the south was a door at the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one enters into them.¹³ Then he said to me, The north rooms and the south rooms, which are before the separate place, they are the holy rooms, where the priests who are near to Yahweh shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meal offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place

is holy.¹⁴ When the priests enter in, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments in which they minister; for they are holy: and they shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.¹⁵ Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it all around.¹⁶ He measured on the east side with the measuring reed five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed all around.¹⁷ He measured on the north side five hundred reeds with the measuring reed all around.¹⁸ He measured on the south side five hundred reeds with the measuring reed.¹⁹ He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed.²⁰ He measured it on the four sides: it had a wall around it, the length five hundred, and the breadth five hundred, to make a separation between that which was holy and that which was common.

CHAPTER 43 Oct. 17

The Return of the Glory of God

Afterward he brought me to the gate that looks toward the east.² Behold, the glory of the God of

42:16 *Reeds* – The problem is that the length of the reed isn't specified. See on 45:1.

42:20 The new temple was “to make a separation between that which was holy and that which was common” – alluding back to Ezekiel's earlier lament that Judah had not made that very separation (22:26). Time and again, the new system is described in terms which allude to the bad practices in the old system – e.g. the stress of 42:4 etc. that the doors of the new chambers were “toward the north” connects with how Ezekiel had earlier seen women weeping for Tammuz “towards the north” in the temple (8:14; 9:2).

Israel came from the east: and His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shined with His glory. ³ It was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. ⁴ The glory of Yahweh came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. ⁵ The Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the house. ⁶ I heard one speaking to me out of the house; and a man stood by me. ⁷ He said to me, Son of man, this is the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of

Israel forever. The house of Israel shall no more defile My holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their prostitution, and by the dead bodies of their kings in their high places; ⁸ in their setting of their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost beside My doorpost, and there was but the wall between Me and them; and they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed: therefore I have consumed them in My anger. ⁹ Now let them put away their prostitution, and the dead bodies of their kings, far from Me; and I will dwell in their midst forever. ¹⁰ You, son of man, show the house to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure

43:5 The glory would have entered the house of God's glory as it did at the inauguration of the first temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3). Ezekiel prophesied that ultimately the glory would fill the temple as it had done then (:4,5). But God's prophesy of this in Is. 60:7, that He would glorify His house, meant that He was prepared to work through men to glorify it. The fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision of the cloud of glory entering the temple again could have been fulfilled if the exiles had done what Cyrus empowered them to do – to glorify the house of glory. And so the fulfilment was delayed. The glory of the temple the exiles built was tragically less than the glory of the first temple; and so it would only be in the last day of Messiah's second coming that the house shall truly be filled with glory (Hag. 2:3,7,9). And the lesson ought to be clear for us, in the various projects and callings of our lives: it becomes crucial for us to discern God's specific purposes for us, and insofar as we follow His leading, we will feel a blessing and power which is clearly Divine.

43:8 How close God was ought to have made them quit their idolatry. But their cognizance of the closeness of God was merely theoretical. They didn't feel nor respond to the wonder of it. And truly, He is not far from every one of us.

43:10 Ezekiel showed Judah the general picture of the temple; if they were obedient, then God promised to give them more details so they could build it in reality. There is a congruence between the style of address found in Ez. 40-48 and the earlier part of the prophecy. This is because Ezekiel is addressing the same audience – those who had heard his criticisms and appeals for repentance were the same group who were now being commanded to build a temple according to the dimensions given. Thus "You shall tell the rebellious house of Israel..." (44:6) is the same rubric used earlier (2:5; 3:26; 12:2,25; 17:12; 24:3). The new temple was "to make a separation

the pattern. ¹¹ If they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the form of the house, and its fashion, and its exits, and its entrances, and all its forms, and all its ordinances, and all its forms, and all its laws; and write it in their sight; that they may keep the whole form of it, and all its ordinances, and do them. ¹² This is the law of the house: on the top of the mountain the whole limit around it shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

Details of the Altar

¹³ These are the measures of the altar by cubits (the cubit is a cubit and a handbreadth): the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and its border around its edge a span; and this shall be the base of the altar. ¹⁴ From the bottom on the ground to

the lower ledge shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser ledge to the greater ledge shall be four cubits, and the breadth a cubit. ¹⁵ The upper altar shall be four cubits; and from the altar hearth and upward there shall be four horns. ¹⁶ The altar hearth shall be twelve cubits long by twelve broad, square in the four sides of it. ¹⁷ The ledge shall be fourteen cubits long by fourteen broad in the four sides of it; and the border about it shall be half a cubit; and its bottom shall be a cubit around; and its steps shall look toward the east. ¹⁸ He said to me, Son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh: These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. ¹⁹ You shall give to the priests the Levites

between that which was holy and that which was common” (42:20) – alluding back to Ezekiel’s earlier lament that Judah had not made that very separation (22:26). Time and again, the new system is described in terms which allude to the bad practices in the old system – e.g. the stress of 42:4 etc. that the doors of the new chambers were “toward the north” connects with how Ezekiel had earlier seen women weeping for Tammuz “towards the north” in the temple (8:14; 9:2). Ezekiel himself was to provide the sons of Zadok with a bullock for a sin offering (43:19), as if he himself could have been present in the work of the building and dedication of this temple. Ezekiel himself, as a priest, was to inaugurate the altar by sprinkling blood upon it and making an offering (43:20–25). Ezekiel’s temple prophecies are described as “the law of the house” (43:12). They were a law, a commandment to be fulfilled. This explains the commandment style of the instructions, e.g. 44:2: “This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened”. The description of Ezekiel’s Temple was to be given to the captives in Babylon by Ezekiel, to lead them to repentance and to assure them of what could be if they repented. Then when the invitation to leave Babylon and return came in the time of Ezra, they ought to have been motivated to return to the land and build the temple which Ezekiel had explained to them. But sadly most of them weren’t very deeply motivated at all; they wanted to build a temple, but not to the extent Ezekiel had outlined. The intention was that *then*, when the temple was built (:11), they were to be obedient in all the ways in which they hadn’t been obedient in the past, with the result that they were now sitting in captivity (44:24).

43:19 This suggests the temple could have been built within Ezekiel’s lifetime, for he

who are of the seed of Zadok, who are near to Me, to minister to Me, says the Lord Yahweh, a young bull for a sin offering. ²⁰ You shall take of its blood, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the ledge, and on the border all around: thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. ²¹ You shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burnt in the appointed place of the house, outside of the sanctuary. ²² On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull. ²³ When you have finished cleansing it, you shall offer a young bull without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. ²⁴ You shall bring them near to Yahweh, and the priests shall cast salt

on them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering to Yahweh. ²⁵ Seven days you shall prepare every day a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. ²⁶ Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and purify it; so shall they consecrate it. ²⁷ When they have accomplished the days, it shall be that on the eighth day, and onwards, the priests shall make your burnt offerings on the altar and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, says the Lord Yahweh.

CHAPTER 44 Oct. 18

The Prince and the Officials of the Temple

Then he brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looks toward the

was to give the animals to the sons of Zadok to offer in the temple; Ezekiel was to prepare the daily sacrifice (46:13). But due to the Jews' selfishness and lack of spirituality, it didn't happen. This accounts for the many links between the Ezekiel prophesies and prophets like Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. What was theoretically possible, what potentially could have been, simply wasn't – because of their self-centredness and lack of effort. The prophecy of Ezekiel 40-48 was therefore primarily command rather than prediction. This was how it should have been, but the Jews failed to obey it all. They were minimalists, satisficers, rather than rising up to their full potential.

43:21 Nehemiah built 'Miphkad', "the Muster Gate" (Neh. 3:31 RSV), the "appointed place" [same Hebrew word]; he really tried to fulfil this command of 43:21. See on 40:29; 48:31. But one man's obedience couldn't in this case count for the whole people. **43:27** See on 20:40. If Judah resumed building the temple according to Ezekiel's plan, "I will take pleasure" in it, God offered (Hag. 1:8). They should be more committed to building the temple "that I may appear in my glory" (RSV). The glory of Yahweh as described at the end of Ezekiel could have appeared in Haggai's time – but this wonderful possibility was held back by Israel's petty minded, self-satisficing laziness. The same word is used here in 43:27 – *then*, when the temple of Ezekiel was built, Yahweh would "accept / take pleasure in" His people and temple. But because they built and served Him with such a mean spirit, He did not "accept" them at that time (Mal. 1:10,13 s.w.).

I will accept you – This is to be connected with the prophecy of 20:41, that God would accept His people when they had been regathered from Babylon.

east; and it was shut. ² Yahweh said to me, This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for Yahweh, the God of Israel, has entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut. ³ As for the prince, he shall sit therein as prince to eat bread before Yahweh; he shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the way of the same. ⁴ Then he brought me by the way of the north gate before the house; and I looked, and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the house of Yahweh: and I fell on my face. ⁵ Yahweh said to me, Son of man, mark well, and see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I tell you concerning all the ordinances of the house of Yahweh, and all its laws; and mark well

the entrance of the house, with every exit of the sanctuary. ⁶ You shall tell the rebellious house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: you house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, ⁷ in that you have brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary, to profane it, even My house, when you offer My bread, the fat and the blood; and they have broken My covenant, to add to all your abominations. ⁸ You have not performed the duty of My holy things; but you have set performers of My duty in My sanctuary for yourselves. ⁹ Thus says the Lord Yahweh, No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary,

44:2 The priests were to shut the gates (44:2; 46:2,12); but the returned exiles in practice refused to do this unless they were paid for it (Mal. 1:10). The potential set up simply wasn't realized because of petty selfishness.

44:6 *Let it suffice you* – These words are picked up from the LXX by Peter, and applied to all of us in 1 Pet. 4:3: “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles” (Gk.). The temple vision should have made them ashamed of their sins (43:10,11). It should have motivated them to live the Kingdom life in their lives. Ezekiel's prophecies should have been an inspiration to Israel to be obedient and live out these things as a reality before them, and thereby see other prophecies come true in their own experience. They could have entered upon an upward spiral of spirituality. The form of the house, the very description of it by Ezekiel, should have inspired them to feel that they had had enough of sin.

44:7 The house was not to be profaned, the covenant wasn't to be broken. Judah returned from exile, built a temple, but profaned the Sabbath (Neh. 13:17,18), and profaned the temple by their marriage with Gentiles and their “weariness” with the temple ordinances (Mal. 1:12; 2:10,11). They got bored with the things of the Kingdom, and so they had no part in it. Judah broke covenant [s.w.] with Yahweh at the time of the restoration by marrying Gentiles and worshipping their gods (Ezra 9:1,14). We can externally appear obedient, as Judah did by building a temple, but our hearts can be far from the things of God's covenant. By doing this, Judah precluded the possibility of all that is spoken in Ez. 40-48 from being fulfilled at that time.

44:9 The temple was primarily for the worship of Israel, “the people of the land” (45:22; 46:3,9), not for the whole world – no uncircumcised were allowed to worship in it.

of any foreigners who are among the people of Israel. ¹⁰ But the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. ¹¹ Yet now they are to be ministers in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house, and ministering in the house: they shall kill the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. ¹² Because they ministered to them before their idols, and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel; therefore have I lifted up My hand against them, says the Lord Yahweh, and they shall bear their iniquity. ¹³ They shall not come near to Me, to execute the office of priest to Me, nor to come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. ¹⁴ Yet will I make them performers of the duty of the house, for all its service, and for all that shall be done therein. ¹⁵ But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who performed the duty of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood, says the Lord Yahweh: ¹⁶ they shall enter into My sanctuary, and they shall come near to My table, to minister to Me, and they shall keep My instructions. ¹⁷ It shall be that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with lin-

en garments; and no wool shall come on them, while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. ¹⁸ They shall have linen headware on their heads, and shall have linen breeches on their waists; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat. ¹⁹ When they go forth into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they minister, and lay them in the holy rooms; and they shall put on other garments, that they not sanctify the people with unclean garments. ²⁰ Neither shall they shave their heads, nor allow their locks to grow long; they shall only cut off the hair of their heads. ²¹ Neither shall any of the priests drink wine when they enter into the inner court. ²² Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her who is divorced; but they shall take virgins of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. ²³ They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the common, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. ²⁴ In a controversy they shall stand to judge; according to My ordinances shall they judge it: and they shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts; and they shall make My Sabbaths holy. ²⁵ They shall not go near a dead person to defile themselves; but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister who has had no husband, they may defile themselves. ²⁶ After he is cleansed, they shall reckon to

him seven days. ²⁷ In the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, says the Lord Yahweh. ²⁸ They shall have an inheritance: I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. ²⁹ They shall eat the meal offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. ³⁰ The first of all the first fruits of every thing, and every offering of everything, of all

your offerings, shall be for the priest: you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, to cause a blessing to rest on your house. ³¹ The priests shall not eat of anything that dies of itself, or is torn, whether it be bird or animal.

CHAPTER 45 Oct. 19

How the Land Was to Be Divided

Moreover, when you shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, you shall offer an offering to Yahweh, a holy portion of the land; the

44:31 There are many details in Ez. 40-48 which seem very hard to apply to a future Kingdom under the rulership of Jesus. The offering of animal sacrifices in order to gain forgiveness seems to flatly contradict the teaching of Hebrews concerning the one time nature of Christ's offering. The existence of animals who will have been "torn" by other animals seems hard to square with the Kingdom prophecies of Isaiah 9 and 11 about the animals living at peace with each other. The language used about "the prince" also seems impossible to understand about an immortal being. The whole prophecy was a command for the returning exiles from Babylon rather than prediction of the future. If we insist that every part of Ez. 40-48 is going to have a literal fulfillment in the Millennium, then we have to accept that Jesus will accept divorce and remarriage in His Kingdom – it's just that the priests won't be able to marry divorcees, but others will (44:22).

45:1 The problem is that the Hebrew text strangely omits the measurement unit. The "oblation" would be about 60 miles square if we measure it in "reeds" as some Bibles assume, although this term isn't in the Hebrew text here; if the "reed" is "six great cubits" as defined in 41:8, then this area would encroach either upon the Mediterranean or the Dead Sea, and it seems contextually more likely that a smaller area measured in cubits is intended, which would make the temple similar in dimension to Solomon's temple (see on 41:26). If measured in reeds, this large area somewhat disrupts the distribution of land amongst the tribes as detailed later in Ezekiel. If the missing measurement unit here is cubits and not reeds, it is likely that it is in the dimensions of the temple itself. The are described here in 45:1 is to be "the length of twenty five thousand". The following verse speaks of *cubits* as the measurement unit. Only the context can decide whether cubits or reeds is meant in many of the Ezekiel passages. If it is going to be thousands of reeds, then it would be over one mile square. However, Jer. 30:18 RSV prophesies that "the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall be where it used to be". And passages as varied as Zech. 1, Ps. 68 and Micah 4 all insist that the temple of the restored Kingdom was to built *within* the city of Jerusalem. If the temple is 500 reeds square, there will be no room for a city, assuming the city will be of the same size as the previous old city of Jerusalem.

length shall be the length of twenty-five thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand: it shall be holy in all its border all around. ² Of this there shall be for the holy place five hundred in length by five hundred in breadth, square all around; and fifty cubits for its suburbs all around. ³ Of this measure you shall measure a length of twenty-five thousand, and a breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary, which is most holy. ⁴ It is a holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to Yahweh; and it shall be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the sanctuary. ⁵ Twenty-five thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth, shall be to the Levites, the ministers of the house, for a possession to themselves, as places to live in. ⁶ You shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and twenty-five thousand long, side by side with the offering of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. ⁷ Whatever is for the prince shall be on the one side and on the other side of the holy offering and of the possession of the city, in front of the holy offering and in front of the possession of the city, on the west side westward, and on the east side eastward; and in length answer-

able to one of the portions, from the west border to the east border. ⁸ In the land it shall be to him for a possession in Israel: and My princes shall no more oppress My people; but they shall give the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes. ⁹ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Let it suffice you, princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute justice and righteousness instead of dispossessing My people, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁰ You shall have just balances, a just ephah and a just bath. ¹¹ The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of a homer, and the ephah the tenth part of a homer: its measure shall be after the homer. ¹² The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels shall be your mina.

Offerings and Feast Days

¹³ This is the offering that you shall offer: the sixth part of an ephah from a homer of wheat; and you shall give the sixth part of an ephah from a homer of barley; ¹⁴ and the set portion of oil, of the bath of oil, the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, which is ten baths, even a homer (for ten baths are a homer); ¹⁵ and one lamb of the flock, out of two hundred, from the

45:8 The princes were not to oppress the people as they did in the recent past (45:8 cp. Jer. 22:3; Ez. 18:7,12,16; 22:7,29; Zeph. 3:1, where the same Hebrew word for “oppress” is found). Thus there was to be repentance for the ‘oppression’ which Ezekiel had earlier had to criticize Israel for. They were to have “just” balances (45:10), as opposed to the “unjust” balances which they had in the lead up to the captivity (Jer. 22:13 Heb.). In the past, they had brought strangers into the temple; but in the new system, they were not to do so (44:7 cp. 9).

well-watered pastures of Israel—for a meal offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make atonement for them, says the Lord Yahweh. ¹⁶ All the people of the land shall give to this offering for the prince in Israel. ¹⁷ It shall be the prince's part to give the burnt offerings, and the meal offerings, and the drink offerings, in the feasts, and on the new moons, and on the Sabbaths, in all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering and the meal offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel. ¹⁸ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: In the first month, in the first day of the month, you shall take a young bull without blemish; and you shall cleanse the sanctuary. ¹⁹ The priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put it on the door posts of the house and on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the posts of the gate of the inner court. ²⁰ So you shall do on the seventh day of the month for everyone who errs, and for him who is ignorant: so you shall make atonement for the house. ²¹ In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, you

shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. ²² On that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. ²³ The seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to Yahweh, seven bulls and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a male goat daily for a sin offering. ²⁴ He shall prepare a meal offering, an ephah for a bull, and an ephah for a ram, and a hin of oil to an ephah. ²⁵ In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, in the feast, shall he do the like the seven days; according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meal offering, and according to the oil.

CHAPTER 46 Oct. 20

The Prince and His Offerings

Thus says the Lord Yahweh: The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. ² The prince shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate outside, and shall stand by the post of

45:16 "The people of the land" were to have a part in the new system of things (45:16,22; 46:3,9), and yet this very phrase is repeatedly used concerning the Samaritan people who lived in the land at the time of the restoration with whom Judah intermarried and whose gods and language they accepted (Ezra 4:4; 10:2,11; Neh. 9:24; 10:30,31). God's intention was that they should eventually be converted unto Him; it was His intention that Ezekiel's temple be built at the time of the restoration under Ezra. And yet Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5 criticize the Jews who returned and built the temple for continuing to oppress these strangers / Gentiles. So much was made possible potentially that never happened, because of Judah's short sightedness and failure to grasp it. The same is true in the lives of God's people today.

the gate; and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. ³ The people of the land shall worship at the door of that gate before Yahweh on the Sabbaths and on the new moons. ⁴ The burnt offering that the prince shall offer to Yahweh shall be on the Sabbath day six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; ⁵ and the meal offering shall be an ephah for the ram, and the meal offering for the lambs as he is able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. ⁶ On the day of the new moon it shall be a young bull without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish: ⁷ and he shall prepare a meal offering, an ephah for the bull, and an ephah for the ram, and for the lambs according

as he is able, and a hin of oil to an ephah. ⁸ When the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of the gate, and he shall go out by its way. ⁹ But when the people of the land shall come before Yahweh in the appointed feasts, he who enters by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he who enters by the way of the south gate shall go out by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate by which he came in, but shall go out straight before him. ¹⁰ The prince, when they go in, shall go in with them; and when they go out, he shall go out. ¹¹ In the feasts and in the solemnities the meal offering shall be an ephah for a bull and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs as he is able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. ¹² When the prince shall prepare a

46:11 “The prince” of 21:27 was Judah’s last ruler – so “the prince” later in Ezekiel would appear to be a promise of a restored monarchy. Yet tragically, the royal family chose to remain in Babylon. “The prince” offers as He is able (:11) – hard to apply to the Almighty Lord Jesus. He offers sacrifice for his own sin, and has children, to whom He will pass an inheritance. And he has to be warned not to oppress the people (:18). It is a more comfortable interpretation to see him as primarily referring to Zerubbabel or Joshua the High Priest (44:3). It is evident from 46:3 and 44:3 that the promised Messiah figure was to be both a king and a priest – which would fit Joshua. Those men could have been so much; but their dysfunctions meant that what had been potentially prepared for them didn’t come true. The very same happens in the lives of so many of God’s people. We must pray for wisdom to understand what God intends for us, and have the faith to realize that we really can realize it in our lives. Zechariah concluded his prophecy about this Messiah figure with the comment that it would come to pass, if he would diligently obey the voice of the Lord (Zech. 6:10-15). Joshua-Jesus didn’t live up to it. And Zerubbabel never ruled in Jerusalem – he returned to the soft life in Babylon after the temple was rebuilt. But the prophecies suffered a deferral. They will in a broad sense be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, *the* branch, although the specific details were the commands which God intended the Messiah figure of Ezekiel’s time to fulfil and as such may not have to be literally fulfilled in any future reapplication of this prophecy.

freewill offering, a burnt offering or peace offerings as a freewill offering to Yahweh, one shall open for him the gate that looks toward the east; and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he does on the Sabbath day: then he shall go out; and after his going forth one shall shut the gate. ¹³ You shall prepare a lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering to Yahweh daily: morning by morning you shall prepare it. ¹⁴ You shall prepare a meal offering with it morning by morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of a hin of oil, to moisten the fine flour; a meal offering to Yahweh continually by a perpetual ordinance. ¹⁵ Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meal offering, and the oil, morning by morning, for a continual burnt offering. ¹⁶ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: If the prince give a gift to any of his sons, it is his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. ¹⁷ But if he gives of his inheritance as a gift to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year

of liberty; then it shall return to the prince; but as for his inheritance, it shall be for his sons. ¹⁸ Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by thrusting them out of their possession; he shall give an inheritance to his sons out of his own possession, that My people not be scattered every man from his possession. ¹⁹ Then he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy rooms for the priests, which looked toward the north: and behold, there was a place on the hinder part westward. ²⁰ He said to me, This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the meal offering; so that they do not bring them into the outer court, to sanctify the people. ²¹ Then he brought me into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and behold, in every corner of the court there was another court. ²² In the four corners of the court there were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty broad: these four in the corners were

46:12 *One shall open for him the gate* – David in his humility aspired to be such an anonymous gatekeeper in God's temple (Ps. 84:10). And yet "the prince" is defined as being "David" (34:24; 37:25). He was the prince exactly because he wished merely to the anonymous gatekeeper who would open the doors for the prince. In this we see the classic illustration of Christ's teaching that true greatness is in humility; He will be the highest in the Kingdom because in this life He debased Himself lowest (Mt. 23:12; Mk. 9:35; 10:44).

46:13 See on 43:19.

46:18 They had gone into captivity for these kinds of abuses, and they were to return and rebuild the temple after the pattern of Solomon's, repent of their sins and live righteously, and then they would have the possibility of bringing in the Messianic Kingdom. But they chose to be satisfied with a semi-revival, a quasi repentance – just as we can be so easily. And Nehemiah records how the princes *did* oppress the people, taking their land / possessions away from them.

of one measure. ²³ There was a wall around in them, around the four, and boiling places were made under the walls all around. ²⁴ Then he said to me, These are the boiling houses, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifices of the people.

CHAPTER 47 Oct. 21

The River

He brought me back to the door of the house; and see, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the front of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, on the south of the altar. ² Then he brought me out by the way of the north gate, and led me round by the way outside to the outer gate, to the gate that looks toward the east; and, there ran out waters on the right side. ³ When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured one thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the waist. ⁵ Afterward he measured one thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to

swim in, a river that could not be passed through. ⁶ He said to me, Son of man, have you seen this? Then he brought me and caused me to return to the bank of the river. ⁷ Now when I had returned, see, on the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸ Then he said to me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Salt Sea Arabah; and the waters of the sea shall be healed. ⁹ It shall happen, that every living creature which swarms, in every place where the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters have come there, and the waters of the sea shall be healed, and everything shall live wherever the river comes. ¹⁰ It shall happen, that fishermen shall stand by it: from En Gedi even to En Eglaim shall be a place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be after their species, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. ¹¹ But its muddy places and its marshes shall not be healed; they shall be given over to salt. ¹² By the river on its banks, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall its fruit fail: it shall bear new fruit every month, because its waters issue out of the sanctuary; and its fruit shall be for food, and its leaf for healing.

47:12 This is alluded to in Rev. 22:2,14, where the future Kingdom of God on earth is spoken of as having a tree or forest of trees of life, giving healing to the nations each month. Again we see that the essence of Ezekiel's vision will come true, but maybe not the exact details, which were tailored to Judah's possible experience on return from captivity.

The Borders of the Land of the Inheritance

¹³ Thus says the Lord Yahweh: This shall be the border, by which you shall divide the land for inheritance according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions.

¹⁴ You shall inherit it, one as well as another; for I swore to give it to your fathers: and this land shall fall to you for inheritance. ¹⁵ This shall be the border of the land: On the north side, from the great sea, by the road to Hethlon, to the entrance of Zedad;

¹⁶ Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazer Hatticon, which is by the border of Hauran. ¹⁷ The border from the sea, shall be from the sea to Hazar Enon at the border of Damascus; and on the north northward is the border of Hamath. This is the north side. ¹⁸ The east side, between Hauran and Damascus and Gilead, and the land of

Israel, shall be the Jordan; from the north border to the east sea you shall measure. This is the east side. ¹⁹ The south side southward shall be from Tamar as far as the waters of Meriboth Kadesh, to the brook of Egypt, to the great sea. This is the south side southward. ²⁰ The west side shall be the great sea, from the south border as far as over against the entrance of Hamath. This is the west side. ²¹ So you shall divide this land to you according to the tribes of Israel. ²² It shall happen, that you shall divide it by lot for an inheritance to you and to the aliens who live among you, who shall father children among you; and they shall be to you as the native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. ²³ It shall happen, that in what tribe the foreigner lives, there you shall give him his inheritance, says the Lord Yahweh.

47:13 The restored Kingdom of God could have come when Judah returned from Babylon. It was therefore potentially possible for the returning exiles to inherit all the land outlined in 47:13-21 and share it out between the twelve tribes. But according to the record in Ezra and Nehemiah, they grabbed every man for himself, his own farmstead, his own mini-Kingdom. They had no interest in the wider vision, nor in subduing extra land; and the majority of the Jews didn't even want to inherit it; they preferred the soft life of Babylon, the Kingdom of men rather than the Kingdom of God. And thus the Kingdom made possible was never actually fulfilled at that time.

47:16 The whole style of Ez. 40-48 is relevant to what could have been in Ezekiel's own time, rather than a specific prediction of the future – the borders of the land are described as “Sibraim, which *is* between the border of Damascus... on the north northward *is* the border of Hamath”.

47:23 The commandments about giving the Gentiles inheritance amongst the tribal cantons are understandable in the light of the fact that the Samaritans were living in the land at the time of the restoration. See on 43:10. Within Ezekiel, Israel are criticized for oppressing the stranger / Gentile who lived with them (22:7,29); and now they are told that in the new temple system, the stranger must be generously given an inheritance in the land, he must be counted as actually belonging to one of the tribes.

CHAPTER 48 Oct. 22*The Final Division of the Land*

Now these are the names of the tribes: From the north end, beside the way of Hethlon to the entrance of Hamath, Hazar Enan at the border of Damascus, northward beside Hamath, (and they shall have their sides east and west), Dan, one portion. ² By the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, Asher, one portion. ³ By the border of Asher, from the east side even to the west side, Naphtali, one portion. ⁴ By the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west side, Manasseh, one portion. ⁵ By the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west side, Ephraim, one portion. ⁶ By the border of Ephraim, from the east side even to the west side, Reuben, one portion. ⁷ By the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west side, Judah, one portion. ⁸ By the border of Judah, from the east side to the west side, shall be the district which you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand cubits in breadth, and in length as one of the portions, from the east side to the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in its midst. ⁹ The district that you shall offer to Yahweh shall be twenty-five thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth. ¹⁰ This holy district shall be for the priests: toward the north twenty-five thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south twenty-five thousand in length: and the sanctuary of Yahweh shall be in its midst.

¹¹ It shall be for the priests who are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, who have kept My instruction, who didn't go astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. ¹² It shall be to them an offering from the offering of the land, a thing most holy, by the border of the Levites. ¹³ Opposite the border of the priests, the Levites shall have an area twenty-five thousand cubits in length, and ten thousand in breadth: the entire length shall be twenty-five thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. ¹⁴ They shall sell none of it, nor exchange it, nor shall the first fruits of the land be separated; for it is holy to Yahweh. ¹⁵ The five thousand that are left in the breadth, in front of the twenty-five thousand, shall be for common use, for the city, for dwellings and for suburbs; and the city shall be in its midst. ¹⁶ These shall be its measures: the north side four thousand five hundred, and the south side four thousand five hundred, and on the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred. ¹⁷ The city shall have suburbs: toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. ¹⁸ The remainder in the length, alongside the holy district, shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward; and it shall be adjacent to the holy district; and its increase shall be for food to those who labour in the city. ¹⁹ Those who labour in the city, out

of all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. ²⁰ The entire district shall be twenty-five thousand by twenty-five thousand; you shall offer the holy district foursquare, with the possession of the city. ²¹ The residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy offering and of the possession of the city; in front of the twenty-five thousand of the offering toward the east border, and westward in front of the twenty-five thousand toward the west border, answerable to the portions, it shall be for the prince: and the holy offering and the sanctuary of the house shall be in its midst. ²² Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, it shall be for the prince. ²³ As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west side, Benjamin, one portion. ²⁴ By the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west side,

Simeon, one portion. ²⁵ By the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west side, Issachar, one portion. ²⁶ By the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west side, Zebulun, one portion. ²⁷ By the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west side, Gad, one portion. ²⁸ By the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar to the waters of Meribath Kadesh, to the brook of Egypt, to the great sea. ²⁹ This is the land which you shall divide by lot to the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their individual portions, says the Lord Yahweh.

The City Gates

³⁰ These are the exits of the city: On the north side four thousand five hundred reeds by measure; ³¹ and the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel, three gates northward: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate of Levi, one. ³² At the east side four

48:29 It was Ezekiel, as he sat with the exiles in Babylon, who was to divide the land by lot unto the various tribes. The tragedy of all the details recorded in Ezekiel 40-48, and the very reason for their being preserved to this day, is to show us to what great extent God has prepared potential things for His people, and yet they can be totally wasted if we don't respond. In fact according to Mic. 4:10, it was God's purpose to exile His people to Babylon, and *there* to deliver them from their enemies. And yet they preferred to side with their enemies and to prefer non-deliverance from Babylon. The tragedy of it all is almost unthinkable, and yet this is what we do if day by day we choose the things of this world against the deliverance from this world which there is in Christ.

48:31 Nehemiah arranged for 12 gates to be built in the wall, as Ez. 48:31-34 had commanded there to be. See on 40:29; 43:21. This verse is alluded to in Rev. 21:12, where it appears to be given a more symbolic application to the people of God, the new Jerusalem. Judah failed to build the new Jerusalem as intended, and so the essence of the vision was reapplied in a more abstract sense, and in this form will have its fulfilment in essence.

thousand five hundred reeds, and three gates: even the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one. ³³ At the south side four thousand five hundred reeds by measure, and three gates: the gate of Simeon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zebulun, one. ³⁴ At the west side four thousand five hundred reeds, with their three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one. ³⁵ It shall be eighteen thousand reeds around: and the name of the city from that day shall be, Yahweh is there.

48:35 See on 35:10.

DANIEL

CHAPTER 1 Oct. 23

Daniel's Babylonian Education

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Jerusalem, and besieged it. ² The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god: and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. ³ The king spoke to Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in some of the Israelites, those of the seed royal and of the nobles; ⁴ youths in whom was no blemish, but handsome, well educated, knowledgeable, understanding science, and such as had the ability to stand in the king's palace; that he should teach them the learning and the language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's dainties, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be trained for three years; that at its end they should stand before the king. ⁶ Now among these were, of the Judeans, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ The prince of the eunuchs gave names to them: to Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel determined not to defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. ⁹ Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs. ¹⁰ The prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king who has appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths who are of your own age? Do you really want to endanger my head with the king?

¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: ¹² Test your servants, I beg you, for ten days; let them give us vegetables to eat, and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our faces be looked on before you, and the faces of the youths who eat of the king's dainties; and as you see, deal with your servants. ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days their faces appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths who ate of the king's dainties. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them vegetables. ¹⁷ Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill

1:8 There was nothing in the Law of Moses which specifically forbade eating or drinking these things. But Daniel would've been defiled in his conscience. We too should go to great lengths to always have a good conscience, even if in the eyes of the world and of other members of God's people we appear strange.

in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ At the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore they served the king. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters who were in all his kingdom. ²¹ Daniel continued up to the first year of king Cyrus.

CHAPTER 2 Oct. 24

King Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him. ² Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. ³ The king said to them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. ⁴ Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in the Syrian language, O king, live forever: tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. ⁵ The king answered the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if you don't make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall

be made a compost heap. ⁶ But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore show me the dream and its interpretation. ⁷ They answered the second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. ⁸ The king answered, I know of a certainty that you would gain time, because you see the thing is gone from me. ⁹ But if you don't tell me the dream, there is but one law for you; for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, until the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation. ¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered before the king and said, There is not a man on the earth who can show the king's matter, because no king, lord or ruler has asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter or Chaldean. ¹¹ It is an unusual thing that the king requires, and there is no other who can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. ¹² Therefore the king was angry and very furious, and he commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. ¹³ So the decree went forth that all the wise men were to be slain; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain.

Daniel Offers to Interpret the Dream

¹⁴ Then Daniel returned answer with counsel and prudence to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who was

gone forth to kill the wise men of Babylon; ¹⁵ he answered Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so urgent from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. ¹⁶ Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would appoint him a time, and he would show the king the interpretation. ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house, and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions;⁸ that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; so that Daniel and his companions should not die with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel responded, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His. ²¹ He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings, and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding; ²² He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. ²³ I thank You, and praise You, You God of

my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might, and has now made known to me what we desired of You; for You have made known to us the king's matter. ²⁴ Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon and said this: Don't destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show to the king the interpretation. ²⁵ Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said: I have found a man among the captives of Judah who will make known to the king the interpretation. ²⁶ The king answered Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation? ²⁷ Daniel answered before the king, and said, The secret which the king has demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, show to the king; ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head on your bed, are these:

2:19 Given the urgency of the situation, Daniel would've been tempted to rush in to the King with the interpretation, knowing that every second counted to save the lives of his friends and himself. But firstly he takes time to thank God; we should do the same in life's crises.

2:21 *Wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding* – God confirms people in their wisdom and understanding. God gives more to the one who already has obtained some more (Lk. 19:25). There is an upward spiral in spiritual growth, which has God's word as the dynamic within it.

2:23 *Made known to us* – Notice how selfless Daniel was, in feeling that the interpretation had been made known to "us", not just to him personally, because he recognized that there had been prayers of others involved, not just his – hence he later says that we will make known the interpretation (:36).

The Dream Revealed

²⁹ As for you, O king, your thoughts came into your mind on your bed, what should happen in the future; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what shall happen.

³⁰ But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but to the intent that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

³¹ You, O king, saw, and behold, a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and its aspect was awesome. ³² As for this image, its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay. ³⁴ You saw until a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet that were of iron

and clay, and broke them in pieces.

³⁵ Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them: and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ This is the dream; and we will tell its interpretation before the king.

The Interpretation Presented

³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory. ³⁸ Wherever the children of men dwell, the animals of the field and the birds of the sky has He given into your hand, and has made you to rule over them all: you are the head of gold. ³⁹ After you shall arise another kingdom infe-

2:35 *No place was found for them* – Quoted in Rev. 20:11 about the present world system being destroyed at Christ's second coming.

2:39 *All the land* – The Chaldee word translated “land” here is equivalent to the Hebrew *eret*, which is used in the Bible to refer to either ‘the land’ promised to Abraham, or the whole planet. Bible prophecy is centred around the land and people of Israel. The Gentile nations mentioned are prophetically significant only in terms of their relations with Israel. Babylon at that time ruled over the land of Israel, but not over the whole earth. The prophecy predicts how after Babylon there would come other empires who would rule over Israel. The chest of silver refers to the Medo-Persian empire, the thighs of brass to the Greeks, and the two legs of iron to the Roman empire, the two legs possibly referring to the Eastern and Western parts of the empire. After that, Israel ceased to be a nation, until in the 20th century the Jews returned and established the state of Israel. The mixture of nations represented by the feet of iron and clay will dominate Israel for a short time – in decorum with the fact that the feet of the statue were not a very large part of its total height. This may refer to a union of nations dominating Israel in the time just prior to Christ's return. He is the stone cut out without hands (:45) – He was born of a virgin with no human hand involved. At His return He will destroy all human kingdoms and establish God's eternal Kingdom on this earth, which shall last eternally.

rior to you; and then a third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over all the land. ⁴⁰ The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, because iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things; and as iron that crushes all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. ⁴¹ Then you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, that shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. ⁴² As the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. ⁴³ Whereas you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cling to one another, even as iron does not mingle with clay. ⁴⁴ In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall

never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; it shall crush to powder and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ As you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall happen hereafter: and the dream is certain, and its interpretation sure. ⁴⁶ Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an offering and sweet incense to him. ⁴⁷ The king responded to Daniel and said, Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you have been able to reveal this secret. ⁴⁸ Then the king made Daniel great, and gave him many great gifts, and

2:44 Clear indication that the Kingdom of God is to be established on earth – not in Heaven.

Crush to powder – Alluded to by Jesus when He taught that He is the stone upon whom we either fall and are broken, or He will fall upon us and grind us to powder (Mt. 21:44). The choice we have is to fall upon Christ and become broken people, limping like Jacob by grace into His Kingdom; or to be ground to powder by Christ at His return, in that we will share the judgments of this present world system. Hence Paul speaks of how the rejected amongst the people of God will be “condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32). The crucial separation between us and the world must be made now.

2:45 The whole image stands complete in the last days; there will be a latter day Nebuchadnezzar who has beneath him a system comprising all the elements of Israel's previous dominators.

2:48 Daniel went through a yo-yo pattern of being promoted into the limelight, and then (in an unrecorded manner) slipping out of the limelight into relative obscurity, from which he was promoted again. Thus in 2:48 Daniel is made Prime Minister, in the events of Chapter 3 he seems to be strangely absent, in 4:8 Daniel is brought in to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's second dream almost as an afterthought, implying he was out of the limelight; by 5:11 King Belshazzar was unaware of Daniel, but promoted him to be third ruler in the Kingdom (5:29). Daniel was made master of the magi-

made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Daniel requested of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel was in the gate of the king.

CHAPTER 3 Oct. 25

The Burning Fiery Furnace

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits, and its breadth six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of

the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ³ Then the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ Then the herald called aloud, To you it is commanded, peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that whenever you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up; ⁶ and whoever doesn't fall down and worship shall immediately be cast

cians by Nebuchadnezzar; but by the time his son was reigning, this had largely been forgotten (5:12) – because Daniel evidently was nowhere near that job to which he'd been promoted. Why did Daniel slip out of the limelight? Was it not for the sake of his conscience? As a member of the Jewish community, it would have been so easy for Daniel to stay where he was, reasoning that holding down a job like that would enable him to do so much for the Truth. But he realized that his personal conscience and devotion to the spiritual life must be given number one priority if he was to help his people. There is an exact correspondence between the mind of Daniel here and the fervent believer who refuses promotion, jumps out of a career that is rubbing too strongly against the conscience...

3:1 The image of the Daniel 2 vision had described Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold, who would soon be replaced by other world empires. Nebuchadnezzar didn't like the sound of this – and so he blasphemously made an entire image of gold, as if to imply that he would in fact never come to an end. Believing in the coming of God's eternal Kingdom means we recognize our own frailty and mortality, and however small *our* 'kingdom' is in this world, it will quickly come to an end. Our focus will be on that Kingdom which is to come, rather than upon our 'kingdom' in this life, that very limited circle of things over which we have some power and control. Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to accept this; he like many unbelievers tried to live within the assumption, and create the impression, that his life and 'kingdom' would continue for ever. See on 4:3.

3:6 Rev. 13:14,15 speaks of the beast creating an image in the last days before Christ returns, and persecuting all those who refuse to bow down to it. This is clearly allud-

into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ⁷ Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and brought accusation against the Jews. ⁹ They answered Nebuchadnezzar the king, O king, live for ever. ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; ¹¹ and whoever doesn't fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not respected you. They don't serve your gods, nor worship

the golden image which you have set up. ¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar said to them, Is it on purpose, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready whenever you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if you don't worship, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands? ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it

ing to what happened in Daniel's time in historical Babylon. The essence of what we read here will therefore be seen in the last days before Christ's return. A "herald" cried aloud to peoples of all nations and languages, and bidden them worship the Babylonian image, on pain of being cast into a fiery furnace (:4). And yet in Rev. 14:9,10, an Angel herald cries to all nations and languages, warning them that if they *do* worship the image, they will be cast into the lake of fire. The Angels had observed Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance and defiance, and many centuries later they will work out their way of parodying it in their future proclamation to the world.

3:8 *Chaldeans* – The very astrologers (4:7) whose lives Daniel had saved (2:12). When we do good to others, very often they aren't merely ungrateful but positively resent us and seek to hurt us. This is a sad tendency of human nature, exemplified throughout history. If it happens to us, we must remember that it is in fact normal, and Biblical history is full of such examples, coming to their ultimate term in the Jewish hatred of their Saviour, Jesus.

3:18 Even if God didn't preserve them, they would still serve Him alone. Perhaps they had Job's words going round in their minds: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in

known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up. ¹⁹ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and his face changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ He commanded mighty men who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to throw them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their trousers, their tunics, and their mantles, and their other garments, and were thrown into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ These three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴ Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste: he spoke and said to his counsellors, Didn't we throw three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered the king, True, O king. ²⁵ He answered, Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are unharmed; and the appearance of the fourth is

like a son of the gods. ²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace: he spoke and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the midst of the fire. ²⁷ The satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power on their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their clothes changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, these who have set aside the king's command, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything evil against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a compost heap; because there is no other god who is able to deliver after this sort. ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Him" (Job 13:15). We cannot expect nor demand Divine deliverance from our crises; our love and trust of Him lead us to accept that He truly knows best and wishes us only our eternal good in our latter end.

3:28 *Yielded their bodies* – Alluded to in Rom. 6:13,19, where we are told that at baptism we yield our bodies in service to God as our true King and Master.

3:30 Where was Daniel at this time? Sick? Weak in faith? Away on business?

CHAPTER 4 Oct. 26***Another Dream for
Nebuchadnezzar***

Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations, and languages, who dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. ² It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked toward me. ³ How great are His signs! How mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation. ⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream which made me afraid; and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. ⁶ Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might explain to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then came in the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; and I told the dream before them; but they did not explain to me its interpretation. ⁸ But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and I told the dream before him, saying, ⁹ Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no

secret troubles you, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. ¹⁰ Thus were the visions of my head on my bed: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth; and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew, and was strong, and its height reached to the sky, and its sight to the end of all the earth. ¹² The leaves of it were beautiful, and its fruit much, and in it was food for all: the animals of the field had their shadow under it, and the birds of the sky lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. ¹³ I saw in the visions of my head on my bed, and behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from Heaven. ¹⁴ He cried aloud, and said thus: Cut down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit: let the animals get away from under it, and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ Nevertheless leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of the sky: and let his portion be with the animals in the grass of the earth: ¹⁶ let his heart be changed from man's, and let an animal's heart be given to him; and let seven times pass over him. ¹⁷ The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the judgment decision by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that

4:3 *From generation to generation* – Nebuchadnezzar learnt from his mistake of wanting his kingdom to last for ever – see on 3:1. He now recognizes the truth of the vision of chapter 2; that *his* kingdom and life were so very brief, and only *God's* Kingdom will be eternal.

4:17 The Chaldee words translated “sentence”, “decree” and “judgment decision” are all legal terms. This is an insight into the court of Heaven – presumably the matter in

the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets up over it the most abased of men.¹⁸ This dream I, king Nebuchadnezzar, have seen; and you, Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.

The Dream's Interpretation

¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was stricken mute for

a while, and his thoughts troubled him. The king answered, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream, or the interpretation, trouble you. Belteshazzar answered, My lord, the dream is to the side of those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries.²⁰ The tree that you saw, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached to the sky, and its view to all the earth;²¹ whose leaves were beautiful, and its fruit much, and in it was food for all; under which the animals of the field lived, and under whose branches the birds of the sky had their habitation:²² it is you, O king, that

question was Nebuchadnezzar's pride and his position on the Jews (Daniel's advice in 4:27 to shew mercy to the poor may be a reference to what the King should've been doing to the Jews – perhaps by enabling their return to their land?). And a 'judicial decision' was made and "a watcher and a Holy One came down from Heaven" to operationalize it (:13). If this is the extent of Angelic attention to the heart of a Gentile king – how much more earnestly are they debating the states of our hearts and our actions, and issuing decrees for action accordingly? God doesn't respond to the issues in our lives on autopilot, He doesn't use standard form responses; there is real, live, active discussion about little you and me in the court of Heaven itself, with Angels sent hither and thither in response.

The kingdom of men – Whilst God is ultimately the King of His entire creation even now, He has given man freewill to rule the world and his own life as he wishes. Thus at present the world is comprised of "the kingdom of men". At Christ's return, "the kingdoms of the world (will) become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). Then God's will and desires will be completely and openly performed in this earth. Hence Jesus' command for us to pray: "Your kingdom come (that) Your will be done on earth, as it is (now) in heaven" (Mt. 6:10).

The most abased – That most abased man was a reference to the Lord Jesus. He humbled Himself on the cross, that He might be exalted – to be King of God's Kingdom. The equivalent Hebrew word is used in Is. 53:3 about Christ's ultimate abasement on the cross.

4:19 Daniel in those moments must have been sorely tempted not to speak forth God's word, suspecting it might cost him his life if he did. We too have those moments when we struggle whether or not to open our mouth and testify as we should.

4:21 A spreading tree giving much fruit to all who took refuge under it is the very idea used by the contemporary prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 17:23) in describing the true Kingdom of God. This was to point up the choice available to Israel: a part in the Kingdom of

has grown and become strong; for your greatness is grown, and reaches to the sky, and your dominion to the end of the earth.²³ Whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from Heaven and saying, Cut down the tree, and destroy it; nevertheless leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of the sky; and let his portion be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him;²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High, which has come on my lord the king:²⁵ that you shall be driven from men, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass as oxen, and shall be wet with the dew of the sky, and seven times shall pass over you; until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it

to whomsoever He will.²⁶ Whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree; your kingdom shall be sure to you, after that you shall have known that the Heavens do rule.²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.

The Interpretation Is Fulfilled

²⁸ All this came on the king Nebuchadnezzar.²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking in the royal palace of Babylon.³⁰ The king spoke and said, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?³¹ While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has

God, or that pseudo-Kingdom of this world. We have the same choice today, living as we do in spiritual Babylon.

4:25 *Until you know* – The King was still struggling to accept the truth of the chapter 2 vision, that *his* kingdom and life were very limited, and he must refocus himself upon *God's* eternal Kingdom rather than upon his *own* life and kingdom. He theoretically had accepted the truth of this in 2:47 and 3:29; but he didn't accept it in his heart until after his humiliation (:34). We may likewise struggle to really accept the Gospel of God's coming Kingdom as we should; for believing in it requires a radical refocus of our lives today, right away from ourselves and our own lives and 'kingdoms'.

Gives it to whoever He will – The fact God gives the kingdoms of this world to whoever *He* chooses should overarch our decision making when it comes to voting in elections and being involved in politics.

4:27 Daniel prophesied in clear enough language that Nebuchadnezzar would surely be driven away from among men and live as an animal. But he goes on to plead: "Let my advice be acceptable to you, and break off your sins by righteousness" – as if to say that no matter how definite and categoric the prophecy of punishment, it was after all conditional, even though the conditions weren't even hinted at within the actual prophecy. God is *so* sensitive to human repentance.

departed from you: ³² and you shall be driven from men; and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field; you shall be made to eat grass as oxen; and seven times shall pass over you; until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will. ³³ The same hour was the thing fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the sky, until his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. ³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or ask Him, What are You doing? ³⁶ At the same time my understanding returned to me; and the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness returned to me; and my officials and my lords sought to me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven; for all His works are truth, and His ways justice; and those who walk in pride He is able to abase.

CHAPTER 5 Oct. 27

Writing on the Wall

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. ² Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink from them. ³ Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of God's house which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. ⁵ In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. ⁶ Then the king's appearance changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; the joints of his thighs were loosened, and his knees struck one against another. ⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whoever shall read this writing, and show me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. ⁸ Then came in all the

4:32 The world is under *God's* control, not that of demons or supposed evil beings in Heaven.

king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor reveal to the king the interpretation. ⁹ Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his appearance was changed, and his lords were perplexed. ¹⁰ Now the queen because of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: the queen spoke and said, O king, live forever; don't let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your appearance be changed. ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him. The king Nebuchadnezzar your father, the king, I say, your father, made him master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; ¹² because an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, the interpreting of dreams, and revealing of strange messages, solving of problems and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.

Daniel Interprets the Words

¹³ Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, Are you that Daniel, who are of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah? ¹⁴ I have heard of you, that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵ Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and tell me its interpretation; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. ¹⁶ But I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations, and dissolve problems; now if you can read the writing, and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. ¹⁷ Then Daniel answered before the king, Let your gifts be to yourself, and give your rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing to the king, and tell him the interpretation. ¹⁸ As for you, O king, the Most High

5:13 This incident is so similar to Joseph being suddenly summoned to come in to the mighty king and explain a dream which was worrying him, on the recommendation of another who remembered his previous ability in interpreting dreams; and they were both rewarded by the king in similar ways (Gen. 41:14,40-42). The fact circumstances repeat within the lives of God's children and also between people, one believer experiencing strangely similar situations to what another one has experienced, is all a sign that our lives are under God's control, and they develop according to patterns which He uses and has used with others. This means that we can feel great fellowship with Bible characters, and also with other believers of our own age. Daniel must have immediately thought of Joseph as he received the command to come before the king, and would've been strengthened by it. Likewise the scene here in Daniel 5 of Gentiles praising their gods, mocking Yahweh, and then suddenly being destroyed was a repeat of that in Jud. 16:24.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: ¹⁹ and because of the greatness that He gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he killed, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he became proud, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: ²¹ and he was driven from men, and his heart was made like an animal's', and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the sky; until he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and that He sets up over it whomsoever He will. ²² You, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and

you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which don't see, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified. ²⁴ Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed: ²⁵ MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of it: MENE; God has numbered your kingdom, and brought it to an end; ²⁷ TEKEL; you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting. ²⁸ PERES; your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. ²⁹ Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. ³⁰ In that night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldees was slain. ³¹ Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

5:20 *His spirit was hardened* – The hardening was done by God. He confirmed Nebuchadnezzar in the mental position he chose to adopt. The language is similar to how God hardened Pharaoh's heart, after Pharaoh had hardened his own heart.

5:22 *Though you knew all this* – A classic example of how knowledge brings responsibility to God's judgment (Lk. 12:48; Jn. 15:22).

You, his son, Belshazzar – Triple emphasis is given to the fact that God was watching and speaking so directly and personally to this man, whose name He knew.

5:26 *Numbered* – God allows things to happen and permits nations to prosper for specific periods of time. The number of our days is likewise numbered (Job 7:1; 14:5; 38:21). God isn't absent from our world; everything is under amazingly tight observation and control.

5:27 Judgment is in a sense ongoing in this life; it's not that God is indifferent now, and will weigh our case only at the last day. Right now, human lives are weighed before God.

CHAPTER 6 Oct. 28***Daniel in the Lions' Den***

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, who should be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one; so that these satraps might give account to them, and that the king should have no loss. ³ Then Daniel was promoted above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellently wise spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel regarding the things of the kingdom; but they could find no case nor fault, because he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, We shall not find any occasion against Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. ⁶ Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said to him, King Darius, live forever. ⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together in order to establish a royal statute, and to make an enforced decree, that whoever shall ask a petition of any

god or man for thirty days, except of you, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which doesn't alter. ⁹ Therefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. ¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he still went into his house (now his windows in his room were open toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did previously. ¹¹ Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹² Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king's decree: Haven't you signed a decree, that every man who shall make petition to any god or man within thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered, That is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which doesn't alter. ¹³ Then they responded and said to the king, That Daniel, who is of the captives of Judah, doesn't respect you, O king, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day. ¹⁴ Then

6:10 Daniel could have just prayed privately, in his heart. Many other Jews probably did this. But he chose to continue to openly pray. He was prepared to give his life for what was only a conscience issue. We too must establish and be prepared to live by our conscience, no matter what others think. Note that Daniel and other faithful believers like David (Ps. 55:17; 119:164) prayed regularly, just as the incense (cp. prayer) was offered regularly. Regular prayer is a good discipline in the life of the believer, rather than praying only when we have the mood or in emergencies. Daniel was willing to die in justification of his habit of open, unashamed, regular prayer.

the king, when he heard these words, was very displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to save him; and he struggled until the going down of the sun to save him. ¹⁵ Then these men assembled together to the king, and said to the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no decree nor statute which the king establishes may be changed. ¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spoke and said to Daniel, Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you. ¹⁷ A stone was brought, and laid on the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring, and with the signet ring of his lords; so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace, and spent the night fasting; no musical instruments were brought before him: and his sleep fled from him. ¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in urgency to the den of lions. ²⁰ When he came near to the den

to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spoke and said to Daniel: Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions? ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, O king, live forever. ²² My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not destroyed me; because before Him innocence was found in me; and also before you, O king, have I done nothing wrong. ²³ Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ The king commanded, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions mauled them, and broke all their bones in pieces, before they came to the bottom of the den. ²⁵ Then king Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages, who dwell in

6:20 *You serve continually* – Darius was referring to Daniel's continual prayer. Prayer is a service to God; something we can do even if we incapable of doing any more physical, external service to Him.

6:22 The mouths of the lions were closed so that they did not “destroy” Daniel; and because of this, Darius praises God, saying that His Kingdom would never be ‘destroyed’ (:26, same original word). Daniel was not destroyed; and thus Darius came to believe that God's Kingdom would not be destroyed. Daniel was set up as a living part and foretaste of that Kingdom, just as we too are to exemplify the life of the future Kingdom in our lives today; in this sense we ‘have eternal life’ in that we live the kind of lives which we will eternally live in God's future Kingdom. To a far greater extent, “the Kingdom of God” is a title given to the Lord Jesus – because He in His mortal life was the essence of that Kingdom, the embodiment of the life which shall then be lived.

6:25 Note how Daniel is presented as a type of Christ in this chapter. :14 The ruler labouring not to kill a righteous man, manipulated by his own underlings = Pilate; :17

all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all the dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and His dominion shall remain to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, He who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. ²⁸ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

CHAPTER 7 Oct. 29

Daniel's Dream – Four Beasts

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream on his bed: then he wrote the dream and told the conclusion of the matters. ² Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my dream and, behold, the four winds of

Heaven broke forth upon the great sea. ³ Four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. ⁴ The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I saw until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand on two feet as a man; and a man's heart was given to it. ⁵ Behold, another beast, a second, like a bear; and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth: and they said thus to it, Arise, devour much flesh. ⁶ After this I saw, and behold, another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. ⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and, behold, a fourth beast, awesome and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and

Den of lions – den s.w. pit Is. 14:15, where it is paralleled with the grave. :17 Stone sealed and put on the mouth of the cave [den]= Mt. 27:66; :17 the purpose could not be changed regarding Daniel's death= Jesus died by the determinate counsel of God, Acts 2:23; :22 An Angel sent; :22 'resurrection' early in the morning; :22 Daniel not hurt because innocence found in him = Acts 2:24; :23 Daniel taken up out of the den = resurrection and ascension, s.w. Ps. 139:8 who shall *ascend* to Heaven; :23 no damage was found on Daniel implies they examined his body= Lk. 24:39; :25,26 decree = great commission to spread the knowledge of God's Kingdom which we must fulfil after the Lord's resurrection.

7:7 Note the emphasis in Dan.7 that the fourth beast is totally different from all other beasts. The Roman empire was not so completely different from the preceding empires to warrant this description. 7:7,19 imply that the vision of the fourth beast and little horn was separate from his vision of the four beasts (:2). The first vision was of four beasts and therefore included some reference to the fourth beast, in its manifestation as the Roman empire. But "after this" (:7) there was the more detailed vision of the fourth beast and little horn. This alone implies that they were to have a special manifestation in the last days. The awesome power and strength of this system amazed Daniel, despite what he had already seen. In Daniel's first vision of the four beasts he says that they were "different one from another" (:3). But in the second vision he realized that the fourth beast "was different from all beasts that were before it" (:7), as if

it was diverse from all the beasts that preceded it; and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. ⁹ I saw until thrones were placed, and One who was the ancient of days sat: his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames, and its wheels burning fire. ¹⁰ A fiery stream came forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. ¹¹ I saw at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I saw even until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. ¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of the sky One like a son of man, and he came up to

the ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. ¹⁴ There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The Interpretation

¹⁵ As for me Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶ I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. ¹⁷ These great animals, which are four, are four kings, who shall arise out of the land. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. ¹⁹ Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was so different from all of them, exceedingly terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; ²⁰ and concerning the ten horns that

they were all relatively similar. The persecuting power we are about to see revealed will thus not be a political or religious power of the type previously seen in history. It is therefore almost beyond our conception of exactly how large and strong this power will be: a world superpower directing its venom against Jews and true Christians.

7:19 This describes the fourth beast as having the iron and brass metals of the image of Dan.2 in it. The fourth beast had feet and teeth, we are specifically told. The lion, representing the head of gold, had feet (:4); the bear, representing the breast of silver, had powerful teeth. Thus the fourth beast had all the characteristics of the other beasts. By it being destroyed through its ten horns being smitten by Christ's return, it is as if the image of Dan.2 is standing erect and complete in the last days, being hit on the ten toes (cp. the ten horns of the beast) by Christ's return.

were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before whom three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke great things, whose appearance was more aggressive than its fellows. ²¹ I saw, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; ²² until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. ²³ Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on the land, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole land, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. ²⁴ As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be different from the former, and he shall put down three kings. ²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear down

the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. ²⁶ But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it to the end. ²⁷ The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. ²⁸ Here is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my appearance was changed: but I kept the matter in my heart.

CHAPTER 8 Oct. 30

A Further Vision of a Ram and a Goat

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to

7:22 The metals of the image in Daniel 2 have their counterpart in the vision of the beasts in Daniel 7. The little stone (Christ) hits the image on the feet and then destroys all the metals together. This means that in some sense the image must stand complete in the last days. The various beasts and metals must all be in existence at the time of Christ's return in order for Him to destroy them by his coming. The little stone hits the image on its ten toes – corresponding to the ten horns of the fourth beast of Dan.7. The ten horns must in a sense be in existence at the time of Christ's coming. Amongst the horns there develops a "little horn" (:8) which persecutes the saints, but is destroyed by Christ's return (:8-11). This horn "made war with the saints... *until* the ancient of days came" (:21,22). Thus the saints will in some way be under persecution when Christ comes. This may be yet future; or it could be that the colossal moral pressure upon true Christians from every angle which we now experience is in fact effectively persecution.

7:25 "A time (a year), times (two years) and an half", i.e. 3.5 years (7:25; 12:7; Rev.12:14). The New Testament speaks of a similar period of 1,260 days -also 3.5 years (Rev.12:6; 11:3); 42 months (3.5 years) (Rev.11:2; 13:5). It seems fair to assume that they are all speaking of an identical or associated period of time. See 9:26.

8:1 There are few Bible characters who use their own name so much – but Daniel is

me, even to me, I Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. ² I saw in the vision; now it was so, that when I saw, I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai. ³ Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. ⁴ I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward; and no beasts could stand before him, neither was there any who could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and magnified himself. ⁵ As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west over the surface of the whole land, and didn't touch the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. ⁶ He came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran on him in the fury of his power. ⁷ I saw him come close to the ram, and he was moved with anger against him, and struck the ram, and broke his

two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him; but he cast him down to the ground, and trampled on him; and there was none who could deliver the ram out of his hand. ⁸ The male goat magnified himself exceedingly: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and in the place of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of the sky. ⁹ Out of one of them came forth a little horn, which grew exceedingly great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land. ¹⁰ It grew great, even to the army of Heaven; and some of the army and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled on them. ¹¹ Yes, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the army; and it took away from him the continual burnt offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. ¹² The army was given over to it along with the continual burnt offering on account of disobedience; and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it did according to its will and prospered. ¹³ Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain

always calling himself "I, Daniel" (7:28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2; 10:2,7; 12:5), despite having been given a Babylonian name. His self-perception was very clearly that he was a Hebrew, and a witness to God's justice / judgment. Daniel has much to teach the man or woman caught up in the corporate life, the engrossing pull of business, education or social contact. His self-perception was that he was not of his surrounding world, even though those around him wanted to see him as one of them. And further, God Himself frequently addresses Daniel by his name – "Daniel". Daniel realized that this was how *God* perceived him; and he wished to perceive himself as God perceived him. And he didn't show one face to the world, and one to God. He openly showed himself to the world as he perceived himself, and he perceived himself as God perceived him. We too should show no shadow self to this world, no appearance; but the person whom we essentially are, and whom God perceives us as being. His children, His witnesses, His people.

one who spoke, How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, and the abomination that makes desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the army to be trodden under foot? ¹⁴ He said to me, To two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. ¹⁵ It happened when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it; and behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. ¹⁶ I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. ¹⁷ So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened, and fell on my face; but he said to me, Understand, son of man; for the vision concerns the time of the end. ¹⁸ Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground; but he touched me, and set me upright. ¹⁹ He said, See, I will make you know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it concerns the appointed time of the end. ²⁰ The ram which you saw, that had the two

horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ The rough male goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. ²² As for that which was broken, in the place where four stood up, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power. ²³ In the latter time of their kingdom, when the wicked have come to the full, a king of fierce appearance and understanding mysteries shall stand up. ²⁴ His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall be very destructive, and shall prosper and do his own will; and he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people. ²⁵ Through his policy he shall cause deceit to prosper; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall he destroy many: he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand. ²⁶ The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true: but seal up the vision; for it belongs to many days to come. ²⁷ I Daniel, fainted, and was sick for some days; then I rose up, and did the king's business:

8:15 Daniel sought to understand the meaning of a vision; but two verses earlier, an Angel had asked another Angel for understanding of the same vision. Here we have the practical meaning, in Angelic terms, of God knowing our prayers and arranging the answers before we even ask them. Perhaps it was Daniel's guardian Angel who asked a more senior Angel for the interpretation of the vision, knowing Daniel was going to be asking for it. Yet it was the second Angel who actually gave the answer to Daniel (:14). Verse 16 describes the one Angel standing at the Ulai river calling out: "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision". Yet at this time, Daniel himself was in vision at the Ulai river (:2). His guardian Angel was there, right in front of him. And He had foreknown Daniel's feelings and arranged for another Angel to respond to them... and so the second Angel (Gabriel) also comes near where Daniel was standing (:17). His guardian Angel had literally called Gabriel to come over to Daniel... And all this kind of thing is going on for us *hourly* in the court of Heaven!

and I wondered at the vision, but none understood it.

CHAPTER 9 Oct. 31

Daniel's Prayer

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, ² in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by the books the number of the years about which the word of Yahweh had come to Jeremiah the prophet for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. ³ I set my face to the Lord God, to seek by prayer and petitions, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to Yahweh my God, and made confession, and said, Oh Lord, the great and dreadful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness with those who love Him and keep His commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from Your precepts and from Your ordinances; ⁶ neither have we listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ⁷ Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, who are near and who are far off, through all the countries

where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You. ⁸ Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; for we have rebelled against Him; ¹⁰ neither have we obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. ¹¹ Yes, all Israel have transgressed Your law, turning aside, that they should not obey Your voice: therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses the servant of God has been poured out on us; for we have sinned against Him. ¹² He has confirmed His words which He spoke against us, and against our judges who judged us, by bringing on us a great evil; for under the whole Heaven such has not been done as has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³ As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil has come on us: yet have we not entreated the favour of Yahweh our God, that we should turn from our iniquities, and accept Your truth. ¹⁴ Therefore has Yahweh watched over the evil, and brought it on us; for Yahweh our God is righteous in all His works which He does, and we have not obeyed His voice. ¹⁵ Now, Lord our God, You who brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has

9:12 God brought the “evil” or disaster (:14); there is no personal Satan who does this, God creates both good and evil in a judicial sense (Is. 45:5-7).

9:15 *We have sinned* – So often in this prayer, Daniel associates himself with his sinful people. No matter how weak we perceive our fellow believers to be, we are part of

gotten Yourself renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. ¹⁶ Lord, according to all Your righteousness, please let Your anger and Your wrath be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all who are around us. ¹⁷ Now therefore, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant, and to his petitions, and cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. ¹⁸ My God, turn Your ear, and hear; open Your eyes, and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name: for we do not present our petitions before You for our righteousness, but for Your great mercies' sake. ¹⁹ Lord, hear; Lord, forgive; Lord, listen and do; don't defer, for Your own sake, my God, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.

The Seventy Weeks

²⁰ While I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Yahweh

my God for the holy mountain of my God; ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening offering. ²² He instructed me, and talked with me, and said, Daniel, I am now come forth to give you wisdom and understanding. ²³ At the beginning of your petitions the commandment went forth, and I have come to tell you; for you are greatly beloved: therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision. ²⁴ Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, to finish disobedience, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. ²⁵ Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the Anointed One, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troubled times. ²⁶ After the sixty-two weeks the Anointed One shall be cut off, and shall have

the body of Christ as they are, and we cannot in this sense disassociate ourselves from them. When we see their sins, we should feel shame for the fact that the body of God's people behave like this, and ask God to forgive *us*.

9:23 See on 10:2.

9:26 69 weeks is 483 days. On the basis of a day for a year, this would make 483 years. However, Jewish time is often reckoned in Lunar cycles rather than Solar, as Europeans are accustomed to. The decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem was given BC457. On the basis of Lunar time, 69 weeks of years comes out at 486.5 Lunar years. Allowing for a BC/AD calendar inaccuracy of 4 years, this brings us to AD33.5 for the time of Messiah being cut off; which is exactly when Jesus was crucified, 33.5 years after his birth. The 69 weeks being split into 7 weeks and 62 weeks is under-

nothing; and the people of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and its end shall be with a flood, and even to the end shall be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷ He shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease; and on the wing of abominations shall come desolation even to the full end, and the wrath that is de-

termined shall be poured out on the one who makes desolate.

CHAPTER 10 Nov. 1

A Vision of a Man

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia something was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and it was true, even a great warfare: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. ² In those days I Daniel was

standable once it is appreciated that most Bible prophecy has some immediate reference to the period around which it was given. 7 weeks of years would come to around 50 years. According to the records of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai it would appear that the bulk of the work was done in the 50 years after the issuing of the decree for rebuilding. This mini time period would doubtless have been of great encouragement to the Jews of the time as they laboured in the rebuilding work amidst so much opposition. The final week of tribulation is hard to interpret, perhaps because if Israel had accepted Christ as Messiah as intended, it could have been fulfilled without the delay which was necessitated. One possibility is that the 3.5 year tribulation of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans between AD67 and AD70 was the half week in which the sacrifices ceased to be offered in the Jerusalem temple (:27). The remaining half week would be fulfilled in the final 3.5 year tribulation before Christ's return (see 7:25). The jump in fulfilment from AD33 to AD70 and then to the last days is the same kind of hiatus found in the gap between the legs and the feet of the image in Dan. 2, and between the succession of beasts and then the terrible beast and the little horn in Dan. 7. These are but suggestions for the interpretation of some of the hardest words in the Bible.

10:2 Verses 2 and 3 show Daniel praying for three weeks – presumably for the fortunes of Israel to be restored. As the days went by, it would have seemed natural to assume that the prayer was going unanswered. However, the Angel told him that “from the first day... your words were heard” (:12), but the delay was because “the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me (the Angel) twenty-one days” – i.e. three weeks. So his first prayer was heard, but it took the Angel three weeks to work out the answer in practice. How many of our prayers are like that! The Angel then describes how he confirmed and strengthened Darius (11:1) to the same end to enable the prayer to be answered – as if when our Angel sees someone set in a course of action which will lead to the answer of our prayer, they are confirmed and strengthened in it. The same idea is found in 9:23; a command being given from God to answer a prayer as soon as it's prayed, but there being a delay to the answer due to the Angels effecting the answer. The wonder of all this needs some reflection. Our words, the thoughts within human braincells, call forth the Angels from the court of Heaven. Our prayers may be answered immediately, but it takes time for the answers to be worked out.

mourning three whole weeks. ³ I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, until three whole weeks were fulfilled. ⁴ In the twenty fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river which is Hiddekel, ⁵ I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, whose thighs were adorned with pure gold of Uphaz: ⁶ his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like burnished brass, and his voice like the voice of a multitude. ⁷ I Daniel alone saw the vision; for the men who were with me didn't see the vision; but a great trembling fell on them, and they fled to hide themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my moisture was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. ⁹ Yet heard I the voice of his words; and at the time I heard the voice of his words, I had fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground. ¹⁰ Behold, a hand touched me, which set me on my knees and on the palms of my hands. ¹¹ He said to me, Daniel, you man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright; for

I am now sent to you. When he had spoken this word to me, I stood trembling. ¹² Then he said to me, Don't be afraid, Daniel; for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard: and I have come for your words' sake. ¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but, behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to make you understand what shall happen to your people in the latter days; for the vision is yet for many days. ¹⁵ And when he had spoken to me according to these words, I set my face toward the ground, and was mute. ¹⁶ Then behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spoke and said to him who stood before me: My lord, by reason of the vision my sorrows are turned on me, and I retain no strength. ¹⁷ For how can my Lord's servant talk with my lord? For as for me, immediately there remained no strength in me, neither was there breath left in me. ¹⁸ Then there touched me again one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. ¹⁹ He said, Greatly beloved man, don't be afraid: peace be to you, be strong, yes, be

10:12 An Angel is sent from Heaven to earth for the sake of human words... The prayers of a man standing at a bus stop on earth can call forth cosmic action. This is the power of prayer, and the extent of God's sensitivity to us.

10:19 Whenever Angels appear to people on earth, the people are afraid, but the Angel comforts them not to fear. It will be the same when the Angel appears to gather us to meet Christ at His return.

strong. When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Let my lord speak; for you have strengthened me. ²⁰ Then he said, Do you know why I have come to you? Now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia. When I go forth, behold, the prince of Greece shall come. ²¹ But I will tell you that which is inscribed in the writing of truth: and there is none who holds with me against these, but Michael your prince.

CHAPTER 11 Nov. 2

The King of the South and the King of the North

As for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. ² Now will I show you the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and when he has grown strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. ³ A mighty king shall stand up, who shall rule with great power, and do according to his will. ⁴ When he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of the sky, but not to his posterity, nor according to his power with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides these. ⁵ The king

of the south shall be strong, and also one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. ⁶ At the end of years they shall join themselves together; and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the strength of her arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and those who brought her, and he who became the father of her, and he who strengthened her in those times. ⁷ But out of a shoot from her roots shall one stand up in his place, who shall come to the army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. ⁸ Also their gods, with their molten images, and with their attractive vessels of silver and of gold, shall he carry captive into Egypt; and he shall refrain some years from the king of the north. ⁹ He shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but he shall return into his own land. ¹⁰ His sons shall war, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on, and overflow, and pass through; and they shall return and war, even to his fortress. ¹¹ The king of the south shall be moved with anger, and shall come forth and

11:3 The “mighty king” is Alexander the Great; as soon as he arose to great power, he died and his empire was split amongst his generals (:4). This is confirmation of the prophecy in Daniel 2 that the Greek empire would also pass off the scene. The rest of the chapter describes how the situation after his death developed in relation to those nations who had domination over Israel; how the mighty powers fought with each other, their fortunes ebbed and faded according to the amount of time God had assigned them.

fight with him, even with the king of the north; and he shall set forth a great multitude, and the multitude shall be given into his hand.¹² The multitude shall be lifted up, and his heart shall be exalted; and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail.¹³ The king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former; and he shall come on at the end of the times, even of years, with a great army and with much substance.¹⁴ In those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the children of the violent among your people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision; but they shall fall.¹⁵ So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mound, and take a well-fortified city: and the forces of the south shall not stand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to stand.¹⁶ But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land, and in his hand shall be destruction.¹⁷ He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women, to corrupt her; but she shall not stand, neither be for him.¹⁸ After this shall he turn his face to the islands, and shall take many: but a commander shall cause

the reproach offered by him to cease; yes, moreover, he shall cause his insolence to return upon him.¹⁹ Then he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.²⁰ Then shall stand up in his place one who shall cause a tax collector to pass through the kingdom to maintain its glory; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.²¹ In his place shall arise a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in time of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries.²² The overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and shall be broken; even the prince of the covenant.²³ After the treaty made with him he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.²⁴ Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them prey and spoil and substance: moreover, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, but only for a time.²⁵ He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall war in battle with an exceeding great and mighty army; but he shall not stand; for they

11:25 *Not stand* – This is typical of the language found in this chapter. The rival kingdoms of men appear so powerful and stable, and are so confident – for a time. Chapter 2 has explained how human empires all pass off the scene, they cannot ‘stand’ for ever, they last only for a time, and will be finally replaced by God’s eternal Kingdom

shall devise devices against him.²⁶ Yes, they who eat of his dainties shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain.²⁷ As for both these kings, their hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table: but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.²⁸ Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do his pleasure, and return to his own land.²⁹ At the time appointed he shall return, and come into the south; but it shall not be in the latter time as it was in the former.³⁰ For ships of Kittim shall come against him; therefore he shall be afraid and shall withdraw, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do his pleasure: he shall even return, and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.³¹ Forces from him shall appear, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.³² Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.³³ Those who are wise among

the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, many days.³⁴ Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help; but many shall join themselves to them with flattery.³⁵ Some of those who are wise shall stumble, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, until the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed.³⁶ The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished; for that which is decreed shall be done.³⁷ Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all.³⁸ But instead he shall honour the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers didn't know shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.³⁹ He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whoever acknowledges him he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price.

when Christ returns. Regardless of the exact details of fulfilment, the chapter gives us the general impression of the vanity of human strength, how all human beauty fades to grey, earth's proud empires pass away, and only the things and people of God's eternal future Kingdom will ultimately stand for ever.

11:31-36 This describes the situation at the time of the Maccabees. However, Jesus speaks of the abomination as also being set up in the last days before His return (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14). So whatever fulfilments these words had in the time e.g. of Antiochus, they were only precursors of the main fulfilment in our last days.

The Time of the End

⁴⁰ At the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. ⁴¹ He shall also come into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief leader of the children of Ammon. ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand also on the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³ But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. ⁴⁴ But news out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and to devote many to destruction. ⁴⁵ He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea

and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

CHAPTER 12 Nov. 3

The Faithful in the Last Days

At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book. ² Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. ⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of its fulfilment: many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall be increased. ⁵ Then I Daniel looked,

11:40-45 This may refer to a latter day invasion of Israel by a “king of the north”, supported by Middle Eastern powers, which will have the temple mount in Jerusalem (:45) as its target. The invader will be destroyed by the return of Christ, at which time there will be resurrection, judgment and the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth (12:1-3).

12:1 *Michael* – The Angel that represents Israel, Daniel’s people.

12:2 Immortality is thus given when Christ returns, after the resurrection and at the judgment seat of Christ – not at the moment of death.

12:3, 10 draw a parallel between those having wisdom and those who turn many to righteousness. Some translate “those who are wise” as “the teachers”, reflecting the play of ideas within the Hebrew sense of ‘wisdom’ – to have wisdom is axiomatically to teach it. To possess God’s Truth therefore means that we will share it with others in some form; one cannot keep good news just to themselves.

12:4 Running is an idiom for responding to God’s word (Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:1). In the last days there will be some who understand the prophecies which Daniel so wanted to but couldn’t (:9), and they will respond to

and behold, two others stood, one on the river bank on this side, and the other on the river bank on that side. ⁶ One said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? ⁷ I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. ⁸ I heard, but I didn't understand: then I said, my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? ⁹ He said, Go

your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand. ¹¹ From the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. ¹³ But go you your way until the end; for you shall rest, and shall stand in your lot, at the end of the days.

this knowledge powerfully. The purpose of prophecy isn't to predict the future, but so that the generation who live at the time of its fulfilment will understand (as in Jn. 13:19; 14:29).

12:7 *Time, times...* See on 7:25.

12:10 In the last days, "the wise shall understand" (12:10). Wisdom and Daniel are clearly associated, at least eight times (Dan. 1:17; 2:13,14,18,24,27,48; Ez. 28:3); as are Daniel and a desire to understand. Yet Daniel did not fully understand his latter day prophecies; "the wise shall understand" in the last days, Daniel was comforted. In other words, there will be a 'Daniel' category in the last days who will share his wisdom, sharing the character of Daniel, and who will be given the understanding he so earnestly sought.

12:13 A promise to Daniel of personal resurrection and receiving a specific place or "lot" in God's future Kingdom on earth.

HOSEA

CHAPTER 1 Nov. 4

The beginning of the word of Yahweh that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Hosea's Family

² When Yahweh spoke at first by Hosea, Yahweh said to Hosea, Go, take for yourself a wife of prostitution and children of unfaithfulness; for the land commits great adultery, forsaking Yahweh. ³ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived, and bore him a son. ⁴ Yahweh said to him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. ⁵ It will happen in

that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. ⁶ She conceived again, and bore a daughter. Then he said to him, Call her name Lo-Ruhamah; for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, that I should in any way pardon them. ⁷ But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by Yahweh their God, and will not save them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horsemen. ⁸ Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived, and bore a son. ⁹ He said, Call his name Lo-Ammi; for you are not My people, and I will not be yours. ¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, which can't be measured nor numbered; and it will come to pass that, in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people', they will be called 'sons of the living

1:2 The first three chapters of Hosea are about his marriage to a prostitute, who had children by other men and who were therefore not his children. Yet Hosea loved her, and oscillates between anger and passionate pleading with her. He fantasizes about how wonderful it would be to have her committed to him, and speculates as to how he might bring her to this. His relationship with her represented God's with Israel, and chapter 4 onwards speaks of God's situation with Israel in the language of marriage and intimate relationship. It may be possible to reason back from some of these chapters to understand other aspects of the Hosea: Gomer relationship.

The beginning – He'd have been tempted to just ignore it, to think he'd been dreaming something, to run away from it. But to his credit, he obeyed. According to the Mosaic Law, a whore should be burnt, not married. Hosea was told to break the letter of the Law, and marry a prostitute; thus he began what was to be quite a theme in both his life and his prophecy – that in the face of sin, God shows His grace. We've likely all seen this in our own lives – at our very weakest moments, the kindness and care of God for us is revealed.

1:10 *Yet the number* – "Yet" is the challenging word. In the face of all Israel's sin, in the face of the inevitable judgment which this attracted, in the very moment when it is declared, God goes on to speak of His loving salvation. This is so hard for humans to

God'.¹¹ The children of Judah and the children of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint themselves one head, and will go up from the land; for great will be the day of Jezreel.

CHAPTER 2 Nov. 5

Punishment and Restoration

Say to your brothers, 'Ammi! [My people]!' and to your sisters,

'Ruhamah! [I will have mercy!]'.²

Contend with your mother! Contend, for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; and let her therefore put away her prostitution from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts; ³ lest I strip her naked, and make her bare as in the day that she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and kill her with thirst.

take on board, called as we are to manifest this same grace of God. In the heat of the moment of others' sin against us, we rarely find it in us to think let alone speak of their ultimate hope of salvation by grace. But this is the challenge of Hosea.

2:3 *Lest I strip her naked... and kill her* – The punishment for a prostitute, a punishment which she should've had at the start. But instead of this punishment, Hosea had married her. We are perhaps nervous to equate our sinfulness, our rebellion, our unfaithfulness, with Gomer's prostitution. But this, surely, is what we are intended to do, and to thereby perceive the extent of God's patient love toward us, to the end that that grace and goodness might lead us to repentance. Because Hosea had so loved this woman, he had legitimate feelings of anger – as does God, having loved us so much. Hosea was the wounded lover, the betrayed man. And these are exactly the feelings of God over the unfaithfulness of His people. The threat to strip her naked was what was done in the case of divorce for adultery. "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband" (2:2) is a quotation from a Jewish divorce formula. Likewise the threat to withdraw her clothing, her "wool and linen" (2:9) likely refers to the obligation a husband had to his wife. Yet for all this talk of divorce, Hosea keeps wanting Gomer to return to him; in his heart he keeps coming back to her. This was an exact reflection of God's feelings for His people. Hosea did everything for this worthless woman. He gave her "the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied to her silver and gold, which they used for Baal" (2:8). He was a wealthy man, and yet gave it all to his wife, who in turn blew it all with her boyfriends on Baal worship. It's like the millionaire marrying a worthless woman who manipulates him into giving her his money, which she blows down at the casino day by day, and sleeps with the guys she hangs out with down there. But "she did not recognize that it was Me who gave her" all these things (2:8) – i.e. she didn't appreciate it. And so Hosea decides that he will withdraw this generosity from her, and then, he surmises, "she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband'" (2:7). This was Hosea's hope, and in his own mind, he put these words in her mouth. The hopefulness of Hosea was a reflection of the love he had for her. And all this speaks eloquently of the hopefulness of the Almighty Father who thought "surely they will reverence My Son" when He sent Him. And the purposeful anticlimax of the parable is that no, they don't and won't reverence His Son, and even worse, they kill Him. In the same way as Hosea had this plan to get Gomer to "return" to him, so God likewise planned that "afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek Yahweh" (3:5). Both God and Hosea thought that their beloved would return if

⁴ Indeed, on her children I will have no mercy; for they are children of unfaithfulness; ⁵ for their mother has played the prostitute. She who conceived them has done shamefully; for she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink'. ⁶ Therefore behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, that she can't find her way. ⁷ She will follow after her lovers, but she won't overtake them; and she will seek them, but won't find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now'. ⁸ For she did not recognize that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied to her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. ⁹ Therefore I will take back My grain in its time, and My new wine in its season, and will pluck away My wool and My linen which should have covered her nakedness. ¹⁰ Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will deliver her out of My hand. ¹¹ I will also cause all her celebrations to cease: her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies. ¹² I will

lay waste her vines and her fig trees, about which she has said, 'These are my wages that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest', and the animals of the field shall eat them. ¹³ I will visit on her the days of the Baals, to which she burned incense, when she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says Yahweh. ¹⁴ Therefore behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ I will give her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she will respond there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁶ It will be in that day, says Yahweh, that you will call Me 'my husband', and no longer call Me 'my master'. ¹⁷ For I will take away the names of the Baals out of her mouth, and they will no longer be mentioned by name. ¹⁸ In that day I will make a covenant for them with the animals of the field, and with the birds of the sky, and with the creeping things of the ground. I will break the bow, the sword, and the battle out of the land, and will make them lie down safely. ¹⁹ I will betroth you to Me forever. Yes, I will

they distanced themselves from her (5:15). But it didn't work out like this. Both God with Israel and Hosea with Gomer ended up *pleading* with her to return (14:1); "yet they do not return to Yahweh their God, nor seek Him, for all this" (7:10). It was and is a tragedy. In our preaching to Israel and to humanity generally, we are pleading with them to accept this most unusual love. The pain of God, the way He is left as it were standing there as a tragic figure, like Hosea was, of itself inspires us to plead with people all the more passionately; and to respond ourselves, to be the loving woman to Him the ultimately faithful man.

betroth you to Me in righteousness, in justice, in loving kindness, and in compassion. ²⁰ I will even betroth you to Me in faithfulness; and you shall know Yahweh. ²¹ It will happen in that day, I will respond, says Yahweh, I will respond to the heavens, and they will echo down to the earth; ²² and the earth will respond to the grain, and the new wine, and the oil; and they will respond to Jezreel. ²³ I will sow her to Me in the earth; and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; and I will tell those who were not My people, ‘You are My people;’ and they will say, ‘You are my God!’.

CHAPTER 3 Nov. 6

The Marriage Reconciled

Yahweh said to me, Go again, love a woman loved by another, and an adulteress, even as Yahweh loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods, and love cakes of raisins. ² So I bought her for myself for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley. ³ I said to her, You shall stay with me many days. You shall not play the prostitute, and you shall not be with any other man. I will also be so toward you. ⁴ For the children of Israel shall live many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without sacred stone, and without ephod or idols. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek Yahweh their God, and David their king, and shall come with trembling to Yahweh and to His blessings in the last days.

CHAPTER 4 Nov. 7

Against the Children of Israel

Hear the word of Yahweh, you children of Israel; for Yahweh has a charge against the inhabitants of the land: Indeed there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. ² There is cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break boundaries, and bloodshed causes bloodshed. ³ Therefore the land will mourn, and everyone who dwells therein will waste away. All living things in her, even the animals of the field and the birds of the sky; yes, the fish of the sea also die. ⁴ Yet let no man bring a case, neither let any man accuse; for Your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. ⁵ You will stumble in the day, and the prophet will also stumble with you in the night; and I will destroy your mother. ⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you may be no priest to Me. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. ⁷ As they were multiplied, so they sinned against Me. I will change their glory into shame. ⁸ They feed on the sin of My people, and set their heart on their iniquity. ⁹ It will be, like people, like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and will repay them for their deeds. ¹⁰ They will eat, and not feel satisfied. They will play the prostitute, and will not increase; because they have abandoned giving to Yahweh. ¹¹ Prostitution, wine, and new wine take away

the heart. ¹² My people consult with their wooden idol, and answer to a stick of wood. Indeed the spirit of prostitution has led them astray, and they have been unfaithful to their God. ¹³ They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because its shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the prostitute, and your brides commit adultery. ¹⁴ I will not punish your daughters when they play the prostitute, nor your brides when they commit adultery; because the men consort with prostitutes, and they sacrifice with the shrine prostitutes; so the people without understanding will come to ruin themselves. ¹⁵ Though you, Israel, play the prostitute, yet don't let Judah offend; and don't come to Gilgal, neither go up to Beth Aven, nor swear, 'As Yahweh lives'. ¹⁶ For Israel has behaved extremely stubbornly, like a stubborn heifer. Then how will Yahweh feed them like a lamb in a meadow! ¹⁷ Ephraim is joined to idols. Leave him alone! ¹⁸ Their drink has become sour. They play the prostitute continually. Her rulers dearly love

their shameful way. ¹⁹ The wind has wrapped her up in its wings; and they shall be unfulfilled in the offering of their sacrifices.

CHAPTER 5 Nov. 8

Judgments against the Priests and the House of Israel

Listen to this, you priests! Listen, house of Israel, and give ear, house of the king! For the judgment is against you; for you have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread on Tabor. ² The rebels are deep in slaughter; but I discipline all of them. ³ I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; for now, Ephraim, you have played the prostitute; Israel is defiled. ⁴ Their deeds won't allow them to turn to their God; for the spirit of prostitution is within them, and they don't know Yahweh. ⁵ The pride of Israel testifies to his face. Therefore Israel and Ephraim will stumble in their iniquity, Judah also will stumble with them. ⁶ They will go with their flocks and with their herds to seek Yahweh; but they won't find Him- He has withdrawn Himself from them. ⁷ They are unfaithful to Yahweh; for they have be-

4:12 *The spirit of prostitution* – Gomer's sexual addiction was reflected in Israel's chronic unfaithfulness to Yahweh. The very process of sinning has a tendency to push people into a downwards spiritual spiral from which there is no easy exit (see 5:4).

4:15 Gilgal and Beth Aven were border towns between Judah and Israel. The nominally faithful people of Judah were slipping over the border to do quick idol worship and then returning, protesting their loyalty to Yahweh. This kind of hypocrisy can so easily be slipped into.

5:7 The way Hosea's final child is called Lo-ammi was because "you are not My people" (1:9). This suggests that although Hosea did presumably have sexual relations with Gomer, these children were not actually conceived from him – i.e. she was continuing her relations with other men; her conception of the children is said to have been "shameful" (2:5) because they were the result of her prostitution (2:4). He calls

gotten foreign children. Now the new moon will devour them with their fields. ⁸ Blow the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah! Sound a battle cry at Beth Aven, behind you, Benjamin! ⁹ Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke. Among the tribes of Israel, I have made known that which will certainly be. ¹⁰ The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark. I will pour out My wrath on them like water. ¹¹ Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment; because he is obsessed in his pursuit of idols. ¹² Therefore I am to Ephraim like a moth, and to the house of Judah like rottenness. ¹³ When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither will he cure you of your wound. ¹⁴ For I will be to Ephraim like a lion, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I myself will tear in pieces and go away; I will carry off, and there will be no one to deliver. ¹⁵ I will go and return to My place, until they acknowledge their offence,

and seek My face. In their affliction they will seek Me earnestly.

CHAPTER 6 Nov. 9

Unrepentant

Come, and let us return to Yahweh; for He has torn us to pieces, and He will heal us; He has injured us, and He will bind up our wounds. ² After two days He will revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we will live before Him. ³ Let us acknowledge Yahweh. Let us press on to know Yahweh. As surely as the sun rises, Yahweh will appear. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain that waters the earth. ⁴ Ephraim, what shall I do to you? Judah, what shall I do to you? For your love is like a morning cloud, and like the dew that disappears early. ⁵ Therefore I have cut them to pieces with the prophets; I slew them with the words of My mouth. Your judgments are like a flash of lightning. ⁶ For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. ⁷ But they, like Adam, have

them “her children”. Gomer appears to reason in 2:4 that the children were her lovers’ payment to her for her sexual services. And in the parallel relationship between God and Israel, Israel were unfaithful to Yahweh and “begotten foreign children”, whilst at the same time claiming to keep the sacrifices and Sabbaths of the Law (:6,7; 2:11). This would confirm that Gomer acted as Hosea’s wife, assuring him of her faithfulness, in the same way as the sacrifices and Sabbaths were intended to reflect Israel’s exclusive faithfulness to Yahweh. Our unfaithfulness to God is this painful for Him.

6:6 *I desire... the knowledge of God* – Israel and Gomer were “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6). Yet they cried out that “My God, how we know You!” (8:2). Israel’s attitude to the Law can so easily be our attitude to the principles of the Gospel, the New Covenant, in which we stand. We can ‘know’ it all, and externally keep it... but in reality not know it at all, focusing on the external sacrifices whilst knowing nothing of the God we supposedly worship. All this was exemplified by Gomer being an observant Jewess, whilst worshipping Baal and living a shameful life.

broken the covenant. They were unfaithful to Me, there. ⁸ Gilead is a city of those who work iniquity; it is stained with blood. ⁹ As gangs of robbers wait to ambush a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem, committing shameful crimes. ¹⁰ In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing. There is prostitution in Ephraim. Israel is defiled. ¹¹ Also, Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you, when I restore the fortunes of My people.

CHAPTER 7 Nov. 10

When I would heal Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, also the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief enters in, and the gang of robbers ravages outside. ² They don't consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own deeds have engulfed them; they are ever before My face. ³ They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. ⁴ They are all adulterers. They are burning like an oven that the baker stops stirring, from the kneading of the dough, until it is leavened. ⁵ On the day of our king, the princes made him sick with the heat of wine so that he joined his hand

with mockers. ⁶ For they have prepared their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait. Their baker sleeps all the night- in the morning it burns as a flaming fire. ⁷ They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges. All their kings have fallen. There is no one among them who calls to Me. ⁸ Ephraim, he mixes himself among the nations, Ephraim is a pancake not turned over. ⁹ Strangers have devoured his strength, and he doesn't realize it. Indeed, gray hairs are here and there on him, and he doesn't realize it. ¹⁰ The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to Yahweh their God, nor seek Him, for all this. ¹¹ Ephraim is like an easily deceived dove, without understanding. They call to Egypt; they hop to Assyria. ¹² When they go, I will spread My net on them. I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will chastise them, as their congregation has heard. ¹³ Woe to them! For they have wandered from Me. Destruction to them! For they have trespassed against Me. Though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against Me. ¹⁴ They haven't cried to Me with their heart, but they howl on their beds. They assemble themselves for grain and new wine. They turn away from Me. ¹⁵ Though

6:10 God's realization of Israel's prostitution, committed as it was amidst protestations of love for God (:4), was mirrored in Hosea's tragic and heartbreaking relationship with his prostitute wife Gomer.

7:2 *I remember... ever before My face* – Sensitive Hosea remembered every unfaithfulness of Gomer; and in this sense God too remembered every sin of His people. This is what makes His patience and grace all the more remarkable, given that He doesn't mentally function as human beings do, forgetting sins against us just because of the nature of our fading memory rather than because we have forgiven them.

I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet they plot evil against Me. ¹⁶ They return, but not to the Most High. They are like a faulty bow. Their princes will fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.

CHAPTER 8 Nov. 11

Sowing the Wind, Reaping the Whirlwind

Put the trumpet to your lips! Something like an eagle is over Yahweh's house, because they have broken My covenant, and rebelled against My law. ² They cry to Me, 'My God, how we know You!'. ³ Israel has cast off that which is good. The enemy will pursue him. ⁴ They have set up kings, but not by Me. They have made princes, and I didn't approve. Of their silver and their gold they have made themselves idols, that they may be cut off. ⁵ Let Samaria throw out his calf idol! My anger burns against them! How long will it be until they are capable of purity? ⁶ For this is even made in Israel! The workman made it, and it is

no God; indeed, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. ⁷ For they sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind. He has no standing grain; the stalk will yield no head of grain. If it does yield, strangers will swallow it up. ⁸ Israel is swallowed up. Now they are among the nations like a worthless thing. ⁹ For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey wandering alone. Ephraim has hired lovers for himself. ¹⁰ But although they sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them; and they begin to waste away because of the oppression of the king of mighty ones. ¹¹ Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they became for him altars for sinning. ¹² I wrote for him the many things of My law; but they were regarded as a strange thing. ¹³ As for the sacrifices of My offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; But Yahweh doesn't accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity, and punish their sins. They will return to Egypt. ¹⁴ For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send

8:2 As in 7:14,16, the pain of God was that Israel's words of devotion to Him were meaningless. This was the pain Hosea would've had as Gomer protested her faithfulness to him, whilst sleeping with and getting pregnant by other men. We must ensure that the words we say in prayer and sing in song to God are really meant sincerely by us, and that we realistically live according to them.

8:13 *They will return to Egypt* – This is repeated in 9:3 and yet God says the very opposite in 11:5. We have God showing His extreme emotion, just as a betrayed and angry husband would – shouting threats one minute and then cancelling them out in expressions of deep love the next. The most hurt man on earth would, however, be nowhere near the pain and hurt felt by God Almighty at the unfaithfulness of His people. The huge extent of His love for Israel is reflected in the depth of His pain and the emotional nature of His outbursts. God has emotion and passion – for us, we who are but water, calcium and complex chemicals, specs of dust on the earth...

a fire on his cities, and it will devour its fortresses.

CHAPTER 9 Nov. 12

The Wrath of Love

Don't rejoice in jubilation, Israel, like the other nations; for you were unfaithful to your God. You love the wages of a prostitute at every grain threshing floor. ² The threshing floor and the winepress won't feed them, and the new wine will fail her. ³ They won't dwell in Yahweh's land; but Ephraim will return to Egypt, and they will eat unclean food in Assyria. ⁴ They won't pour out wine offerings to Yahweh, neither will they be pleasing to Him. Their sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat of it will be polluted. Their bread will merely be for their hunger, it will not come with acceptance as an offering into the house of Yahweh. ⁵ What will you do in the day of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of Yahweh? ⁶ For, behold, they have marched off to destruction; Egypt will gather them up, Memphis will bury them. Nettles will possess their pleasant things of silver, thorns will

come up in their tents. ⁷ The days of visitation have come, the days of reckoning have come. Israel will consider the prophet to be a fool, and the inspired man to be insane, because of the abundance of your sins, and because your hostility is great. ⁸ A prophet watches over Ephraim with my God. A fowler's snare is on all of his paths, and hostility in the house of his God. ⁹ They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity, He will punish them for their sins. ¹⁰ I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at its first season; but they came to Baal Peor, and consecrated themselves to the shameful thing, and became abominable like that thing which they so loved. ¹¹ As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away like a bird. There will be no birth, none with child, and no conception. ¹² Though they bring up their children, yet I will bereave them, so that not a man shall be left. Indeed, woe also to them when I depart from them! ¹³ I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place; but Ephraim will bring out his chil-

9:1 *You love the wages of a prostitute* – Israel are presented as sexually addicted, even paying men to sleep with her (8:9). It's one thing to sin and hate ourselves for it; it's another to love and revel in sin as Israel did.

9:4 Their offering of wine and bread to God would make them yet more unclean, just as it is possible to keep the breaking of bread service to our condemnation rather than to our blessing (1 Cor. 11:29). This stark reality means that the memorial meeting brings us to a T intersection in our lives; either we are drinking to our blessing (1 Cor. 10:16) or to our condemnation.

9:10 *I saw... as* – God looked upon Israel *as if* they were perfect when they left Egypt (Num. 23:21), even though they were not. He was in love with them, as He is with us, having counted His righteousness to us as we emerge from our Red Sea / baptism into Christ.

dren to the murderer. ¹⁴ Give them—Yahweh, what will you give them? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. ¹⁵ All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more. All their princes are rebels. ¹⁶ Ephraim is struck. Their root has dried up. They will bear no fruit. Even though they bring forth, yet I will kill the beloved ones of their womb. ¹⁷ My God will cast them away, because they did not listen to Him; and they will be wanderers among the nations.

CHAPTER 10 Nov. 13

Israel is a luxuriant vine that puts forth his fruit. According to the abundance of his fruit he has multiplied his altars. As their land has prospered, they have adorned their sacred stones. ² Their heart is divided, and so now they will be found guilty. He will demolish their altars, He will destroy their sacred stones. ³ Surely now they will say, We have no king; for we don't fear Yahweh; and the king we have, what can he do for us? ⁴ They make promises, swearing falsely in making covenants. Therefore judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field. ⁵ The inhabitants of Samaria will be in terror because of the calves of Beth Aven; for its

people will mourn over it, along with its priests who rejoiced over it; because its glory has departed from it. ⁶ It also will be carried to Assyria for a present to a great king. Ephraim will receive shame, and Israel will be ashamed of his own counsel. ⁷ Samaria and her king will float away, like a twig on the water. ⁸ The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed. The thorn and the thistle will come up on their altars. They will tell the mountains, Cover us! and the hills, Fall on us! ⁹ Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah, there they remained. The battle against the children of iniquity doesn't overtake them in Gibeah. ¹⁰ When it is my desire, I will chastise them; and the nations will be gathered against them, when they are bound to their two transgressions. ¹¹ Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh; so I will put a yoke on her beautiful neck. I will set a rider on Ephraim, Judah will plough, Jacob will break his clods. ¹² Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness. Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Yahweh, until He comes and rains righteousness on you. ¹³ You have ploughed wickedness and you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, for you trusted in your way, in the multitude of your mighty men. ¹⁴ Therefore a battle roar will

9:15 *I hated them... will love them no more* – And yet God protests His eternal and free love for Israel (14:4). See on 8:13.

10:11 *Her beautiful neck* – This isn't sarcasm, rather is it God recognizing the beauty of the woman He was having to judge. Such is His love even for those He has to reject.

arise among your people, and all your fortresses will be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth Arbel in the day of battle. The mother was dashed in pieces with her children. ¹⁵ So Bethel will do to you because of your great wickedness. At daybreak the king of Israel will be destroyed.

CHAPTER 11 Nov. 14

God's Love for His People

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt. ² The more I called to them, so they went away from Me. They sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to engraved images. ³ Yet I taught Ephraim to walk. I took them by his arms; but they didn't know that it was I who healed them. ⁴ I drew them with cords of a man, with ties of love; and I was to them like those who lift off the yoke on their necks; and I bent down to him and I fed him. ⁵ They won't return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian will be their king, because they refused to repent. ⁶ The sword will fall on their cities, and will destroy the bars of their gates, and will put an end to their plans. ⁷ My people are determined to turn from Me. Though

they call to the Most High, they certainly won't exalt Him. ⁸ How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned within Me, My compassion is aroused. ⁹ I will not execute the fierceness of My anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of you; and I will not come in wrath. ¹⁰ They will walk after Yahweh, who will roar like a lion; for He will roar, and the children will come trembling from the west. ¹¹ They will come trembling like a bird out of Egypt, and like a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I will settle them in their houses, says Yahweh. ¹² Ephraim surrounds Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit. Judah still remains with God, and is faithful to the Holy One.

CHAPTER 12 Nov. 15

Jacob to Be Israel's Example

Ephraim feeds on wind, and chases the east wind. He daily lies more and more and multiplies his desolation. They make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into

11:8, 9 Here we have one of the deepest windows onto the extent of God's hurt and variation of thought within Himself as He considers the behaviour of His people. His changes of mind are as it were ethically allowable exactly because He is God and not man; they are driven by the passion of the deepest love ever known in all existence.

11:12 *Ephraim surrounds Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit* – Gomer must have lied to Hosea so much. Israel are criticized throughout his prophecy for just the same (see 7:13 too). The untruthfulness became compulsive and obsessive: "he daily lies more and more" (12:1). Gomer would've lied about where she was going, about how she spent Hosea's money, about whose the children were... The key proof of our spiritual sincerity is whether we are in the core of our beings *truthful*, both with our God and with ourselves.

Egypt. ² Yahweh also has a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his deeds He will repay him. ³ In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his maturity he had power with God. ⁴ Indeed, he struggled with the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication to him. He found him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us, ⁵ even Yahweh, the God of Armies; Yahweh is His name of renown! ⁶ Therefore you also turn to your God. Keep grace and justice, and wait continually for your God. ⁷ A merchant has dishonest scales in his hand. He loves to defraud. ⁸ Ephraim said, Surely I have become rich, I have found myself wealth. In all my wealth they won't find in me any iniquity that is sin. ⁹ But I am Yahweh your God from the land of Egypt. I will yet again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast. ¹⁰ I have also spoken to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and by the ministry of the prophets I have used parables. ¹¹ If Gilead is wicked, surely they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls. Indeed, their altars

are like heaps in the furrows of the field. ¹² Jacob fled into the country of Aram, and Israel served to get a wife, and for a wife he tended flocks and herds. ¹³ By a prophet Yahweh brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved. ¹⁴ Ephraim has bitterly provoked anger, therefore his blood will be left on him, and his Lord will repay his contempt.

CHAPTER 13 Nov. 16

God's Anger against His People

When Ephraim spoke with trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he became guilty in Baal, he died. ² Now they sin more and more, and have made themselves molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of the craftsmen. They say of them, 'They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calves'. ³ Therefore they will be like the morning mist, and like the dew that passes away early in the morning, like the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing floor, and like the smoke out of the chimney. ⁴ Yet I am Yahweh your

12:3 *In his maturity he had power with God* – This suggests that Jacob reached spiritual maturity that night he wrestled with the Angel. To be that familiar with God that we can reason with Him, struggle with Him in prayer, seek to change His will over an illness or situation... this is spiritual maturity. It was by his prayer and tears that he had this "power with God" and in a sense prevailed over God's intention to slay him (:4). This whole characteristic of striving with God was memorialized in his new name: Israel, implying 'striver and prevailer with God and men'. And this must be the characteristic of Israel after the Spirit too. There is a confusion in the Hebrew between 'striver' and 'prince' – for the struggle comes before the crown. Our relationship with Him, our attaining of salvation, is a struggle, a wrestling, a desperate clinging on, a pleading with tears. Yet Jacob that night really is a type of us all, for we are to turn to God as Jacob did then (:6).

God from the land of Egypt; and you shall acknowledge no god but Me, and besides Me there is no saviour. ⁵ I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. ⁶ According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted. Therefore they have forgotten Me. ⁷ Therefore I will be like a lion to them, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. ⁸ I will meet them like a bear that is bereaved of her cubs, and will tear the covering of their heart. There I will devour them like a lioness, tear them like a wild animal. ⁹ You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against Me, against the One who is your help. ¹⁰ Where is your king now, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges, of whom you said, ‘Give me a king and princes?’. ¹¹ I gave you a king in My anger, and have taken him away in My wrath. ¹² The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sin is stored up. ¹³ The sorrows of a travailing woman will come on him. He is an unwise son; for when it is time, he doesn’t come to the opening of the womb. ¹⁴ I will

ransom them from the power of Sheol, I will redeem them from death! Death, where are your plagues? Sheol, where is your destruction? Compassion will be hidden from my eyes. ¹⁵ Though he is fruitful among his brothers, an east wind will come, the breath of Yahweh coming up from the wilderness; and his spring will become dry, and his fountain will be dried up. He will plunder the storehouse of treasure. ¹⁶ Samaria will bear her guilt; for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open.

CHAPTER 14 Nov. 17

Repentance and Blessing

Israel, return to Yahweh your God; for you have fallen because of your sin. ² Take words with you, and return to Yahweh. Tell him, Forgive all our sins, and accept that which is good: so we offer our lips like bulls. ³ Assyria can’t save us. We won’t ride on horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ‘You are

13:10 Often in Hosea, God appeals to Israel to let Him be their ‘king’ (13:10). But there is a Hebraism whereby a husband is called the ‘king’ of his wife. God’s appeal was reflected in Hosea’s desire for Gomer to as it were re-marry him, to let him truly be her king / husband. And yet she felt like Israel: “What then should a king do [for] us?” (10:3). She was so selfish that she didn’t see anything in it for her... when so much love was being offered to her.

14:3 Hosea’s prophecy ends with God protesting His eternal love for Israel, and a description of them in the Kingdom, when they will have ‘returned’ to Him. Remember that the God / Israel relationship was a reflection of the Hosea / Gomer situation. I take this final, majestic section to be a reflection of Hosea’s fantasy, his day dream, that one day Gomer would return to him and blossom as a person. For fantasies are all a part of true love. “From Me you will acquire fruit” (14:8) is perhaps his fantasy that *somehow*, this worn out woman with dry breasts and a miscarrying womb (9:14) would *somehow* one day still bear him children of their own, and that in him “the fatherless”

our gods!'; for in You the fatherless finds mercy. ⁴ I will heal their waywardness. I will love them freely; for My anger is turned away from him. ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel. He will blossom like the lily, and send down his roots like Lebanon. ⁶ His branches will spread, and his beauty will be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. ⁷ Men will dwell in his shade. They will revive like the grain, and blossom like the

vine. Their fragrance will be like the wine of Lebanon. ⁸ Ephraim, what have I to do any more with idols? I will answer, and will take care of him. I am like a green fir tree; from Me you will acquire fruit. ⁹ Who is wise, that he may understand these things? Who is prudent, that he may know them? For the ways of Yahweh are right, and the righteous walk in them; but the rebellious will stumble in them.

[a reference to Gomer's illegitimate children] would find mercy in being accepted into the family (14:3). Hosea died with his dream unfulfilled. We are left with the question as to whether this similar loving intention of God for Israel will in fact be fulfilled, or whether it was what was potentially possible for Israel; or whether His fantasy for them will be fulfilled through a new Israel. If the latter, and we are that new Israel, then we can imagine what passionate joy the Father finds in our bumbling attempts to respond to Him and be His loyal and faithful wife. Whatever, the simple fact is that it all reflects an amazing grace, an ineffable love... and this God is our God, and Hosea who reflected all this is truly a pattern for ourselves in daily life. The very existence of such passionate love for us, love beyond reason, carries with it an inevitable warning as to our responsibilities.

JOEL

CHAPTER 1 Nov. 18

Locusts

The Word of Yahweh that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. ² Hear this, you elders, and listen, all of you inhabitants of the land. Has this ever happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? ³ Tell your children about it, and have your children tell their children, and their children tell another generation. ⁴ What the swarming locust has left, the great locust has eaten. What the great locust has left, the grasshopper has eaten. What the grasshopper has left, the caterpillar has eaten. ⁵ Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. ⁶ For a nation has come up on my land, strong, and without number. His teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a lioness. ⁷ He has laid My vine waste, and stripped My fig tree. He has stripped its bark, and thrown it away. Its branches are made white. ⁸ Mourn like a virgin dressed in sackcloth for

the husband of her youth! The meal offering and the drink offering are cut off from Yahweh's house; the priests, Yahweh's ministers, mourn. ¹⁰ The field is laid waste, the land mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the new wine has dried up and the oil wastes away. ¹¹ Be confounded, you farmers! Wail, you vineyard keepers; for the wheat and for the barley and the harvest of the field has perished. ¹² The vine has dried up, and the fig tree withered; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all of the trees of the field are withered away; for joy is withered away from the sons of men.

Repent!

¹³ Put on sackcloth and mourn, you priests! Wail, you ministers of the altar. Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God, for the meal offering and the drink offering are withheld from your God's house. ¹⁴ Sanctify a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house

1:2 Elders... *all of you* – Often the Bible brackets the elders with all the ordinary people, thus emphasizing that God relates with individuals; His appeal isn't merely to religious specialists or leaders, but to all of us.

1:12 If we lose joy, we have lost our faith. It was the same with Israel. "The vine [of Israel is] withered... for joy is withered"; the people of God were to be a people of joy, and when their joy was no more, they were no longer God's people; for "joy and gladness" were cut off from the house of God (:16). The experience of joy is the litmus test for a community of God's people. This thought gives rise to some sober self-examination, especially for those who may have come to feel that 'holding the faith' is a matter of glumly trudging onwards through this evil world, grimly gripping hold of our faith as we bemoan the state of those around us. To hold on to the Faith is described as holding on to the rejoicing of the hope unto the end (Heb. 3:6).

of Yahweh your God, and cry to Yahweh. ¹⁵ Alas for the day! For the day of Yahweh is at hand, and it will come as a destruction from the Almighty. ¹⁶ Isn't the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? ¹⁷ The seeds rot under their clods. The granaries are laid desolate. The barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. ¹⁸ How the animals groan! The herds of livestock are confused because they have no pasture. Yes, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. ¹⁹ Yahweh, I cry to you because the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame has burned up all the trees of the field. ²⁰ Yes, the animals of the field pant to You, for the water brooks have dried up, and the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

CHAPTER 2 Nov. 19

More Locusts

Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of Yahweh comes, for it is near at hand: ² a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the dawn spreading on the mountains. A great and strong people! There has never been the like, neither will there be any more after them, even to the years of many generations. ³ A fire devours be-

fore them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and after them-like a desolate wilderness. Yes, and no one has escaped them. ⁴ Their appearance is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen, so do they run. ⁵ Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. ⁶ At their presence the people are in anguish. All faces have grown pale. ⁷ They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like warriors. They each march in his line, and they don't swerve off course. ⁸ Neither does one jostle another; they march each one in his path, and they burst through the defences, and don't break ranks. ⁹ They rush on the city, they run on the wall, they climb up into the houses, they enter in at the windows like thieves. ¹⁰ The earth quakes before them, the skies tremble, the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. ¹¹ Yahweh thunders His voice before His army; for His forces are very great; for he is strong who obeys His command; for the day of Yahweh is great and very awesome, and who can endure it?

A Fast Is Proclaimed

¹² Yet even now, says Yahweh, turn to Me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with

2:11 *His army* – The pagan armies were God's in the sense that He controlled them. No evil can happen to us without God allowing it; our worst enemies are ultimately sent and permitted by Him. There is no personal Satan figure who controls these people; God is in total control.

mourning. ¹³ Tear your heart, and not your garments, and turn to Yahweh, your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and relents from sending calamity. ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering and a drink offering to Yahweh, your God. ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion! Sanctify a fast. Call a solemn assembly. ¹⁶ Gather the people. Sanctify the assembly. Assemble the elders. Gather the children, and those who nurse from the breasts. Let the bridegroom go forth from his room, and the bride out of her room. ¹⁷ Let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Your people, Yahweh, and don't give Your heritage to reproach, that the pagan nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'.

Yahweh Answered His People

¹⁸ Then Yahweh was jealous for His land, and had pity on His people. ¹⁹ Yahweh answered His people, Behold, I will send you grain, new wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied with them; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. ²⁰ But I will remove the northern army far away from you, and will drive it into a barren and desolate land, its front into the eastern sea, and its back into the western sea; and its stench will come up, and its bad smell will rise. Surely He has done great things! ²¹ Land, don't be afraid! Be glad and rejoice, for Yahweh has done great things! ²² Don't be afraid, you animals of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness spring up, for the tree bears its fruit. The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. ²³ Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in Yahweh your God; for He gives you the former rains in just

2:13 *Relents* – Despite having spoken as if God's judgment was inevitably going to come, Joel knew that God can state things and then change His planned judgments because He is so sensitive to human repentance. And so Joel calls for a fast, and for absolutely everyone in the community to repent and beg God for mercy. Even those in the process of marriage were to break off the ceremony (:16) and come to a special assembly (:15) to beg God to change His mind. Joel was so certain that God's prophetic word would be fulfilled that he appealed to people with such urgency and insistence to repent, so that the prophesied judgments wouldn't happen to them. Our belief in God's word will likewise motivate our witness and impart a spirit of urgency to it which we couldn't have if we weren't so convinced that the prophecies will come true.

2:20 *Northern army* – Babylon and Assyria are spoken of in the Bible as the 'northern' invader, although they were situated to the East of Israel. This was because there was no easy way through the desert separating them from Israel, and travel was typically up the Fertile Crescent and then down into Israel from the north. Joel is quoted and alluded to in the New Testament as if these things will come true in the last days before Christ returns. Dan. 11:40-44 speak of a latter day "King of the north" invading Israel just before Christ's coming. Geographically, Babylon and Assyria refer to what is today Iran and Iraq.

measure, and He causes the rain to come down for you, the former rains and the latter rains, as before. ²⁴ The threshing floors will be full of wheat, and the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. ²⁵ I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the great locust, the grasshopper, and the caterpillar, My great army, which I sent among you. ²⁶ You will have plenty to eat and will be satisfied, and will praise the name of Yahweh your God who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people will never again be ashamed. ²⁷ You will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Yahweh your God, and there is no one else; and My people will never again be ashamed.

The Day of the Lord

²⁸ It will happen in the last days, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ And also on the servants and on the handmaids I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, fire, and pillars of

smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. ³² It will happen that whoever will call on the name of Yahweh shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, and among the remnant, those whom Yahweh calls.

CHAPTER 3 Nov. 20

Judgment on the Nations

For behold, in those days, and in that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgment on them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. They have divided My land, ³ and have cast lots for My people, and have given a boy for a prostitute, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. ⁴ Yes, and what are you to Me, Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Will you repay Me? And if you repay Me, I will swiftly and speedily return your repayment on your own head. ⁵ Because you have taken My silver and

2:32 This passage is quoted in Acts 2:21-41 and interpreted as meaning that whoever calls upon themselves the Name of the Lord by baptism into His Name will be saved. People from many nations were baptized into the Name just before the 'last day' of Judah's destruction in AD70 (:28). It would seem that this was but a primary fulfilment of what will happen just before the final 'last day' of Christ's return. There will be a special preaching of the Gospel to all nations just before Christ returns (Mt. 24:14).

3:2 *Judgment on them there for My people* – The basis of judgment will be how individuals have treated God's people, both natural and spiritual Israel. Jesus was very clear that how we treat the least of His brothers or sisters is how we treat Him, and He will judge people on this basis (Mt. 25:40).

My gold, and have carried My finest treasures into your temples, ⁶ and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem to the sons of the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their border. ⁷ Behold, I will stir them up out of the place where you have sold them, and will return your repayment on your own head; ⁸ and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the children of Judah, and they will sell them to the men of Sheba, to a distant nation; for Yahweh has spoken it. ⁹ Proclaim this among the nations: Sanctify war! Stir up the mighty men. Let all the warriors draw near. Let them come up. ¹⁰ Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say, 'I am strong!'. ¹¹ Hurry and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves together. Cause Your mighty ones to come down there, Yahweh. ¹² Let the nations arouse themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the surrounding nations. ¹³ Put in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the winepress is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

For the day of Yahweh is near, in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The sun and the moon will be darkened, and the stars will withdraw their shining. ¹⁶ Yahweh will roar from Zion, and thunder from Jerusalem; the heavens and the earth will shake, but Yahweh will be a refuge for His people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel.

God's People to Be Blessed

¹⁷ So you will know that I am Yahweh your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem will be holy, and no strangers will pass through her any more. ¹⁸ It will happen in that day, that the mountains will drop down sweet wine, the hills will flow with milk, all the brooks of Judah will flow with waters, and a fountain will come forth from the house of Yahweh and will water the valley of Shittim. ¹⁹ Egypt will be a desolation, and Edom will be a desolate wilderness, because of the violence done to the children of Judah; because they have shed innocent blood in their land. ²⁰ But Judah will be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. ²¹ I will cleanse their blood that I have not so far cleansed: for Yahweh dwells in Zion.

3:9 *Sanctify war* – Declaring a holy war against Israel sounds like Islamic *jihad*.

3:12-14 These verses seem to describe an invasion of Israel by many nations, resulting in them being destroyed in a valley in Israel; these verses are applied to the last days in the description of the battle of Armageddon in Rev. 16:16. God will be suddenly revealed in the Jerusalem area (:16), associated with His "mighty ones" "coming down" there (:11). Obadiah 21 speaks of the same situation. This surely refers to the return of Christ to earth from Heaven with His Angels with Him, and also the resurrection of His people, who will then also be His "mighty ones" with Him (1 Thess. 4:14; 2 Thess. 1:7). Jesus ascended to Heaven from Olivet, near Jerusalem, and the Angels promised that He would return to earth in the same way (Acts 1:11).

AMOS

CHAPTER 1 Nov. 21

The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. ² He said: Yahweh will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds will mourn, and the top of Carmel will wither.

Judgment on the Nations around Israel

³ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Damascus, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron; ⁴ but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, and it will eat up the palaces of Ben Hadad. ⁵ I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him who holds the sceptre from

the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity to Kir, says Yahweh. ⁶ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Gaza, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they carried away captive the whole community, to deliver them up to Edom; ⁷ but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it will devour its palaces. ⁸ I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him who holds the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn My hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines will perish, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁹ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Tyre, yes, for four, I will not relent on its punishment; because they delivered up the whole community to Edom, and didn't remember the brotherly covenant; ¹⁰ but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it will destroy its palaces. ¹¹ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Edom, yes, for four, I will not turn away its

1:6 Notice that the reasons for the judgments are all because of what people did to other people. Human treatment of others is the basis for God's judgment. We also learn from this chapter that God noticed how Gentiles treated other Gentiles. He doesn't just ignore the unbelievers, zoning out on their actions and issues with each other. His sensitivity to human sin, and His total knowledge of all that goes on in this world, His reading of every motive behind every action, is simply colossal. It should encourage us that we are not alone in this world; the amazing knowledge of God means we can thereby feel His presence. The reference to "For three transgressions... and for four" can be read as meaning that God doesn't switch off, as it were, after the third sin; He is sensitive also to the fourth. He doesn't simply write people off as 'sinners' after a certain amount of sin; He keeps noticing their behaviour and the hurt of their sin continues growing within Him.

1:11 *His anger raged continually, and he kept his wrath forever* – The implication could be that anger is an acceptable emotion, but not if it becomes a continual state of mind.

punishment; because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity, and his anger raged continually, and he kept his anger forever; ¹² but I will send a fire on Teman, and it will devour the palaces of Bozrah. ¹³ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead, that they may enlarge their border. ¹⁴ But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it will devour its palaces, with shouting in the day of battle, with a storm in the day of the whirlwind; ¹⁵ and their king will go into captivity, he and his princes together, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 2 Nov. 22

Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Moab, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime; ² but I will send a fire on Moab, and it

will destroy the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab will die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet; ³ and I will cut off the judge from their midst, and will kill all their princes with him, says Yahweh. ⁴ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Judah, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have rejected Yahweh's law, and have not kept His statutes, and their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked; ⁵ but I will send a fire on Judah, and it will eat up the palaces of Jerusalem. ⁶ Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Israel, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; ⁷ they trample on the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and deny justice to the oppressed; and a man and his father use the same girl, to profane My holy name; ⁸ and they lay themselves down beside every altar on clothes taken in pledge; and

2:1 *I will not turn away its punishment* – A tacit recognition that God can state a punishment or destiny against a person or group, and yet turn away from doing it in the light of their repentance, as happened with Israel at the time of Moses, or with Nineveh in the book of Jonah. However there is a point where such changes are no longer possible; a change of mind is no longer a possibility (Hos. 13:14).

2:2 The “fire” promised here and throughout chapter 1 is not so much literal fire as symbolic of God's anger and condemnation (see too Jer. 17:27; Jude 7). When Jesus spoke of fire as the punishment of the wicked and used the metaphor of Gehenna, the ever burning garbage site near Jerusalem, He too wasn't speaking literally but in harmony with His Father's figurative usage of “fire” in the Old Testament as a metaphor for judgment.

2:7 *To profane My holy name* – In our context, we have been baptized into the same Name. We can likewise profane that Name by our behaviour. This is the essence of the meaning of blaspheming God's Name.

2:8 *Drink the wine of the condemned* – Under the New Covenant, we too run the risk of drinking the wine of that covenant to our own condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29). As

in the house of their God they drink the wine of the condemned. ⁹ Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. ¹⁰ Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness to possess the land of the Amorite. ¹¹ I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Isn't this true, you children of Israel? says Yahweh. ¹² But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'Don't prophesy!'. ¹³ See, I will crush you in your place, as a cart crushes that is full of grain. ¹⁴ Flight will flee from the swift; and the strong won't strengthen his force; neither shall the mighty deliver himself; ¹⁵ neither shall he stand who handles the bow; and he who is swift of foot won't escape; neither shall he who rides the horse deliver himself; ¹⁶ and he who

is courageous among the mighty will flee away naked in that day, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 3 Nov. 23

The Inevitability of Judgment

Hear this word that Yahweh has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying: ² You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all of your sins. ³ Do two walk together, unless they have agreed where to meet? ⁴ Will a lion roar in the thicket, when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? ⁵ Can a bird fall in a trap on the earth, where no snare is set for him? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when there is nothing to catch? ⁶ Does the trumpet alarm sound in a city without the people being afraid? Does evil happen to a city and Yahweh hasn't done it? ⁷ Surely the Lord Yahweh will do

we hold that cup, we realize we are at a T-junction; we shall either be saved or condemned, and we should live life in the intensity of that knowledge.

2:11 *I raised up... Nazirites* – Becoming a Nazirite was totally voluntary. Yet God works through our freewill.

2:12 *You gave the Nazirites wine to drink* – Nazirites weren't allowed to drink wine (Num. 6:3). To lead others into sin, or discourage them from the spiritual commitments they have made, is reckoned by God as worthy of the strongest condemnation. We should be positive and supportive of others' spirituality rather than destructive of it. Jesus therefore had so much anger with the Pharisees and Jewish leadership for the very same reason.

3:2 We whom God has chosen in Christ are therefore more responsible for our sins than others in the world; they sin with far less accountability than we have. We must remember this when we are tempted to sin as they do.

3:6 A classic proof of the fact that God rather than any sinful Satan figure brings "evil" in the sense of disaster on earth (Is. 45:5-7).

3:7 See on 7:1-6.

nothing, unless He first reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.⁸ The lion has roared- who will not fear? The Lord Yahweh has spoken- who can but speak it forth?⁹ Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see what unrest is in her, and what oppression is among them.¹⁰ Indeed they don't know how to do right, says Yahweh, who hoard plunder and loot in their palaces.¹¹ Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: An adversary will overrun the land; and he will pull down your strongholds, and your fortresses will be plundered.¹² Thus says Yahweh: As the shepherd rescues out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued who sit in Samaria on the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.¹³ Listen, and testify against the house of Jacob, says the Lord Yahweh, the God of Armies.¹⁴ For in the day that I visit the transgressions of

Israel on him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar will be cut off, and fall to the ground.¹⁵ I will strike the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory will perish, and the great houses will have an end, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 4 Nov. 24

God Tries to Make His People Return to Him

Listen to this word you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who tell their husbands, Bring us drinks! ² The Lord Yahweh has sworn by His holiness that, behold, the days shall come on you that they will take you away with hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks. ³ You will go out at the breaks in the wall, each one straight before her; and you will cast yourselves into Harmon, says Yahweh. ⁴ Go to Bethel, and sin; to Gilgal, and sin more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes

3:9 Hebrew poetry rhymes according to the ideas presented rather than the assonance of the words. However, this doesn't mean that in a couplet, the first part is directly equal to the second part. Subtle differences are set up in order to make a point. The lion has roared: who shall not fear? God has spoken: who can but speak forth? If a lion roars, so a man naturally fears as a result of it. God speaks, and just as naturally we can do nothing but speak it forth. Hence the hearers are to publish God's purpose to the Gentile nations around them. The lion roars, and man fears; and we are set up to expect: God speaks, and man should fear. But there is an intended dashing of this expectation. God has spoken, just as the lion may roar; but we are not to *fear* but rather to *speak it forth* to others. If we believe that the Bible is indeed the inspired word of God, if we hear that voice of Yahweh, we will inevitably speak it forth to others. Hence Peter says that he could never agree not to speak forth God's word, because to do so is a natural process for the believer (Acts 4:20).

4:4, 5 God as it were encourages sinful people in their sin; there's a downward and an upward spiral, we never remain in a neutral position in our spiritual journey.

every three days, ⁵ offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings and brag about them: for this pleases you, you children of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh. ⁶ I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in every town; yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh. ⁷ I also have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it not to rain on one city, and caused it not to rain on another city. One place was rained on, and the piece where it didn't rain withered.

⁸ So two or three cities staggered to one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh. ⁹ I struck you with blight and mildew many times in your gardens and your vineyards; and your fig trees and your olive trees have the swarming locust devoured: yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh. ¹⁰ I sent plagues among you like I did upon Egypt. I have slain your young men with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh. ¹¹ I have overthrown some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom

and Gomorrah, and you were like a burning stick plucked out of the fire; yet you haven't returned to Me, says Yahweh. ¹² Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel. ¹³ For, behold, He who forms the mountains, and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought; who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the high places of the earth: Yahweh, the God of Armies, is His name.

CHAPTER 5 Nov. 25

A Call to Repentance

Listen to this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel. ² The virgin of Israel has fallen; she shall rise no more. She is cast down on her land; there is no one to raise her up. ³ For thus says the Lord Yahweh: The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth one hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel. ⁴ For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel: Seek Me, and you will live; ⁵ but don't seek Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and don't pass to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing. ⁶ Seek Yahweh, and you will live; lest He

4:10 *The stench of your camps* – These words have a strange relevance to the death camps of Europe in the 1940s. The tragedy of Israel's history, and of so many individual lives, is that despite suffering so much, people refuse to return to their God. Their pain is therefore in vain.

4:13 *He who forms the mountains* – Nothing in the natural creation is static; although the mountains may appear so permanent and lifeless, God is forming them in an ongoing sense. God's ongoing, unceasing work in the natural creation is the constant comfort that we are not alone.

break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, and there be no one to quench it in Bethel. ⁷ You who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth: ⁸ seek Him who made the Pleiades and Orion, He who turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night; who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, Yahweh is His name; ⁹ He who brings sudden destruction on the strong, so that destruction comes on the fortress. ¹⁰ They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they detest him who speaks blamelessly. ¹¹ Forasmuch therefore as you trample on the poor, and take taxes of wheat from him— therefore you who have built houses of cut stone will not dwell in them. You who have planted pleasant vineyards shall not drink their wine. ¹² For I know how many are your offences, and how great are your sins— you who afflict the just, who take a bribe, and who turn aside the needy in the courts. ¹³ Therefore a prudent person keeps silent in such a time, for it is an evil time. ¹⁴ Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be with you, as you say. ¹⁵ Hate

evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. ¹⁶ Therefore thus says Yahweh the God of Armies, the Lord: Wailing will be in all the boulevards; and they will say in all the streets, ‘Alas! Alas!’, and they will call the farmer to mourning, and those who are skilful in lamentation to wailing. ¹⁷ In all vineyards there will be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of you, says Yahweh.

The Day of Yahweh

¹⁸ Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh! Why do you long for the day of Yahweh? It will be darkness for you, and not light. ¹⁹ As if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or he went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a snake bit him. ²⁰ Won’t the day of Yahweh be darkness for you, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it? ²¹ I hate, I despise your feasts, and I can’t tolerate your solemn assemblies. ²² Yes, though you offer Me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat animals. ²³ Take away from

5:18 It is quite possible to be enthusiastic about the coming of Christ – the final “day of the Lord” – and yet if we don’t live a serious spiritual life, then this day will actually be our destruction.

5:22 Peace offerings were freewill offerings of devotion to God. We can make them and other sacrifices to God, worship God enthusiastically (:23), keep the feasts solemnly (:21 – cp. the breaking of bread meeting) – and yet God will be irritated by these things and angry with us if at the same time we are guilty of injustice to others (:24 and most of the chapter). Justice and not being harmful to others is of such paramount value to God.

Me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. ²⁴ But let justice roll on like rivers, and righteousness like a mighty stream. ²⁵ Did you really bring to Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? ²⁶ You also carried the tent of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves. ²⁷ Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says Yahweh, whose name is the God of Armies.

CHAPTER 6 Nov. 26

Woe to Those Who Are at Ease

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who are secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come! ² Go to Calneh, and see; and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms? Or is their border greater than your border? ³ Those who put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; ⁴ who lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves

on their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; ⁵ who strum on the strings of a harp; who invent for themselves instruments of music, like David did; ⁶ who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. ⁷ Therefore they will now go into captivity with the first who go captive; and the feasting and lounging will end. ⁸ The Lord Yahweh has sworn by Himself, says Yahweh, the God of Armies, that I hate the pride of Jacob, and detest his fortresses. Therefore I will deliver up the city with all that is in it. ⁹ It will happen, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. ¹⁰ When a man's relative carries his body out of the house to burn it, he will ask him who is in the innermost parts of the house: 'Is there yet any with you?'. And if he says, 'No', then he will say, 'Hush! Indeed we must not mention the name of Yahweh'. ¹¹ For behold, Yahweh says it, and the great house will be smashed to pieces, and the little house into bits. ¹² Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plough there with

5:26 In addition to carrying Yahweh's tent or tabernacle through the wilderness, the Israelites took with them the gods of Egypt and carried their tent with them too. Leaving Egypt through the Red Sea is like baptism into Christ (1 Cor. 10:1,2); Israel's wilderness journey is analogous to our lives now as we travel towards the promised land of God's Kingdom. We mustn't take with us the gods of this world (cp. Egypt); God's claim on us is total and exclusive.

6:1-6 The situation described here before the "day of the Lord" in those days is exactly the situation today. Self-indulgence, laziness, over sleeping, over eating, brain-washed by music and ignoring the needs of others, whilst psychologically putting the reality of God's judgment far away (:3) – this is the spirit of our age, and it heralds the final day of the Lord.

oxen? But you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness; ¹³ you who rejoice in a thing of nothing, who say, ‘Haven’t we taken for ourselves horns by our own strength?’. ¹⁴ For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, says Yahweh, the God of Armies; and they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arabah.

CHAPTER 7 Nov. 27

Locusts

Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me: and behold, He formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and behold, it was the latter growth after the king’s harvest. ² It happened that when they made an end of eating the grass of

the land, then I said, Lord Yahweh, forgive, I beseech You! How could Jacob stand? For he is so small. ³ Yahweh relented concerning this. It shall not be, says Yahweh. ⁴ Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me and behold, the Lord Yahweh called for judgment by fire; and it dried up the great deep, and would have devoured the land. ⁵ Then I said, Lord Yahweh, cease, I beg You! How could Jacob stand? For he is small. ⁶ Yahweh relented concerning this. This also shall not be, says the Lord Yahweh.

A Plumb-Line

⁷ Thus he showed me: Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. ⁸ Yahweh said to me, Amos, what do you see? I said, A plumb line.

7:1-6 God reveals His intention regarding Israel, but then Amos makes a case against this and is heard. In fact, these and other examples suggest that this is almost a pattern with God – to devise His purpose, and then in the ‘gap’ until its fulfilment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or amend those plans. This could be what 3:7 is speaking of: “Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, unless He first reveals His secret to His servants the prophets”. It’s as if He reveals His plans to them *so that* they can then comment upon them in prayer.

7:2 God is open to changing His stated plan due to the mediation of others. It would even appear that Amos believed God could forgive the sins of others because of *his* prayers rather than their repentance. For Amos doesn’t merely ask God not to execute His judgments, but to actually forgive Israel. There’s an obvious similarity with the intercession of Moses; the only other person to pray “Forgive, I beseech You” is Moses – the same Hebrew words are found on his lips twice (Ex. 34:9; Num. 14:19). Moses’ amazing example had been meditated upon by Amos as he did his agricultural work – and he rose up to the same level. He prayed the same prayer. We too should be motivated in our prayer lives by Biblical examples, even using the same words. So many Biblical prayers use the words of previous Scripture. God leads us to see the similarities between our situations and those of Biblical figures – e.g. by giving Amos a vision of judgment upon Israel in terms of a locust plague, which was intended to lead Amos to see Israel as Egypt and himself as Moses in making intercession to end the plague. Amos gets into the spirit of Moses by asking God to “cease” (7:5), using the same word used to describe how the plagues “ceased” as a result of Moses’ intercession (Ex. 9:29,33,34).

Then the Lord said, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel. I will not again change My mind about punishing them.⁹ The high places of Isaac will be desolate, the sanctuaries of Israel will be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.¹⁰ Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.¹¹ For Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land’.¹² Amaziah also said to Amos, You prophet, go, flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:¹³ but don’t prophesy again any more at Bethel; for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a royal house! ¹⁴ Then Amos answered Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore figs; ¹⁵ and Yahweh took me from following the flock, and Yahweh said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to

My people Israel’.¹⁶ Now therefore listen to the word of Yahweh: ‘You say, Don’t prophesy against Israel, and don’t preach against the house of Isaac’.¹⁷ Therefore thus says Yahweh: ‘Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided by line; and you yourself shall die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land’.

CHAPTER 8 Nov. 28

A Basket of Summer Fruit

Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit.² He said, Amos, what do you see? I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then Yahweh said to me, The end has come on My people Israel. I will not again change My mind about them any more.³ The songs of the temple will be wailings in that day, says the Lord Yahweh. The dead bodies will be many. In every place they will throw them out in silence.⁴ Hear this, you who desire to swal-

7:14 Amos stresses that speaking forth God’s word wasn’t at all what he wished to do or was cut out for. Likewise Paul says that because preaching God’s word was against his natural inclination, therefore a calling to preach the Gospel had indeed been given to him (1 Cor. 9:17). Paul was sent to the Gentiles and not the Jews as he might naturally have preferred; the disciples were unlearned and ignorant men called to preach to the Jewish intelligentsia; women weren’t accepted as legal witnesses and yet the Lord asks women to be the first witnesses of His resurrection; always in the preaching of His word does God use those who humanly aren’t qualified to do so. He doesn’t use slick presentation, but rather human weakness in order to convert others. Amos doubtless alludes to himself in 3:8 where he says that a prophet cannot but speak out God’s word – and this is alluded to by the apostles when they say they cannot but speak out what they have seen and heard of Christ. Note how Amos doesn’t actually answer the serious false allegation against him personally, but gets on with speaking forth God’s word – for this was his life’s focus.

low up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, ⁵ saying, ‘Oh when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath end, that we may market wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel large, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; ⁶ that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the sweepings along with the wheat?’. ⁷ Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. ⁸ Won’t the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? Yes, it will rise up wholly like the River; and it will be stirred up and sink again, like the River of Egypt. ⁹ It will happen in that day, says the Lord Yahweh, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the day time. ¹⁰ I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will make you wear sackcloth on all your bodies, and baldness on every head. I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day. ¹¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh. ¹² They will wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will run back and forth to seek the word of Yahweh, and will not find it. ¹³ In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint for thirst. ¹⁴ Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, ‘As your god, Dan, lives;’ and, ‘As the way of

Beersheba lives;’ they will fall, and never rise up again.

CHAPTER 9 Nov. 29

God’s People to Be Destroyed

Isaw the Lord standing beside the Altar, and He said, Strike the tops of the pillars, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will kill the last of them with the sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape. ² Though they dig into Sheol, there My hand will take them; and though they climb up to the sky, I will bring them down from there. ³ Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there; and though they be hidden from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it will bite them. ⁴ Though they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it will kill them. I will set My eyes on them for evil, and not for good. ⁵ For the Lord, Yahweh of Armies, is He who touches the land and it melts, and all who dwell in it will mourn; and it will rise up wholly like the River, and will sink again, like the River of Egypt. ⁶ It is He who builds His chambers in the heavens, and has founded His vault on the earth; He who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth; Yahweh is His name. ⁷ Are you not like the children of the Ethiopians to Me, you children of Israel?, says Yahweh. Haven’t I brought up Israel out of the

land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? ⁸ See, the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the surface of the earth; except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says Yahweh. ⁹ For, see, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet not the least kernel will fall to the earth. ¹⁰ All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, 'Evil won't overtake us nor meet us'.

Rebuilding

¹¹ After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it as in the days of

old; ¹² that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who makes these things known from of old. ¹³ See, the days come, says Yahweh, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the one treading grapes him who sows seed; and sweet wine will drip from the mountains, and flow from the hills. ¹⁴ I will bring My people Israel back from captivity, and they will rebuild the ruined cities, and inhabit them; and they will plant vineyards, and drink wine from them. They shall also make gardens, and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will plant them in their land, and they will no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, says Yahweh your God.

9:11, 12 We have used the Septuagint version of these verses, because this is the form which is quoted under inspiration in Acts 15:14-18. There, James quotes these verses to prove that Gentiles could become called by God's Name through being baptized into the Name of His Son, the Lord Jesus; and that this process was not predicated upon circumcision. We see, therefore, the huge weight given by the early Christians to every Old Testament word of God. Note that Acts 15:14 speaks of God *visiting* the Gentiles, and quotes :12 about the Gentiles *seeking* the Lord as proof of this. God is in search of man, and some men are in search of Him. They meet in that moment of baptism into His Name as it is in His Son, and the union is a wonderful and eternal one.

OBADIAH

Nov. 30

Obadiah's Vision against Edom

The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Lord Yahweh says about Edom. We have heard news from Yahweh, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, saying, Arise, and let's rise up against her in battle. ² Behold, I have made you small among the nations. You are greatly despised. ³ The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, who says in his heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'. ⁴ Though you mount on high as the eagle, and though your nest is set among the stars, I will bring you down from there, says Yahweh. ⁵ If thieves came to you, if robbers by night—oh, what disaster awaits you!—wouldn't they only steal until they had enough? If grape pickers came to you, wouldn't they

leave some gleanings grapes? ⁶ How are the men of Esau searched out! How are his hidden things searched through! ⁷ All the men of your alliance have brought you on your way, even to the border. The men who were at peace with you have deceived you, and prevailed against you. Friends who eat your bread lay a snare under you. There is no understanding in him. ⁸ Won't I in that day, says Yahweh, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mountain of Esau? ⁹ Your mighty men, Teman, will be dismayed, to the end that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter. ¹⁰ For the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame will cover you, and you will be cut off forever. ¹¹ In the day that you stood on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance,

:5 This could imply that Esau / Edom's anger with Jacob / Israel was justified to *some extent* – they were condemned because they took it too far. Unless we control our anger, we will soon go too far and slip into sin. Hence we shouldn't let the sun go down over our anger (Eph. 4:26).

:6 Every past day of judgment reveals something of the future. Edom's day of judgment is described as his hidden, secret things being searched through. This may be alluded to by Paul when he speaks of how "the hidden things" of our hearts will be revealed in the final searching of the day of judgment (1 Cor. 4:5).

:7 *Friends who eat your bread* – To eat bread together was a sign of friendship and fellowship. The breaking of bread service is therefore a sign of our personal friendship with God; it's a great honour to be invited there.

:10 The nation of Edom is judged for the same thing as the historical Esau – hatred of their brother. Our attitude to our brethren will be a major factor in determining our eternal future (Mt. 25:40).

:10-14 Pride, indifference to others' pain even though it is a judgment for their sins, resentment, feelings of superiority... These mental attitudes, rather than the many other sins of Edom, were what so angered God.

and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots for Jerusalem, even you were like one of them. ¹² But don't look down on your brother in the day of his disaster, and don't rejoice over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction. Don't speak proudly in the day of distress. ¹³ Don't enter into the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Don't look down on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither seize their wealth on the day of their calamity. ¹⁴ Don't stand in the crossroads to cut off those of his who escape. Don't deliver up those of his who remain in the day of distress. ¹⁵ For the day of Yahweh is nearly upon all the nations! As you have done, it will be done to you. Your deeds will return upon your own head. ¹⁶ For as you have drunk on My holy mountain, so will all the nations drink continually. Yes, they will drink, swallow down, and will be as though they had not

been. ¹⁷ But in Mount Zion, there will be those who escape, and it will be holy. The house of Jacob will possess their inheritances. ¹⁸ The house of Jacob will be a fire, the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble. They will burn among them and consume them. There will not be anyone remaining to the house of Esau. Truly Yahweh has spoken. ¹⁹ Those of the South will possess the mountain of Esau, and those of the lowland, the Philistines. They will possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria. Benjamin will possess Gilead. ²⁰ The captives of this army of the children of Israel, who are among the Canaanites, will possess even to Zarephath; and the captives of Jerusalem, who are in Sepharad, will possess the cities of the Negev. ²¹ Saviours will come up on Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom will be Yahweh's.

:21 See on Joel 3:12-14.

JONAH

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 1

Jonah Tries to Flee from God

Now the word of Yahweh came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, ² Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me. ³ But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going down to Tarshish; so he paid its fare, and went down into it, in order to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. ⁴ But Yahweh sent out a great wind on the sea and there was a mighty storm on the sea, so that the ship was likely to break up. ⁵ Then the sailors were afraid, and every man cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship and he was laying down, deeply asleep. ⁶ So the captain came to him and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call on your God! Maybe

your God will look to us so that we won't perish. ⁷ They all said to each other, Come, let's cast lots, that we may know who is responsible for this evil that is on us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they asked him, Tell us, please, for whose cause this evil is on us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? Of what people are you? ⁹ He said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land. ¹⁰ Then were the men extremely afraid and said to him, What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Yahweh, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm to us? For the sea grew more and more stormy. ¹² He said to them, Take me up, and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will be calm for you; for I know that because of me this great storm is on you. ¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed

1:3 Jonah is described as going progressively 'down' – down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the hold of the ship, and then down into the depths of the sea (1:3,5; 2:6). This was the depth of his degradation. Yet he was brought up from it. Jonah was like Nineveh – the "wickedness" of Nineveh (1:2; 3:8) is the same Hebrew word used in 4:1 where Jonah was displeased "exceedingly", i.e. 'wickedly'. Their wickedness was paralleled with the wickedness of his hard heartedness towards them. When the sailors awoke him with the words "Get up and call ...", they were using the very words which God had used perhaps just days earlier to call him with. We can't escape the call – God will repeat it to us through life's circumstances, even through our very efforts to avoid the call. The obvious lesson is to willingly and in love respond to the calls we receive, rather than go through the agonies of seeking to avoid them. Jonah's response: "I am an Hebrew..." was basically his response to God... he didn't want to give Nineveh a chance of salvation because he was a patriotic Jew. God does these complex things with us many times daily... if we will perceive them.

hard to get them back to the land; but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they cried to Yahweh and said, We beg you Yahweh, we beg you, don't let us die for the sake of this man's life, and don't lay on us innocent blood; for you, Yahweh, have done as it pleased You. ¹⁵ So they took up Jonah, and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared Yahweh exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows. ¹⁷ Yahweh prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 2

Jonah Prays from inside the Fish

Then Jonah prayed to Yahweh his God out of the great fish's belly. ² He said, I called because of my affliction to Yahweh and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried. You heard my voice, ³ for You threw me into the depths, into the heart of the seas. The water was all around me. All Your waves and Your breakers passed over me. ⁴ I said, 'I have

been banished from Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple'. ⁵ The waters surrounded me, even to the soul. The deep was around me, the weeds were wrapped around my head. ⁶ I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth barred me in forever: yet have You brought up my life from the pit, Yahweh my God. ⁷ When my soul ebbed away within me, I remembered Yahweh. My prayer came in to You, into Your holy temple. ⁸ Those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy. ⁹ But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation belongs to Yahweh. ¹⁰ Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah on the dry land.

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 2

To Nineveh after All

The word of Yahweh came to Jonah the second time saying, ² Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I give you. ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days'

2:2 Jonah knew his Bible well; his poem is absolutely full of references to the Psalms. And yet Ps. 139 had clearly stated that we cannot flee anywhere from God's presence; for even in the deep sea, He will find us. Jonah knew this; and yet he didn't know it. He had to learn what this meant in practice. And so, incident by incident, blow by blow, our theoretical knowledge is turned into flesh, into reality for us; for the same God who worked *so* hard in Jonah's life is at work in ours.

3:3 It took Jonah three days to walk through Nineveh (3:3). On the first day in the city, he told them that in 40 days God would destroy them (3:4); it follows that by the time he was in the middle of the city he was telling them that they had 37 days left. So too the Jews had between 37 and 40 years notice of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a worthwhile speculation that for Jonah to be a sign to the Ninevites by reason of being three days in the whale (Mt. 12:38-40), he must have had in his body the marks of his

journey across. ⁴ Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried out and said, In forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown! ⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from their greatest even to their least. ⁶ The news reached the king of Nineveh and he arose from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ He made a proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor animal, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; ⁸ but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and animal, and let them cry mightily to God. Yes, let them turn each one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we might not perish? ¹⁰ God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. God relented of the disaster which He said He would do to them, and He didn't do it.

CHAPTER 4 Dec. 3

Jonah Angry Because of God's Compassion on Nineveh

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² He prayed to Yahweh and said, Please, Yahweh, wasn't this what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore I hurried to flee away to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and You relent of doing harm. ³ Therefore now Yahweh, take, I beg You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. ⁴ Yahweh said, Is it right for you to be angry? ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made himself a shelter, and sat under it in the shade, until he might see what would become of the city. ⁶ Yahweh God prepared a vine, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. So Jonah was very glad because of the vine. ⁷ But God prepared a worm at dawn the next day, and it chewed on the vine so that it withered. ⁸ It

experience for all to see, as Christ did. Being inside the fish for that period may have made his flesh change colour or bear some other physical mark so that he could be a sign to them of what had happened. Doubtless he recounted his story to them – so that they were encouraged by the fact of God's love to the resurrected Jonah to repent and likewise throw themselves on God's mercy. In all this we see Jonah as a type of Christ. They would have looked upon that man as we look upon Jesus, to see the love of God manifested in him; they responded by repenting in sackcloth, casting off their materialism, and living in a way that showed their complete belief that "the judge stands before the door". What is our response to Jonah/Jesus?

3:4 No conditions were given; but God changed His stated purpose because He is so sensitive to human repentance.

4:8 God created a great wind with which He brought Jonah and his fellows to their knees in 1:4. God here creates another great wind with which to teach Jonah some-

happened that when the sun arose, God prepared a hot east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he fainted and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. ⁹ God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry about the vine? He said, I am right to be angry, even to death. ¹⁰ Yahweh said, You have been con-

cerned for the vine, for which you have not laboured, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. ¹¹ Shouldn't I be concerned for Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who can't discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

thing else. Jonah ought to have perceived the same hand of the same God at work with him. Jonah's life "ebbed away" inside the fish (2:7) – and a very similar word is used here in 4:8 about his experience as he sat under the vine. In the fish, Jonah prayed that God would save his life, and was heard. But when he was made to feel the same again, he instead prayed God to take away his life. Perhaps this shows that even when we respond well to circumstances, those same circumstances may repeat in order to test us as to whether we will continue to make that right response.

MICAH

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 4

Against Samaria and Jerusalem

The word of Yahweh that came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. ² Hear, you peoples, all of you. Listen, O earth, and all that is therein: and let the Lord Yahweh be witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. ³ For behold, Yahweh comes forth out of His place, and will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. ⁴ The mountains melt under him, and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like waters that are poured down a steep place. ⁵ All this is because of the disobedience of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the disobedience of Jacob? Isn't it Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Aren't they Jerusalem? ⁶ Therefore I

will make Samaria like a rubble heap of the field, like places for planting vineyards; and I will pour down its stones into the valley, and I will uncover its foundations. ⁷ All her idols will be beaten to pieces, and all her temple gifts will be burned with fire, and all her images will be destroyed; for as the hire of a prostitute has she obtained them, and to the hire of a prostitute shall they return.

Lamentation and Wailing

⁸ For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will howl like the jackals, and moan like the daughters of owls. ⁹ For her wounds are incurable; and it has come even to Judah. It reaches to the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Don't tell it in Gath. Don't weep at all. At Beth Ophrah I have rolled myself in the dust. ¹¹ Pass on, inhabitant of Shaphir, in nakedness

1:8 Micah didn't just mindlessly transmit God's word to God's people. He perceived the truth of the words he was repeating, and believed absolutely that they would come true; and so he wept and rolled himself in the dust (:10). This may have been from grief, but it may also be that he thought that *his* repentance and prayer could avert the judgment upon God's people which he was prophesying.

1:10 Rolling naked in the dust... this was the extent of Micah's passion for the repentance of his audience. Our preaching isn't to be an emotionless publicity campaign for our denomination or local church, but a passionate appeal for real response. Indifference, lack of passion, is the besetting tragedy of our age. When did you last really shed tears? When were you moved, really wrenched in your gut, by the suffering of others, by the sin of this world, your own sin, your part in humanity's tragic rejection of God... when did you last *feel* for God in His pain, as He sees His beloved children and creation walk away from Him day after day, second after second? When did you last feel ecstatic joy, deep sadness... in this post-modern world of surface level emotion? It's in all this that the words of the prophets and their personal nature as people challenge us – and their spirit is to be the spirit of our testimony to Jesus in this world (Rev. 19:10).

and shame. The inhabitant of Zaanan won't come out. When you hear the wailing of Beth Ezel, you will know there is no protection there. ¹² For the inhabitant of Maroth waits anxiously hoping for good, but evil has come down from Yahweh to the gate of Jerusalem. ¹³ Harness the chariot to the swift steed, inhabitant of Lachish. She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; For the transgressions of Israel were found in you. ¹⁴ Therefore you will give a parting gift to Moresheth Gath. The houses of Achzib will be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel. ¹⁵ I will yet hand you over to your enemy, inhabitant of Mareshah. The leader who is the glory of Israel will come to hide in the Adullam cave. ¹⁶ Shave your heads, and cut off your hair for the children of your delight. Enlarge your baldness like the vulture; for they have gone into captivity from you!

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 5

The Plans of Man and the Plans of God

Woe to those who devise iniquity and work evil on their beds!

1:12 *Evil has come down* – Evil in the sense of calamity and disaster comes from God (Is. 45:5-7); it's not true that there is a personal Satan figure who brings evil, and God brings only good. Both good and evil ultimately come from God; He is in control of our lives, and has total power in the cosmos.

2:1 What people think about as they lay on their beds is known by God and is the basis of His judgment of them.

2:6 The apostles were likewise ordered not to preach, but their response was that it was impossible for them to keep quiet about God's word as it was in Christ (Acts 5:28). We cannot but share God's word with others if it really has a place in our hearts (Am. 3:8).

2:7 *Spirit... restrained?* – The prophets didn't speak their own words but God's words, because they spoke as they were moved by God's Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:21). For

When the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. ² They covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away; and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. ³ Therefore thus says Yahweh: Behold, I am planning against these people a disaster, from which you will not remove your necks, neither will you walk proudly; for it is an evil time. ⁴ In that day they will take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, saying, 'We are utterly ruined! My people's possession is divided up. Indeed he takes it from me and assigns our fields to traitors!'. ⁵ Therefore you will have no one who divides the land by lot in the assembly of Yahweh.

There Are False Prophets

⁶ Don't preach!, they preach, Don't preach about these things. Disgrace won't overtake us. ⁷ Shall it be said, O house of Jacob: Is the Spirit of Yahweh restrained? Are these His doings? Don't My words do good to him who walks blamelessly? ⁸ But lately My people have risen up as an

enemy. You strip the robe and clothing from those who pass by, confidently assuming that they aren't in danger. ⁹ You drive the women of My people out from their pleasant houses; from their young children you take away My blessing forever. ¹⁰ Arise, and depart! For this is not your resting place, because of your uncleanness that destroys, even with a grievous destruction. ¹¹ If a man walking in a spirit of falsehood lies: I will prophesy to you of wine and of strong drink; he would be the prophet of this people.

The Promise of Deliverance

¹² I will surely assemble, Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as a flock in the midst of their pasture; they will swarm with people. ¹³ He who opens the breach goes up before them. They break through and pass the gate, and go out. And their king passes on before them, with Yahweh at their head.

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 6

God's Rebuke of the People's Leaders

Isaid, Please listen, you heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: Isn't it for you to know justice? ² You who hate the good, and

love the evil; who tear off their skin, and their flesh from off their bones; ³ who also eat the flesh of My people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces for the pot, and as flesh within the cauldron. ⁴ Then they will cry to Yahweh, but He will not answer them. Yes, He will hide His face from them at that time, because they made their deeds evil. ⁵ Thus says Yahweh concerning the prophets who lead My people astray; for those who proclaim, Peace! to those who feed them; and whoever doesn't provide for their mouths, they prepare war against Him: ⁶ Therefore night is over you, with no vision, and it is dark to you, that you may not divine; and the sun will go down on the prophets, and the day will be black over them. ⁷ The seers shall be disappointed, and the diviners confounded. Yes, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God. ⁸ But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Yahweh, and of judgment, and of might, to declare to Jacob his disobedience, and to Israel his sin. ⁹ Please listen to this, you heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, who hate justice, and pervert all right judgment. ¹⁰ They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. ¹¹ Her leaders judge

a prophet not to speak or preach would therefore be as good as trying to restrain the Spirit of God; and this cannot be done.

My words do good – The early chapters of Proverbs emphasize how God's words give strength to those who already obey them. There is an upward spiral in spiritual life, in which the Spirit and word of God is the dynamic. Exposure to God's word confirms us in living a spiritual life. Hence the importance of daily Bible reading.

for bribes, and her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money: yet they lean on Yahweh and say, Isn't Yahweh in the midst of us? No disaster will come on us. ¹² Therefore Zion for your sake will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will become heaps of rubble, and the mountain of the temple like the high places of a forest.

CHAPTER 4 Dec. 6

The Mountain of Yahweh's Temple

But in the latter days, it will happen that the mountain of Yahweh's temple will be established on the top of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills; and nations will stream to it. ² Many nations will go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion will go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem;

³ and He will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more. ⁴ But they will sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and no one will make them afraid: for the mouth of Yahweh of Armies has spoken. ⁵ Indeed all the nations may walk in the name of their gods; but we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God for ever and ever. ⁶ In that day, says Yahweh, I will assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; ⁷ and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Yahweh will reign over them on Mount Zion from then on, even forever. ⁸ You, tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it will

3:12 *For your sake* – Other people suffer because of the sins of others. However, when Hezekiah studied the words of Micah, he repented and begged God to change His mind about this very verse – and God changed His mind and didn't bring this evil (Jer. 26:19). So God's words of prophecy are open to renegotiation, according to prayer and repentance. This adds intensity and significance to our entreaties of God, knowing that others (e.g. Moses) have successfully reasoned with God and He has changed His stated intentions.

4:1-4 A clear prophecy of the literal establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, based around Jerusalem. 'Mountains' are symbolic of kingdoms.

4:4 *Vine... fig tree* – These words were quoted by Rabshakeh, in offering the Jews this very situation in pagan Assyria (2 Kings 18:31,32). The world around us in its advertisements and glossy images is in fact a fake Kingdom of God, imitating the true Kingdom of God. And so the choice is highlighted for us – between the kingdoms of this world for today, and the eternal Kingdom of God tomorrow.

For the mouth – The wonder of the process of inspiration is that the black print we read on white paper in the Bible is the very mouth of God speaking to us.

4:8 The Kingdom of God which Jesus will establish at His return will in fact be a re-

come, yes, the former kingdom will return, the kingdom will come to the daughter of Jerusalem. ⁹ Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counsellor perished, that pains have taken hold of you as of a woman in travail? ¹⁰ Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now you will go forth out of the city, and will dwell in the field, and will come even to Babylon. There you will be delivered. There Yahweh will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. ¹¹ Now many nations have assembled against you, that say, Let her be raped, and let our eye gloat over Zion. ¹² But they don't know the thoughts of Yahweh, neither do

they understand His counsel; for He has assembled them like the sheaves to the threshing floor. ¹³ Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass; and you will beat in pieces many peoples: and I will devote their gain to Yahweh, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.

CHAPTER 5 Dec. 7

Bethlehem the Birthplace of the Promised Ruler

Now you shall gather yourself in troops, daughter of troops. He has laid siege against us. They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek. ² But you, Bethlehem

establishment of the Kingdom which was earlier, when Yahweh was Israel's Kingdom on earth (Ez. 21:25-27; 1 Chron. 29:23). This "former Kingdom" will be restored, again on earth, but to a far more glorious extent.

4:10 How was the travelling daughter of Zion to be delivered / rescued in *Babylon* after having been taken captive there from Jerusalem by the Babylonians? Surely in that there, God intended a spiritual revival of the people, there they would hear Ezekiel's appeal to repent, which if responded to would enable them to build the temple which he had described (Ez. 43:10,11) and thus usher in a Messianic Kingdom. God had so many wonderful plans for His people which they didn't allow to come true for them.

4:12 God assembles the nations to judge / thresh them, but they assemble themselves (:11). This is part of a large Biblical theme – that those who are judged in fact judge themselves. The only ones who will be rejected by God are those who themselves don't wish to be in His Kingdom.

5:1 Mk. 14:65 (Gk.) says that Christ was hit with "strokes of rods". Perhaps it was in this sense that the rod comforted Messiah (Ps. 23:4) in that He saw immediately that prophecy was being fulfilled in Him. Our darkest moments likewise can be our greatest encouragement if only we perceive them as we should. As men mocked Him and smote Him, thus they were treating their judge at the time of judgment. In His time of dying, the Lord Jesus was the judge of Israel. This explains why when we come before the cross, not only at the breaking of bread but *whenever* we reflect upon Him and His death, we are in some sense coming before Him in judgment.

5:2 A prophecy of Christ's birth in Bethlehem (Mt. 2:6). This prophecy of His birth is prefaced by a statement that Messiah would be smitten with a rod (:1) – which happened at the end of His life. In our linear way of thinking, we'd expect this to be the other way around – Messiah is born, grows up, suffers, dies... but God doesn't think

Ephrathah, being small among the clans of Judah, out of you one will come forth to Me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. ³ Therefore He will abandon them until the time that she who is in labor gives birth. Then the rest of his brothers will return to the children of Israel. ⁴ He shall stand, and shall shepherd in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God: and they will live, for then he will be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ He will be our peace when Assyria invades our land, and when he marches through our fortresses, then we will raise against him seven shepherds, and eight senior leaders of men.

Deliverance and Destruction

⁶ They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in its gates. He will deliver us from the Assyrian, when he invades our land, and when he marches within our border. ⁷ The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from Yahweh, like showers on the grass, that don't wait for man, nor wait for the sons of men. ⁸ The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the animals of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is no one to deliver. ⁹ Let your hand be lifted up

above your adversaries, and let all of your enemies be cut off. ¹⁰ It will happen in that day, says Yahweh, That I will cut off your horses out of the midst of you, and will destroy your chariots. ¹¹ I will cut off the cities of your land, and will tear down all your strongholds. ¹² I will destroy witchcraft from your hand; and you shall have no soothsayers. ¹³ I will cut off your engraved images and your pillars out of your midst; and you shall no more worship the work of your hands. ¹⁴ I will uproot your Asherim out of your midst; and I will destroy your cities. ¹⁵ I will execute vengeance in anger, and wrath on the nations that didn't listen.

CHAPTER 6 Dec. 8

Yahweh's Case against His People

Listen now to what Yahweh says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear what you have to say. ² Hear, you mountains, Yahweh's controversy, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for Yahweh has a controversy with His people, and He will contend with Israel. ³ My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage. I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵ My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know

and write like that; the prophecies often appear to 'jump around' in their chronological fulfilment.

the righteous acts of Yahweh. ⁶ How shall I come before Yahweh, and bow myself before the exalted God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams? With tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my disobedience? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does Yahweh require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

The Guilt of the People

⁹ Yahweh's voice calls to the city, and wisdom sees your name: Listen to the rod, and He who appointed it. ¹⁰ Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a short ephah that is accursed? ¹¹ Shall I be pure with dishonest scales, and with a bag of deceitful weights? ¹² Her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their speech. ¹³ Therefore I also have struck you with a grievous wound. I have made you desolate because of your sins. ¹⁴ You shall eat, but not be satisfied. Your humiliation will be in your midst. You will store up, but not save; and that which you save I will give up to the sword. ¹⁵ You will sow, but won't reap. You will tread

the olives, but won't anoint yourself with oil; and crush grapes, but won't drink the wine. ¹⁶ For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab. You live by their commands, that I may make you a ruin, and her inhabitants a hissing; and you will bear the reproach of my people.

CHAPTER 7 Dec. 9

The Misery of the People

Misery is mine! Indeed, I am like ¹One who gathers the summer fruits, as gleanings of the vineyard: There is no cluster of grapes to eat. My soul desires to eat the early fig. ² The Godly man has perished out of the land, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net. ³ Their hands are on that which is evil to do it diligently. The ruler and judge ask for a bribe; and the powerful man dictates the evil desire of his soul. Thus they conspire together. ⁴ The best of them is like a brier. The most upright is worse than a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, even your visitation, has come; now is the time of their confusion. ⁵ Don't trust in a neighbour. Don't put confidence in a friend. With the woman lying in your embrace, be careful of the words of your mouth! ⁶ For the son dishonours the father,

6:7 Micah comes to the point where he would fain make sacrifice for Israel, even to the point of offering his firstborn son, so strongly did he take upon himself the sins of his people. But he tells Israel that even this will be no good; they must repent themselves, for God doesn't work on the basis of substitution but representation. In all this, Micah came close to the spirit of the Father and Son. For the Father *would* give His firstborn for their sin.

the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. ⁷ But as for me, I will look to Yahweh. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. ⁸ Don't rejoice against me, my enemy. When I fall, I will arise. When I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me. ⁹ I will bear the indignation of Yahweh, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case, and executes judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light. I will see His righteousness. ¹⁰ Then my enemy will see it, and shame will cover her who said to me, where is Yahweh your God? Then my enemy will see me and will cover herself with shame. Now she will be trodden down like the mire of the streets. ¹¹ A day to build your walls! In that day, He will extend your boundary. ¹² In that day they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and from sea to sea, and mountain to mountain. ¹³ Yet the land will be desolate because of those who dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

Prayer and Praises

¹⁴ Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your heritage, who dwell by themselves in a forest, in the midst of fertile pasture land; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. ¹⁵ As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt, I will show them marvellous things. ¹⁶ The nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. They will lay their hand on their mouth. Their ears will be deaf. ¹⁷ They will lick the dust like a serpent. Like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their dens. They will come with fear to Yahweh our God, and will be afraid because of You. ¹⁸ Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity, and passes over the disobedience of the remnant of His heritage? He doesn't retain his anger forever, because He delights in loving kindness. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities under foot; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will give truth to Jacob, and mercy to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

7:16 *Ashamed of all their might* – In the day of judgment, people will be ashamed of the size of their bank accounts, the trust they put in investments, influential people, wealth, bodily strength. All human advantage will be despised – and we must live in that spirit today.

NAHUM

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 10

Against Nineveh

A divine word about Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. ² Yahweh is a jealous God and avenges; Yahweh avenges and is full of wrath. Yahweh takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He maintains wrath against His enemies. ³ Yahweh is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Yahweh has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. ⁴ He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan languishes, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languishes. ⁵ The mountains quake before Him, and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at His presence, yes, the world, and all who dwell in it. ⁶ Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken apart by Him. ⁷ Yahweh is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who take refuge in

Him. ⁸ But with an overflowing flood He will make a full end of His adversaries, and will pursue His enemies into darkness. ⁹ What do you plot against Yahweh? He will make a full end; affliction won't rise up the second time. ¹⁰ For while they are entangled in thorns, and intoxicated with their drink, they will be consumed utterly like dry stubble. ¹¹ There is one gone forth out of you, who devises evil against Yahweh, who counsels wickedness. ¹² Thus says Yahweh: Though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so they will be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. ¹³ Now will I break his yoke from off you, and will burst your bonds apart. ¹⁴ Yahweh has commanded concerning you: No more descendants will bear your name. Out of the house of your gods will I cut off the engraved image and the molten image. I will make your grave, for you are vile. ¹⁵ Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, Judah! Per-

1:4 He rebukes – These verses are full of allusion to what God did at the Red Sea – but they are written in the present tense, as if God's wonders are no less in our day too, even though they are expressed in a less visual way.

1:8 Pursue His enemies into darkness – The final day of judgment will feature the rejected being chased by Angels into darkness, where they will weep and bang their teeth in anger with themselves (Ps. 35:5,6; Job 18:18; Mt. 22:13).

1:15 The feet of him – This prophecy about Christ is quoted in Rom. 10:15 about our preaching, but with a subtle change of pronoun: "How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach". We are the Lord Jesus to this world, because we are brethren in Him. This alone is a powerful imperative as to who we are, how we speak, the men and women we show ourselves to be. The Nahum passage is in the context of preaching to

form your vows, for the wicked one will no more pass through you. He is utterly cut off.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 10

How Nineveh Is to Fall

He who dashes in pieces has come up against you. Keep the fortress! Watch the way! Strengthen your muscles! Fortify your power mightily! ² For Yahweh restores the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel; for the destroyers have destroyed them, and ruined their vine branches. ³ The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are dressed in scarlet, the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the pine spears are brandished. ⁴ The chariots rage in the streets, they rush back and forth in the broad highways. Their appearance is like torches, they run like lightning. ⁵ He summons his picked troops. They stumble on their way. They dash to protect its wall, and the protective shield is put in place. ⁶ The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved. ⁷ It is decreed: she is uncovered, she is carried away; and her handmaids moan

as with the voice of doves, beating on their breasts. ⁸ Like water from a burst dam the people rush away from Nineveh. Stop! Stop! they cry, but no one looks back. ⁹ Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold, for there is no end of the booty, the glory of all goodly jewels. ¹⁰ She is empty, void, and waste. The heart melts, the knees knock together, their bodies and faces have grown pale. ¹¹ Where is the den of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion and the lioness walked, the lion's cubs, and no one made them afraid? ¹² The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with the kill, and his dens with prey. ¹³ Behold, I am against you, says Yahweh of Armies, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions; and I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your envoys will no longer be heard.

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 11

A Woe to Nineveh

Woe to the city of blood! It is all full of lies and robbery- no end

Israel the good news of their ultimate freedom from the Assyrian invasion which was then imminent. We are in a strikingly parallel situation in these last days, and should be making a special witness to Israel and the Jewish people.

2:1 Nineveh would have seemed invincible at the time Nahum prophesied. Nahum's words would have seemed as the rantings of a madman. The prophecies about Christ's return and the destruction of the present world order likewise demand faith to believe, but they will just as surely come true.

2:2 *Vine branches* – Israel were God's vineyard, the individual Israelites were the branches (Is. 5:1). Jesus uses the same figure about us – He is the vine and we who are baptized into Him are the branches (Jn. 15:5). Thus the individuals in Christ are now the true Israel of God, a nation currently without a homeland, but waiting for the establishment of our Kingdom on this earth (Gal. 3:27-29).

to the prey! ² The noise of the whip, the noise of the rattling of wheels, prancing horses, and bounding chariots, ³ the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies. They stumble on their bodies, ⁴ because of the multitude of the prostitution of the alluring prostitute, the mistress of witchcraft, who sells nations through her prostitution, and families through her witchcraft. ⁵ Behold, I am against you, says Yahweh of Armies, and I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame. ⁶ I will throw abominable filth on you, and make you vile, and will set you a spectacle. ⁷ It will happen that all those who look at you will flee from

you, and say, ‘Nineveh is laid waste! Who will mourn for her?’ Where will I seek comforters for you? ⁸ Are you better than No-Amon, who was situated among the rivers, who had the waters around her; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea? ⁹ Cush and Egypt were her infinite strength. Put and Libya were her helpers. ¹⁰ Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity. Her young children also were dashed in pieces at the head of all the streets, and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her senior leaders were bound in chains. ¹¹ You also will be drunken. You will go into hiding. You also will seek a stronghold because of the enemy. ¹² All your fortresses will be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs: if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. ¹³ Behold, your

3:4 *And families* – One aspect of the sin of prostitution and much sexual sin is that it destroys families; and God is a family God who has created the family unit as His preferred method for His people.

3:5, 6 The language of these verses is extreme. This is the fully legitimate anger of God against those who abuse His people and sin against Him. The grace and kindness of God shouldn’t let us forget His wrath with sin which is also a part of His total character and personality.

3:7 *Nineveh is laid waste* – At the time Nahum was speaking, she was prosperous and powerful. But God’s word is so sure of fulfilment that He can speak in the present tense, speaking of things which haven’t yet happened as if they have (Rom. 4:17). We also, by faith, must view this world with the same eyes. It’s all over for this world, right here and now, so certain is it that Christ will return and establish His Kingdom upon the ruins of the kingdoms of men.

3:9 *Infinite strength* – Egypt is presented in the Bible as representative of human strength. It *appeared* that their strength was infinite, but only God has infinite strength. This is an example of how the Bible often speaks of situations as they appear to people on earth, even though this is not ultimately how things are. The language of demons in the New Testament is another example. God sometimes adopts a human perspective in reasoning with us, in order to connect with us; just as we do when trying to communicate with and explain things to those (e.g. children) who understand something far less than we do.

troops in your midst are like women. The gates of your land are set wide open to your enemies. The fire has devoured your bars. ¹⁴ Draw water for the siege. Strengthen your fortresses. Go into the clay, and tread the mortar. Make the brick kiln strong. ¹⁵ There the fire will devour you. The sword will cut you off. It will devour you like the grasshopper. You have multiplied like grasshoppers, bred like the locust. ¹⁶ You have increased your merchants more than the stars of the skies. The grasshopper strips, and flees away.

¹⁷ Your guards are like the locusts, and your officials like the swarms of locusts, which settle on the walls on a cold day, but when the sun appears, they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. ¹⁸ Your shepherds slumber, king of Assyria. Your nobles lie down, your people are scattered on the mountains, and there is no one to gather them. ¹⁹ There is no healing for your wound, for your injury is fatal. All who hear the report of you clap their hands over you; for who hasn't felt your endless cruelty?

HABAKKUK

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 12

Habakkuk Complains

The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. ² Yahweh, how long will I cry, and You will not hear? I cry out to you Violence!- and will You not save? ³ Why do You show me iniquity, and look at perversity? For destruction and violence are before me. There is strife, and contention rises up. ⁴ Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth; for the wicked surround the righteous, therefore justice is perverted.

God's Reply

⁵ Look among the nations, watch, and wonder marvellously; for I am working a work in your days, which you will not believe though it is told you. ⁶ For, behold, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the

earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs. ⁷ They are feared and dreaded. Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. ⁸ Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen press proudly on. Yes, their horsemen come from afar, they fly as an eagle that hastens to devour. ⁹ All of them come for violence; their hordes face the desert; he gathers prisoners like sand. ¹⁰ Yes, he scoffs at kings, and princes are a derision to him. He laughs at every stronghold, for he builds up an earthen siege ramp, and takes it. ¹¹ Then he sweeps by like the wind, and goes on further. He is indeed guilty; his strength is his god.

Habakkuk Complains again

¹² Aren't You from everlasting, Yahweh my God, my Holy One? We

1:2 The closer we are to God, the more we will be able like Habakkuk to question Him, to have dialogue with Him, rather than accepting the principles of the Bible as His cold word to us which we simply have to accept without any response from us back to Him.

1:5 Paul appropriates the words of Hab. 1:5 LXX to his work of preaching (Acts 13:2; 14:26). Even if people don't believe our message, God is still using us to work His work. In the process of preaching the Gospel we feel God working with us; the exercise of preaching is therefore largely for our benefit, and it is not therefore ever a failure even if people disbelieve the Gospel we preach.

1:6 God 'raised up' evil people in order to fulfil His purpose. The temporary 'rise and rise' of the wicked shouldn't discourage us – it is actually of God, and they are merely tools in His hands.

1:12 If we truly believe that we are *His* people, not those of this world, and that we are truly part of His eternal family, then God's eternity becomes a guarantee of our eternal salvation. If He lives for ever, so shall we (this is true also of Christ – if we are connected with His resurrection to eternal life through baptism, we too shall live for ever with Him, Jn. 14:19; Rom. 6:8; 2 Cor. 13:4; 2 Tim. 2:11).

also will not die! Yahweh, you have appointed him for judgment. You, Rock, have established him to punish. ¹³ You who have purer eyes than to see evil, and who cannot look on perversity, why do You tolerate those who deal treacherously, and keep silent when the wicked swallows up the man who is more righteous than he, ¹⁴ and make men like the fish of the sea, like the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? ¹⁵ He takes up all of them with the hook; he catches them in his net, and gathers them in his dragnet. Therefore he rejoices and is glad. ¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net, and burns incense to his dragnet, because by them his life is luxurious, and his food is good. ¹⁷ Will he therefore continually empty his net, and kill the nations without mercy?

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 13

I will stand at my watch, and set myself on the ramparts, and will look out to know what He will say to me, and what answer I will get concerning my complaint.

God's Reply

² Yahweh answered me, Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he who reads it may run. ³ For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it speeds toward the end, and won't prove false. Though it takes time, wait for it; because it will surely come. It won't delay. ⁴ Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright in him; but the justified one will live due to his faith. ⁵ Yes, moreover, wine is treacherous. A proud man who doesn't stay at home, who enlarges his desire as Sheol, and he is like death, and can't be satisfied, but gathers to himself all nations, and heaps to himself all peoples. ⁶ Won't all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, 'Woe to him who increases that which is not his, and who enriches himself by extortion! How long?' ⁷ Won't your debtors rise up suddenly, and wake up those who now make you tremble, and you will be their victim? ⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples

2:2 *May run* – Running in response to God's word is an idiom for obediently responding to it (Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; 2 Thess. 3:1). The 'plainer' the word is made, the more clearly it is understood, the greater will be our response to it. Correct understanding of God's word is therefore important because it is related to the extent of our 'running' in response to it.

2:3 The context is a prophecy concerning the coming Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem. There were some who felt that the fulfilment of these words of God was 'tarrying' so long that it would never come. We face the same temptation with regard to the prophecies of Christ's return.

2:4 *The justified* – Much is made of this verse in the New Testament, to teach that we sinners are counted righteous, declared in the right as we stand in the dock before the judgment of God, on the basis of our faith in Christ – rather than our works (Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38). The context of this verse teaches that living by faith is the antithesis of being proud. The life of faith, trusting thereby in grace, is a life of humility.

will plunder you, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all who dwell in it. ⁹ Woe to him who gets an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!

¹⁰ You have devised shame to your house, by cutting off many peoples, and have sinned against your soul.

¹¹ For the stone will cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the wood-work will answer it. ¹² Woe to him who builds a town with blood, and establishes a city by iniquity! ¹³ Behold, isn't it of Yahweh of Armies that the peoples labour for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁵ Woe to him who gives his neighbour drink, pouring your inflaming wine until they are drunk, so that you may gaze at their naked bodies!

¹⁶ You are filled with shame, and not glory. You will also drink, and be exposed! The cup of Yahweh's right hand will come around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. ¹⁷ For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the destruction

of the animals, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to every city and to those who dwell in them. ¹⁸ What value does the engraved image have, that its maker has engraved it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he who fashions its form trusts in it, to make mute idols? ¹⁹ Woe to him who says to the wood, 'Awake!' or to the mute stone, 'Arise!' Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in its midst. ²⁰ But Yahweh is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him!

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 14

A Prayer of Habakkuk

A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, set to victorious music. ² Yahweh, I have heard of Your fame. I stand in awe of Your deeds, Yahweh. Renew your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make it known. In wrath, You remember mercy. ³ God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and His praise filled the earth. ⁴ His splendour is

2:14 A clear prediction of God's Kingdom coming on earth.

2:16 Being given the cup of the Lord is a double symbol – of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16,21; 11:26); or, as here, a symbol of condemnation (Ps. 75:8; Jer. 51:7; Rev. 16:19). This adds some intensity to the cup we take at the memorial service. We are drinking that cup either to our condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29), or to our eternal blessing. Hence the breaking of bread meeting brings us up to a T-intersection in our lives.

3:2 *In wrath, You remember mercy* – God's anger and judgments aren't the wrath of an offended deity who is more powerful than us, as it were hitting back at us because we have upset Him. His judgments incorporate mercy, and are aimed at bringing good out of evil, teaching others His ways through them (Is. 26:9).

like the sunrise. Rays shine from His hand, where His power is hidden. ⁵ Plague went before Him, and pestilence followed His feet. ⁶ He stood, and shook the earth. He looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled. The age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal. ⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction. The dwellings of the land of Midian trembled. ⁸ Was Yahweh displeased with the rivers? Was Your anger against the rivers, or Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, on Your chariots of salvation? ⁹ You removed the sheath from Your bow, You called for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers. ¹⁰ The mountains saw You, and were afraid. The storm of waters passed by, the deep sea roared and lifted up its hands on high. ¹¹ The sun and moon stood still in the sky at the light of Your arrows as they went, at the shining of Your glittering spear. ¹² You marched through the land in wrath. You threshed the nations in anger. ¹³ You went forth for the salvation of Your

people, for the salvation of Your anointed. You crushed the head of the land of wickedness. You stripped them head to foot. Selah. ¹⁴ You pierced the heads of his warriors with their own spears. They came as a whirlwind to scatter me, gloating as if to devour the wretched in secret. ¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, churning mighty waters. ¹⁶ I heard, and my body trembled. My lips quivered at the sound. Rotteness enters into my bones, and I tremble in my place, because I must wait quietly for the day of trouble, for the coming up of the people who invade us. ¹⁷ For though the fig tree doesn't flourish, nor fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive fails, the fields yield no food; the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls: ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in Yahweh. I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! ¹⁹ Yahweh, the Lord, is my strength. He makes my feet like deer's feet, and enables me to go in high places. For the musical director, on my stringed instruments.

3:16 After twice approaching God with the question of "Why?", and each time being given fresh insights into the awful nature of the judgment to come as a response, Habakkuk ends up with a trembling body and lips that 'quivered at the sound' of God's word... and yet, at the very same time, feels that he still "will rejoice in the Lord" (:18), even though he doesn't fully understand. Faith involves an element of acceptance that God is right, even though we don't understand.

3:17 These were all the blessings promised for obedience. Habakkuk had been obedient, but didn't seem to have received these blessings. Yet still he had the faith to rejoice in God's grace, even though he didn't understand the exact relationship between obedience and blessing in this life.

3:18 *Yet will I* – Even if others amongst God's people turn away and are punished for it, yet we personally can still rejoice in our personal relationship with God.

ZEPHANIAH

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 15

Coming Destruction

The word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah. ² I will utterly sweep away everything off of the surface of the earth, says Yahweh. ³ I will sweep away man and animal. I will sweep away the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and the idols along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the surface of the earth, says Yahweh.

Against Judah

⁴ I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place: the name of the idolatrous and pagan priests, ⁵ those who worship the army of the sky on the housetops, those who worship and swear by Yahweh and also swear by Malcam, ⁶ those who have turned back from

following Yahweh, and those who haven't sought Yahweh nor inquired after Him. ⁷ Be silent at the presence of the Lord Yahweh, for the day of Yahweh is at hand. For Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests. ⁸ It will happen in the day of Yahweh's sacrifice that I will punish the princes, the king's sons, and all those who are clothed with foreign clothing. ⁹ In that day, I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their master's house with violence and deceit. ¹⁰ In that day, says Yahweh, there will be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, a wailing from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills. ¹¹ Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the people of Canaan are undone! All those who were loaded with silver are cut off. ¹² It will happen at that time that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and I will punish the men who are settled on their dregs, who say in their heart, Yahweh will not do good, neither

1:5 *And also swear* – Repeatedly the Bible condemns the human tendency to worship both the true God and also idols (1 Cor. 10:21). Yahweh has loved us so much that He is rightfully jealous over us, and our loyalty must be to Him alone.

1:12 *With candles* – Alluding to the Jewish custom of searching their homes for yeast, representing sin, at Passover time.

In weak moments we all tend to assume that God is somehow in limbo, indifferent and not paying attention to our behaviour or situation here on earth. The temporary silence of God doesn't mean that He is not watching intently. These people who thought that God was indifferent were themselves "settled on their dregs", they hadn't moved for a long time, and they thought God was like them. We must resist the temptation to think that God's attitudes to things and people, our own selves included, are merely a reflection of *our* attitudes (Ps. 50:21). The Bible reveals to us God's judgments, positions and emotions, and we must accept this revelation rather than assuming that God is somehow created in our own image.

will He do evil. ¹³ Their wealth will become a spoil, and their houses a desolation. Yes, they will build houses, but won't inhabit them. They will plant vineyards, but won't drink their wine.

The Great Day of Yahweh Is Near

¹⁴ The great day of Yahweh is near. It is near, and hurries greatly, the voice of the day of Yahweh. The mighty man cries there bitterly. ¹⁵ That day is a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, ¹⁶ a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements. ¹⁷ I will bring distress upon men, so that they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Yahweh; and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh's wrath, but the whole land will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy; for He will make an end, yes, a terrible end, of all those who dwell in the land.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 16

Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, you nation that has no shame, ² before the appointed time when the day passes as the

chaff, before the fierce anger of Yahweh comes on you, before the day of Yahweh's anger comes on you. ³ Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the land, who have kept His ordinances. Seek righteousness; seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of Yahweh's anger.

Against the Land of the Philistines

⁴ For Gaza will be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation. They will drive out Ashdod at noonday, and Ekron will be rooted up. ⁵ Woe to the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of Yahweh is against you, Canaan, the land of the Philistines. I will destroy you, that there will be no inhabitant. ⁶ The sea coast will be pastures, with booths for shepherds and folds for flocks. ⁷ The coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah. They will find pasture there. They will lie down in the evening in the houses of Ashkelon, for Yahweh their God will visit them, and restore them.

Against Moab and Ammon

⁸ I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the insults of the children of Ammon, with which they have reproached My people, and magnified themselves against their border. ⁹ Therefore as I live, says Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, surely

1:17, 18 These are a series of allusions to Sodom, showing that God's sinful people were no better than the worst Gentiles. Mere association with God's people and knowing truths about God doesn't mean of themselves that we are any better than the worst sinners.

2:3 Humility is a height which we should aspire to. This is a complete inversion of human thinking and values.

Moab will be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, a possession of nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them, and the survivors of My nation will inherit them. ¹⁰ This they will have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of Yahweh of Armies. ¹¹ Yahweh will leave them awestruck, for He will starve all the gods of the land. Men will worship Him, everyone from his place, even from every border of the nations.

Against Cush

¹² You Cushites also, you will be killed by My sword.

Against Assyria

¹³ He will stretch out His hand against the north, destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, as dry as the wilderness. ¹⁴ Herds will lie down in the midst of her, all the animals of the nations. Both the pelican and the porcupine will lodge

in its capitals. Their calls will echo through the windows. Desolation will be in the thresholds, for He has laid bare the cedar beams. ¹⁵ This is the joyous city that lived carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me. How she has become a desolation, a place for animals to lie down in! Everyone who passes by her will hiss, and shake their fists.

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 17

Jerusalem's Future

Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, the oppressing city! ² She didn't obey the voice. She didn't receive correction. She didn't trust in Yahweh. She didn't draw near to her God. ³ Her princes in the midst of her are as roaring lions, her judges are as evening wolves; they leave nothing until the next day. ⁴ Her prophets are arrogant and treacherous people, her priests have desecrated the sanctuary; they have done violence to the law. ⁵ Yahweh in the midst of her, He is righteous;

2:11 The pagan gods didn't exist at all, but God speaks of starving them to death. He speaks as if they exist, and then shows by exercising His great power that effectively they don't. God and His Son adopted the same approach in the New Testament with the demons or idols which were believed in.

2:12 *My sword* – God used the swords of pagan nations to do His judgments, but effectively they were *His* swords. The fact God uses people to do His will doesn't mean they are righteous. When bad things happen to us at the hands of evil people, we needn't think that God has left us at the whim of the wicked and forgotten us. He is actually using those people according to His plan.

2:15 *I am* – An allusion to the meaning of 'Yahweh' – 'I am that I am'. Those who effectively deny the existence of God are themselves playing God, claiming that *I am*, rather than accepting that *He is*. Acceptance of the fact that Yahweh is the only "I am" means that we will not be "I" centred, but God centred.

3:5 *Know no shame* – The righteous admit their sins and do know shame for them; and so they will come to a position where in the Kingdom of God, they will be aware that

He will do no wrong. Every morning He brings His justice to light. He doesn't fail, but the unjust know no shame. ⁶ I have cut off nations, their battlements are desolate; I have made their streets waste, so that no one passes by. Their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, so that there is no inhabitant. ⁷ I said, Just fear Me. Receive correction, so that her dwelling won't be cut off, according to all that I have appointed concerning her. But they rose early and corrupted all their doings. ⁸ Therefore wait for Me, says Yahweh, until the day that I rise up to seize the prey; for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, even all My fierce anger; for all the land will be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. ⁹ For then I will purify the lips of the peoples, that they may all call on the name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one neck. ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Cush, My worshippers, even the daughter of My dispersed people, will bring My offering. ¹¹ In that day you will not be ashamed for all your doings in

which you have transgressed against Me; for then I will take away out of the midst of you your proud exulting ones, and you will no more be arrogant in My holy mountain. ¹² But I will leave in the midst of you an afflicted and humbled people, and they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh. ¹³ The remnant of Israel will not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they will feed and lie down, and no one will make them afraid. ¹⁴ Sing, daughter of Zion! Shout, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Yahweh has taken away your judgments. He has thrown out your enemy. The King of Israel, Yahweh, is in the midst of you. You will not be afraid of evil any more. ¹⁶ In that day it will be said to Jerusalem, Don't be afraid, Zion. Don't let your hands be weak. ¹⁷ Yahweh your God is in the midst of you, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with joy, He will calm you in His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. ¹⁸ I will gather those who mourn with longing for the ap-

they have sinned but will not know shame for those sins (:11), so fully acceptant will they be of the work of Christ which has left them genuinely spotless and blameless before God's throne (Jude 24). Verse 19 continues the irony around the theme of "shame" by saying that the shame of sinners is known by everyone else – apart from they themselves, who "know no shame". The point is that we might as well be ashamed for our sins before others, because actually they do or will see the shame of our sins anyway.

3:7 God's judgments could have been averted *if* they repented. God may 'appoint' things to happen to a person, but if they repent, then that potential which He has designed will in fact not happen. In this lies the wonderful significance of repentance.

3:13 *Refuge in the name* – In our times, we can do this by being baptized into the Name.

3:18 In the Kingdom of God on earth, God will empower those who now long to be obedient to God's commands but cannot be due to circumstance or weakness. We will

pointed feasts, you will no longer suffer reproach. ¹⁹ Behold, at that time I will deal with all those who afflict you, and I will save those who are lame, and gather those who were driven away. I will give them praise and honour, those whose shame was	once in all the earth. ²⁰ At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you; for I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes, says Yahweh.
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all then be able to serve God as strongly as we now wish. Our experiences in this life, even of our own weaknesses, are preparing our desire for that eternity which we will then be given.

HAGGAI

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 18

Come and Build God's House

In the second year of Darius the King, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, the Word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, ² This is what Yahweh of Armies says: These people say, 'The time hasn't yet come, the time for Yahweh's house to be built'. ³ Then the Word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ⁴ Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, while this house lies waste? ⁵ Now therefore this is what Yahweh of Armies says: Consider your ways. ⁶ You have sown much, and bring in little. You

eat, but you don't have enough. You drink, but you aren't filled with drink. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm, and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes in it. ⁷ This is what Yahweh of Armies says: Consider your ways. ⁸ Go up to the mountain, bring wood, and build the house. I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says Yahweh. ⁹ You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says Yahweh of Armies, Because of My house that lies waste, while each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore for your sake the skies withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the

1:2 The Apocryphal book of Baruch 6:2 records how Baruch changes the prophecy of Jer. 29:10, that Israel were to be 70 years in Babylon and then return: "When you reach Babylon you will be there many years, a period seven generations long, after which I will bring you back". The 70 years are turned into seven generations. This was precisely the mindset spoken against in Haggai 1:2, whereby the Jews reasoned that the time had not yet come to rebuild the temple. "The time" referred to the time spoken of by Jeremiah – but Baruch had re-interpreted the 70 years as meaning seven generations. And yet all this was done with a surface-level reverence for God's word – the exiles considered themselves blessed because they had God's law (Baruch 4:4). Indeed, much of Baruch is a condemnation of idols and a demand to worship Yahweh. Human nature seeks to defer serving God until later – we're quick to find excuses. But the Bible stresses how God's true servants rise up and serve Him immediately.

1:9 *Looked for much* – The Jews in Babylon for the most part chose to remain there rather than return to rebuild God's land and house. Many of those who did return did so, it seems, motivated by the hope of personal gain. They were more interested in building houses for themselves than in restoring God's house, and therefore God sent famine – they didn't get the "much" benefit and blessing for themselves which they had expected. We too can leave 'Babylon', the world, and sign up to God's work from the motive of personal benefit, rather than a genuine desire to see God's glory and His work and cause progressed.

grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on that which the ground brings forth, on men, on livestock, and on all the labour of the hands.¹² Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Yahweh, their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Yahweh, their God, had sent him; and the people feared Yahweh.¹³ Then Haggai, Yahweh's messenger, spoke Yahweh's message to the people, saying, I am with you, says Yahweh.¹⁴ Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remainder of the people; and they came and worked on the house of Yahweh of Armies, their God,¹⁵ in the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 18

The Glory of the New House of God

In the seventh month, in the twenty-first day of the month, the word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet, saying,² Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to

the remainder of the people, saying,³ 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Isn't it in your eyes as nothing?'⁴ Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel!' says Yahweh. 'Be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest! Be strong, all you people of the land', says Yahweh, 'and work, for I am with you', says Yahweh of Armies.⁵ This is the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, and My Spirit dwelt among you. 'Don't be afraid'.⁶ For this is what Yahweh of Armies says: 'Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations. The precious things of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says Yahweh of Armies. ⁸ The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine', says Yahweh of Armies. ⁹ 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former', says Yahweh of Armies; 'and in this place will I give peace', says Yahweh of Armies.

Blessings

¹⁰ In the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the Word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet, saying,¹¹ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,¹² 'If someone carries holy food in the

1:14 *The spirit* – God can work directly on the human mind [spirit] and strengthen us in the attitudes we adopt.

2:5 *My Spirit* – God dwelt amongst Israel after they left Egypt through an Angel; He makes His Angels Spirits (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7). One way God's Spirit works amongst us His people is through the unseen ministry of Angels.

fold of his garment, and the garment touches bread, stew, wine, oil, or any food, will it too become holy?'. The priests answered, No. ¹³ Then Haggai said, If one who is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, will it be unclean? The priests answered, It will be unclean. ¹⁴ Then Haggai answered, 'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me', says Yahweh; 'and so is every work of their hands. That which they offer there is unclean. ¹⁵ Now, please consider from this day and backward, before a stone was laid on a stone in Yahweh's temple. ¹⁶ Through all that time, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty, there were only twenty. ¹⁷ I struck you with blight, mildew, and hail in all the work of your hands; yet you didn't turn to Me', says Yahweh. ¹⁸ 'Consider, please, from this day and backward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, since the day that the

foundation of Yahweh's temple was laid, consider it. ¹⁹ Is the seed still in the barn? Yes, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree haven't brought forth. From this day on I will bless you'.

Zerubbabel Is a Chosen Signet Ring

²⁰ The Word of Yahweh came the second time to Haggai in the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, ²¹ Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, 'I will shake the heavens and the earth. ²² I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations. I will overthrow the chariots, and those who ride in them. The horses and their riders will come down, everyone by the sword of his brother. ²³ In that day, says Yahweh of Armies, will I take you, Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel', says Yahweh, 'and will make you as a signet ring, for I have chosen you', says Yahweh of Armies.

2:12, 13 Unholiness spreads easier than holiness does. In spiritual things, it's easier to slip into a downward spiral than into an upward spiral. The Jews thought that mere vague association with holy things would somehow make them holy. Our attendance at meetings, identification on a social level with God's people, breaking bread etc. will not of itself make us holy.

2:17 One of the saddest things to observe is people suffering from situations which God uses to try to bring them back to Him, and them still refusing to return to Him. So much tragic human suffering is in vain because people won't perceive the spiritual intention behind it.

ZECHARIAH

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 19

Return to the Lord

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, ² Yahweh was very displeased with your fathers. ³ Therefore tell them: Thus says Yahweh of Armies: ‘Return to me’, says Yahweh of Armies, ‘and I will return to you’, says Yahweh of Armies. ⁴ Don’t you be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying: Thus says Yahweh of Armies, ‘Return now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings;’ but they did not hear, nor listen to me, says Yahweh. ⁵ Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? ⁶ But My words and My decrees, which I commanded My servants the prophets, didn’t they influence your fathers? Then they repented and said, ‘Just as Yahweh of Armies determined to do to us, according to our ways, and according to our practices, so He has done with us’.

A Man on a Red Horse

⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zecha-

riah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, ⁸ I had a vision in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in a ravine; and behind him there were red, brown, and white horses. ⁹ Then I asked, ‘My lord, what are these?’ The angel who talked with me said to me, I will show you what these are. ¹⁰ The man who stood among the myrtle trees answered, They are the ones Yahweh has sent to go back and forth through the earth. ¹¹ They reported to the angel of Yahweh who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked back and forth through the earth, and behold, all the earth is at rest and in peace. ¹² Then the angel of Yahweh replied, O Yahweh of Armies, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation those seventy years? ¹³ Yahweh answered the angel who talked with me with kind and comforting words. ¹⁴ So the angel who talked with me said to me, Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says Yahweh of Armies: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. ¹⁵ I am very angry with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, but they added to

1:2 God is frequently called “Yahweh of Armies” in Zechariah because the prophecy is seeking to assure the Jews that although everything seemed quiet on earth and in the land of Judah (:11), God’s invisible armies of Angels were very actively working. We need to also be aware of this.

1:12 The Angel didn’t understand – Angels don’t sin, they have God’s nature, but they still don’t know everything (Mt. 24:36).

the calamity. ¹⁶ Therefore thus says Yahweh: I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in it, says Yahweh of Armies, and a builders' line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem'. ¹⁷ Proclaim further, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh of Armies: My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and Yahweh will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem'.

Four Horns and Four Carpenters

¹⁸ I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, four horns. ¹⁹ I asked the angel who talked with me, What are these? He answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. ²⁰ Yahweh showed me four carpenters. ²¹ Then I asked, What are these coming to do? He said, These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man lifted up his head; but these have come to saw them off, to cast down the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 20

A Man with a Measuring Line in His Hand

I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² Then I asked, Where are you going? He said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its breadth and what is its length. ³ Behold, the angel who talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, ⁴ and said to him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. ⁵ For I', says Yahweh, 'will be to her a wall of fire around it, and I will be the glory in the midst of her. ⁶ Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north', says Yahweh; 'for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the sky', says Yahweh. ⁷ 'Come, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon'. ⁸ For thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'For honour He has sent me to the nations which plundered you; for he who touches you touches the apple

1:16 God had returned to Jerusalem; through the prophets, He had called for the Jews to leave Babylon and also return to Jerusalem. But most of them preferred to stay in the soft life there. Those who returned were following where God led. The call to repentance in :3 was in terms of 'returning' to God – and the Jews could've demonstrated this by returning to Jerusalem from Babylon. God had already returned to them; they had to return to Him. God takes the initiative with us, time and again.

1:21 A horn can be understood as a symbol of power.

2:7 God urged the Jews to leave Babylon. But as the book of Esther explains, they were quite comfortable there, Jews were in high places, they didn't stay weeping by the rivers of Babylon for long; and there's archaeological evidence they were involved in banking and commerce. But God told them to escape from it – for spiritually, it would kill them. Their position was urgent. But most preferred to remain there, rather than leave it all behind and make the long and uncertain journey to a land in ruins.

2:8 *Apple of His eye* – The most sensitive spot on the human body. God is so sensitive

of His eye. ⁹ For, behold, I will shake My hand over them, and they will be a spoil to those who served them; and you will know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me. ¹⁰ Sing and rejoice, daughter of Zion; for, behold, I come, and I will dwell in the middle of you', says Yahweh. ¹¹ Many nations shall join themselves to Yahweh in that day, and shall be My people; and I will dwell in the middle of you; and you shall know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me to you. ¹² Yahweh will inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. ¹³ Be silent, all flesh, before Yahweh; for He has roused Himself from His holy habitation!

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 20

Rich Clothing to Replace Filthy Garments

He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary. ² Yahweh said to Satan, Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Yes, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Isn't this a burning stick plucked out of the fire? ³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the angel. ⁴ He answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, Take the filthy garments from him. To him he said, Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass

to us His people; His love for us is so great that He will be highly sensitive to everything done bad to us, and every pain we experience.

3:1 The context in Zechariah 3 was that of the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. That situation was reflected in the Heavenly court. The Jews were trying to rebuild the temple and re-establish a system of worship there. However, "the people of the land" acted as a satan ['Satan' means 'adversary'] to the Jews. They are actually called "the adversaries of Judah" in Ezra 4:1. They wrote an accusation against the (new) inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem to the king of Persia (Ezra 4:6). The Hebrew word for "accusation" is related to that translated "satan". 3:8 tells us that the characters of verses 1 and 2 are 'men of sign' i.e. we have to interpret them. So the satans – the adversaries – stood before the angel along with Joshua the High Priest, who "was clothed with filthy garments" (:3) – without a mitre on his head (:5 implies). The inhabitants of the land, the satan, were complaining to God, manifested in the angel, that the new Jewish high priest was not really valid, as he did not wear the proper clothes (they had probably been lost during the captivity). The angel rebukes the satan, and proceeds to clothe Joshua with a set of priestly clothes and a mitre (:4,5), thus showing God's acceptance of him. The inference behind the complaint was that God had not really chosen Jerusalem for the Jews to rebuild, and that therefore they were going ahead with their plans without God behind them. But the angel says that the Lord *has* chosen Jerusalem, in the same way as He *had* chosen Joshua to be high priest. Thus Joshua represented Jerusalem. "Isn't this a burning stick plucked out of the fire?", the angel asks satan concerning Jerusalem. This is quoted in Jude 23 concerning saving repentant sinners. Thus the angel is in effect saying, 'Jerusalem has repented, therefore I have plucked them out of the fire of judgment and destruction; you should not therefore be implying that Jerusalem and the Jews are so sinful that they cannot be restored to their land with Me behind them'.

from you, and I will clothe you with rich clothing. ⁵ I said, Let them set a clean turban on his head. So they set a clean turban on his head, and clothed him; and the angel of Yahweh was standing by. ⁶ The angel of Yahweh protested to Joshua, saying, ⁷ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'If you will walk in My ways, and if you will follow My instructions, then you also shall judge My house, and shall also keep My courts, and I will give you a place of access among these who stand by. ⁸ Hear now, Joshua the high priest, you and your fellows who sit before you; for they are men who are a sign: for, behold, I will bring forth My servant, the Branch. ⁹ For, behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes: behold, I will engrave its engraving', says Yahweh of Armies, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. ¹⁰ In that day', says Yahweh of Armies, 'every man will invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree'.

CHAPTER 4 Dec. 21

Lampstand of Gold and Two Olive Trees

The angel who talked with me came again, and awoke me, as a man who is awoken out of his sleep. ² He said to me, What do you see? I said, I have seen, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with its bowl on the

top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are on the top of it; ³ and two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl, and the other on the left side of it. ⁴ I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? ⁵ Then the angel who talked with me answered me, Don't you know what these are? I said, No, my lord. ⁶ Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit', says Yahweh of Armies. ⁷ Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are a plain; and he will bring out the capstone with shouts of 'Grace, grace, to it!'. ⁸ Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ⁹ The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house. His hands shall also finish it; and you will know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me to you. ¹⁰ Indeed, who despises the day of small things? For these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. These are the eyes of Yahweh, which run back and forth through the whole earth. ¹¹ Then I asked him, What are these two olive trees on the right side of the lampstand and on the left side of it? ¹² I asked him the second time, What are these two olive branches, which are beside the two golden

4:6 The prophets continually criticize human strength. In our terms, this may translate into situations like what we do when we feel the first onset of an illness; when a car won't start... do we trust in human strength, on the pretensions of science, and only turn to God if all else fails? In prophetic terms, this is *awful!* That we don't first and totally turn to our God.

spouts, that pour the golden oil out of themselves? ¹³ He answered me, Don't you know what these are? I said, No, my lord. ¹⁴ Then he said, These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

CHAPTER 5 Dec. 21

A Flying Scroll

Then again I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, a flying scroll. ² He said to me, What do you see? I answered, I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its breadth ten cubits. ³ Then he said to me, This is the curse that goes out over the surface of the whole land; for everyone who steals shall be cut off according to it on the one side; and everyone who swears falsely shall be cut off according to it on the other side. ⁴ I will cause it to go out, says Yahweh of Armies, and it will enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him who swears falsely by My name; and it will remain in the midst of his house, and will destroy it with its timber and its stones.

Wickedness in the Ephah Basket

⁵ Then the angel who talked with me came forward, and said to me, Lift up now your eyes, and see what is this that is appearing. ⁶ I said, What

is it? He said, This is the ephah basket that is appearing. He said moreover, This is their appearance in all the land ⁷ (and behold, a talent of lead was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah basket. ⁸ He said, This is Wickedness!; and he threw her down into the midst of the ephah basket; and he put the weight of lead on its mouth. ⁹ Then I lifted I up my eyes, and saw, and behold, there were two women, and the wind was in their wings. Now they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah basket between earth and the sky. ¹⁰ Then I said to the angel who talked with me, Where are these carrying the ephah basket to? ¹¹ He said to me, To build her a house in the land of Shinar. When it is prepared, she will be set there in her own place.

CHAPTER 6 Dec. 22

Four Chariots from between Mountains of Brass

Again I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. ² In the first chariot were red horses; in the second chariot black horses; ³ in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot dappled horses, all of them

5:3 This condemns theft and dishonesty amongst the exiles who had returned from Babylon. Malachi and Haggai comment that the harvests were poor and the people suffered – because their focus was on building their own farms rather than building God's house. Verses 5-11 seem to be saying that their wickedness was so great that they may as well be taken up by Angelic means and returned to Babylon ["Shinar", :11] to build a pagan temple there, as an inversion of the way they had been taken by Angelic means from Babylon to Judah in order to build Yahweh's temple.

powerful. ⁴ Then I asked the angel who talked with me, What are these, my lord? ⁵ The angel answered me, These are the four spirits of the sky, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶ The one with the black horses goes out toward the north country; and the white went out after them; and the dappled went forth toward the south country. ⁷ The strong went out, and sought to go that they might walk back and forth through the earth: and he said, Go around and through the earth! So they walked back and forth through the earth. ⁸ Then he called to me, and spoke to me, saying, Behold, those who go toward the north country have quieted My spirit in the north country.

Silver and Gold Crowns for Joshua

⁹ The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ¹⁰ Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah; and come the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have come from Babylon. ¹¹ Yes, take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them on the head of Joshua the son of Je-

hozadak, the high priest; ¹² and speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says Yahweh of Armies, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build Yahweh’s temple; ¹³ even he shall build Yahweh’s temple; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; and he shall be a priest on His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. ¹⁴ The crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in Yahweh’s temple. ¹⁵ Those who are far off shall come and build in Yahweh’s temple; and you shall know that Yahweh of Armies has sent me to you. This will happen, if you will diligently obey the voice of Yahweh your God’.

CHAPTER 7 Dec. 22

Justice and Mercy

It happened in the fourth year of King Darius that the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Chislev. ² The people of Bethel sent Sharezer and Regem Melech, and their men, to entreat Yahweh’s

6:12 Zerubbabel’s name meant ‘The branch /shoot from Babylon’. He could have fulfilled these prophecies, he was intended to – but history records he returned to Babylon. So the prophecy was reapplied to Joshua the High Priest – the Hebrew form of ‘Jesus’. But he also failed. The fulfilment has therefore been reapplied and rescheduled to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, “the branch” (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5).

6:15 So often, God sets up very detailed potentials for His people – but they are only realized if we play our part. It must be so tragic for God, enthusiastically creating plans in such detail, which are then never operationalized because of human laziness and small minded selfishness.

You shall know – Zechariah says this several times, implying that his words weren’t taken seriously by those he spoke with. This is the experience of all God’s true children.

favour, ³ and to speak to the priests of the house of Yahweh of Armies, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? ⁴ Then the word of Yahweh of Armies came to me, saying, ⁵ Speak to all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh month for these seventy years, did you actually fast to Me, really to Me? ⁶ When you eat, and when you drink, don’t you eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? ⁷ Aren’t these the words which Yahweh proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and its cities around her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?’.

⁸ The word of Yahweh came to Zechariah, saying, ⁹ Thus has Yahweh of Armies spoken, saying, ‘Execute true judgment, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother. ¹⁰ Don’t oppress the widow, nor the fatherless, the foreigner, nor the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your

heart’. ¹¹ But they refused to listen, and turned their backs, and stopped their ears, that they might not hear. ¹² Yes, they made their hearts as hard as flint, in case they might hear the law, and the words which Yahweh of Armies had sent by His Spirit in the previous prophets. Therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of Armies. ¹³ It has come to pass that, as He called, and they refused to listen, so they will call, and I will not listen, said Yahweh of Armies; ¹⁴ but I will scatter them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they have not known. Thus the land was desolate after them, so that no man passed through nor returned: for they made the pleasant land desolate.

CHAPTER 8 Dec. 23

Yahweh Promises to Bless Jerusalem

The word of Yahweh of Armies came to me. ² Thus says Yahweh of Armies: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. ³ Thus says Yahweh: I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

7:5 We can do religious exercises such as fasting and other things which involve physical loss and discomfort for us, and yet our heart may still be far from God. Indeed, we can do these things as it were unto ourselves and not to God; but this isn’t the same as true spirituality (cp. Col. 2:21-23).

7:12 *His Spirit in the previous prophets* – The prophets, whose words are now in written form in the Bible, were inspired by God. His Spirit was in them, and was articulated through their words which we now read on paper. In this sense God’s words are Spirit and life (Jn. 6:63); and the prophets spoke not just their own words, but the words which God’s Spirit inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). Through absorbing God’s word into our lives, His Spirit and life will be active in us.

8:2 God’s enormous love for us His people explains why He is also so jealous over us, and why at times He has so much anger relating to us. Every thought or action of unfaithfulness or denial of Him is indescribably painful to Him.

Jerusalem shall be called ‘The City of Truth;’ and the mountain of Yahweh of Armies, ‘The Holy Mountain’. ⁴ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Old men and old women will again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. ⁵ The streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. ⁶ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: If it is too hard in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be too hard in My eyes? says Yahweh of Armies. ⁷ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country; ⁸ and I will bring them, and they will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. ⁹ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Let your hands be strong, you who hear in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets who were in the day that the foundation of the house of Yahweh of Armies was laid, even the temple, that it might be built. ¹⁰ For before those days there were no wages for man, nor

any wages for an animal; neither was there any peace to him who went out or came in, because of the adversary. For I set all men everyone against his neighbour. ¹¹ But now I will not be to the remnant of this people as in the former days, says Yahweh of Armies. ¹² For they will sow their seed in peace and the vine will yield its fruit, and the ground will give its increase, and the skies will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. ¹³ It shall come to pass that, as you were a curse among the nations, house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Don’t be afraid. Let your hands be strong. ¹⁴ For thus says Yahweh of Armies: As I thought to do evil to you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, says Yahweh of Armies, and I didn’t repent; ¹⁵ so again have I thought in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Don’t be afraid. ¹⁶ These are the things that you shall do: speak every man the truth with his neighbour. Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates,

8:3 Ezra 6:14 says that the captives who returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem prospered in their work and were inspired to do it by the prophecies of Zechariah. He encouraged their hands to be strong in the work (:13). Here in :3 God says that He has already returned to Zion (the temple mount); and so those who returned were as it were following Him. This prophecy that Jerusalem would surely be rebuilt would’ve encouraged the builders as they worked against so many obstacles and so much discouragement from within and without.

8:6 This question touches upon the psychology of the reason why we find it hard to believe God. We assume that if something is too hard for *us*, then it must be too hard for God. We assume that God is a man, just a bit bigger and wiser and more powerful than us, but broadly within our limitations. Thus we make God after our own image, instead of realizing that we are made in *His* image. Of course, we do this only subconsciously. The unlimited almightiness of God is what true faith accepts.

¹⁷ and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says Yahweh. ¹⁸ The word of Yahweh of Armies came to me. ¹⁹ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months shall be for the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace. ²⁰ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: Many peoples, and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come; ²¹ and the inhabitants of one shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go speedily to entreat the favour of Yahweh, and to seek Yahweh of Armies. I will go also'. ²² Yes, many peoples and strong nations will come to seek Yahweh of Armies in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of Yahweh. ²³ Thus says Yahweh of Armies: In those days, ten men will take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they will take hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew, saying, 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'.

CHAPTER 9 Dec. 24

Condemnation on the Enemies of God's People

An oracle. The word of Yahweh is against the land of Hadrach, and

will rest upon Damascus; for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward Yahweh; ² and Hamath, also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, because they are very wise. ³ Tyre built herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver like the dust, and fine gold like the mire of the streets. ⁴ Behold, the Lord will dispossess her, and He will strike her power in the sea; and she will be devoured with fire. ⁵ Ashkelon will see it, and fear; Gaza also, and will writhe in agony; as will Ekron, for her expectation will be disappointed; and the king will perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon will not be inhabited. ⁶ Foreigners will dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. ⁷ I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; and he also will be a remnant for our God; and he will be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. ⁸ I will encamp around My house against the army, so that none pass through or return; and no oppressor will pass through them any more: for now I have seen with My eyes.

The Coming of the King

⁹ Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Be-

9:1 Note the mutuality between God and His people – our eyes look to Him, and His eyes look to us (:8). And in that catching of the eye, that flash moment when the God who is in search of man meets the man who is in search of God, there is the energy of the Spirit.

9:7 *He will be* – Note how often God states that the intended result of His judgment of Israel's enemies is that they will join the people of God.

9:9 The concept of a humble King was a contradiction in terms – a King was supposed to be proud and displaying his power, riding on a fine horse rather than a young ass. Je-

hold, your King comes to you! He is righteous, and having salvation; humble, and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow will be cut off; and he will speak peace to the nations: and his dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. ¹¹ As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I have set free your prisoners from the pit in which is no water. ¹² Turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope! Even today I declare that I will restore double to you. ¹³ For indeed I bend Judah as a bow for Myself. I have filled the bow with Ephraim; and I will stir up your sons, Zion, against your sons, Greece, and will make you like the sword of a mighty man.

The Lord Will Appear

¹⁴ Yahweh will be seen over them; and His arrow will go flashing like lightning; and the Lord Yahweh will blow the trumpet, and will go with whirlwinds of the south. ¹⁵ Yahweh

of Armies will defend them; and they will destroy and overcome with sling stones; and they will drink, and roar as through wine; and they will be filled like bowls, like the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ Yahweh their God will save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they are like the jewels of a crown, lifted on high over His land. ¹⁷ For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.

CHAPTER 10 Dec. 25

God's Care for Judah

Ask of Yahweh rain in the time of the spring rains; Yahweh will make storm clouds, He will give rain showers to everyone for the plants in the field. ² For the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie; and they have told false dreams. They comfort in vain. Therefore they go their way like sheep. They are oppressed, because there is no shepherd. ³ My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the male goats; because Yahweh of Armies has visited His flock,

sus fulfilled this prophecy by entering Jerusalem sitting on a young donkey which hadn't been broken in (Lk. 19:30). It would've stopped and started and wandered rather than striding purposefully. It's rather like a new victorious president entering his capital city in a spluttering old car, rather than in a fleet of shining, powerful, quietly purring Mercedes. The point was that in God's Kingdom, true greatness is in humility. The mighty horse and chariot which human strength prefers is to be brought to nothing (:10; 10:5).

10:1 We shouldn't presume upon God's blessings; even in the time of rain, we are to ask for it. Even if we have food in the fridge and in the cupboard, we are to ask God to give us the food of today (Mt. 6:11).

10:3 *Because* – This implies that because Yahweh had visited His people and (potentially) made them a strong flock capable of doing His work, *therefore* the priests were at fault for not enabling Judah's spiritual revival. God is angry with those who don't play their part in enabling His potential plans for others to come true for them.

the house of Judah, and will make them as His majestic horse in the battle. ⁴ From Him will come forth the cornerstone, from Him the nail, from Him the battle bow, from Him every ruler together. ⁵ They shall be as mighty men, treading down muddy streets in the battle; and they shall fight, because Yahweh is with them; and the riders on horses will be confounded. ⁶ I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back; for I have mercy on them; and they will be as though I had not cast them off: for I am Yahweh their God, and I will hear them. ⁷ Ephraim will be like a mighty man, and their heart will rejoice as through wine; yes, their children will see it, and rejoice. Their heart will be glad in Yahweh. ⁸ I will signal for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them; and they will increase as they have increased. ⁹ I will sow them among the peoples; and they will remember Me in far countries; and they will live with their children, and will return. ¹⁰ I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and there won't be room enough for them. ¹¹ He will pass through the sea of affliction, and will strike the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile will dry up; and the pride of Assyria will be brought down, and

the scepter of Egypt will depart. ¹² I will strengthen them in Yahweh; and they will walk up and down in His name, says Yahweh.

CHAPTER 11 Dec. 26

Open your doors, Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars. ² Wail, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen, because the stately ones are destroyed. Wail, you oaks of Bashan, for the strong forest has come down. ³ A voice of the wailing of the shepherds! For their glory is destroyed: a voice of the roaring of young lions! For the pride of the Jordan is ruined.

The Breaking of the Covenants

⁴ Thus says Yahweh my God: Feed the flock of slaughter. ⁵ Their buyers slaughter them, and go unpunished. Those who sell them say, 'Blessed be Yahweh, for I am rich;' and their own shepherds don't pity them. ⁶ For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, says Yahweh; but, behold, I will deliver the men, every one of them, into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king. They will strike the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. ⁷ So I fed the flock of slaughter, especially the oppressed of the flock. I took for myself two staves. The one I called Grace, and the other I called Union, and I fed the flock. ⁸ I cut off the three shepherds in one month; for my soul was weary of them, and their soul

10:5 See on 9:9.

10:11 Repeatedly Zechariah emphasizes that it is the pride of these nations more than anything else which is the basis for their condemnation. The Nile was the pride of the Egyptians just as the Jordan was Judah's pride (11:3).

also loathed me. ⁹ Then I said, I will not feed you. That which dies, let it die; and that which is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let those who are left eat each other's flesh. ¹⁰ I took my staff Grace, and cut it apart, 'That I might break My covenant that I had made with all the people'. ¹¹ It was broken in that day; and thus the poor of the flock that listened to me knew that it was the word of Yahweh. ¹² I said to them, If you think it best, give me my value; and if not, keep it. So they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ Yahweh said to me, Throw it to the potter, the handsome price that I was valued at by them! I took the thirty pieces of silver, and threw them to the potter, in the house of Yahweh. ¹⁴ Then I cut apart my other staff, even Union, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. ¹⁵ Yahweh said to me, Take for yourself yet again the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶ For, behold, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who

will not visit those who are cut off, neither will seek those who are scattered, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that which is sound; but he will eat the flesh of the fat sheep, and will tear their hoofs in pieces. ¹⁷ Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock! The sword will be on his arm, and on his right eye. His arm will be completely withered, and his right eye will be totally blinded!

CHAPTER 12 Dec. 27

Destruction for Jerusalem's Enemies

An oracle. The word of Yahweh concerning Israel. Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him says: ² Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the surrounding peoples, and on Judah also will it be in the siege against Jerusalem. ³ It will happen in that day, that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples. All who trample

11:10 Israel rejected God's covenant, and therefore He rejected them in that He broke the unbreakable-by-Him covenant (2 Kings 17:15,20). In reality, they had rejected themselves, and broke the covenant (Jer. 31:32). It was only they who could break it, and God was only sadly confirming what they had done. And so with us. Only we can reject ourselves from God's covenant love.

11:11 It was the poor within the society of Zechariah's time who responded to God's word; and this is a principle, that it's the poor [in whatever sense] who accept the Gospel better than the wealthy (Lk. 7:22; 1 Cor. 1:26). The 'prosperity Gospel' is not Biblical.

11:14 Covenant relationship between people is broken [the horizontal level, as it were] when they break their covenant relationship with God [the vertical level] – :10. Conversely, if we are in covenant with God then we must be in meaningful covenant relationship with all those others who are in covenant with God. In our times, baptism into Christ means that we are "in" the new covenant based around God's Gospel promises (Gal. 3:27-29). We therefore are in covenant fellowship with all others who are in the same covenant status with God.

upon it will be severely wounded, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against it. ⁴ In that day, says Yahweh, I will strike every horse with terror, and his rider with madness; and I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. ⁵ The chieftains of Judah will say in their heart, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Yahweh of Armies their God’. ⁶ In that day I will make the chieftains of Judah like a pan of fire among wood, and like a flaming torch among sheaves; and they will devour all the surrounding peoples, on the right hand and on the left; and Jerusalem will yet again dwell in their own place, even in Jerusalem. ⁷ Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David

and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem be not magnified above Judah. ⁸ In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He who is feeble among them at that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them. ⁹ It will happen in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Look on Me Whom They Have Pierced

¹⁰ I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look to Me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for his

12:3 *Trample upon it* – The LXX of this verse is quoted in Lk. 21:24 as having a specific fulfilment in the last days before Christ returns.

12:10 This states that men would look upon the pierced (i.e. crucified) Saviour, and mourn in recognition of their own sinfulness. This verse is quoted as having fulfilment both at the crucifixion (Jn. 19:37) and also at the final judgment (Rev. 1:7). There is strong connection between these two events. The cross was “the judgment of this world” (Jn. 12:31). The cross divided men into two categories: The repentant thief and the bitter one; the soldiers who mocked and the Centurion who believed; the Sanhedrin members who believed and those who mocked; the women who lamented but didn’t obey His word, and those whose weeping isn’t recorded, but who stood and watched and believed. As we come before the cross in our minds, we are naturally driven to self-examination. There our thoughts are revealed (Lk. 2:35). This is why self-examination should occur naturally if we break bread properly, i.e. with our minds focused upon Him as He hung there.

Only son... firstborn – The Jews will come to understand something of God’s grief at the death of His only Son.

Pierced – It’s possible that the Lord Jesus still has marks in His hands and side where He was crucified – 13:6 may imply that the Jews of the last days will look upon them. He had them after His resurrection (Jn. 20:27), and marks of death were visible in the vision of Jesus which John saw (Rev. 5:6). Perhaps for absolute eternity He will carry these marks as a constant reminder to us all of the price paid for our redemption.

firstborn. ¹¹ In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. ¹² The land will mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; ¹³ the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the Shimeites apart, and their wives apart; ¹⁴ all the families who remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

CHAPTER 13 Dec. 28

Forgiveness of Sins

In that day there will be a spring opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. ² It will come to pass in that day, says Yahweh of Armies, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they will be remembered no more. I will also cause the prophets and the spirit of impurity to pass out of the land. ³ It will happen that, when anyone still prophesies, then his father and his mother who bore him will tell him, ‘You must die,

because you speak lies in the name of Yahweh;’ and his father and his mother who bore him will stab him when he prophesies. ⁴ It will happen in that day, that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision, when he prophesies; neither will they wear a hairy mantle to deceive: ⁵ but he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for I have been made a bondservant from my youth’. ⁶ One will say to him, ‘What are these wounds in your hands?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends’.

The Refining of God’s People

⁷ Awake, sword, against My shepherd, and against the man who is close to Me, says Yahweh of Armies. Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones. ⁸ It shall happen that in all the land, says Yahweh, two parts in it will be cut off and die; but the third will be left in it. ⁹ I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them like gold is tested. They will call on My name,

13:6 *Marks* – See on 12:10.

13:8 This could mean that two thirds of the Jews now living in Israel will die during the tribulation.

13:9 The purpose of Israel’s final tribulation will be to bring them to repentance; once there is repentance amongst them, then Christ will come (Is. 59:20). The quicker they repent, the shorter and lesser will be their tribulation. This explains why some of the prophecies of the last days are vague and hard to fit together chronologically – because there are various potential scenarios, depending upon the speed of Israel’s repentance. This trial of faith as gold is tried is going on in the lives of believers right now (1 Pet. 1:7) – the tribulations of our lives are therefore as intense and dramatic, in spiritual terms, as the tribulation about to break upon Israel. We shouldn’t underestimate the traumas which we go through spiritually.

and I will hear them. I will say, ‘It is My people;’ and they will say, ‘Yahweh is my God’.

CHAPTER 14 Dec. 28

The Lord Returns to Reign

Behold, the day of Yahweh comes, when your spoil will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city will be taken, the houses pillaged, and the women raped. Half of the city will go out into captivity, and the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. ³ Then Yahweh will go out and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. ⁴ His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in two, from east to west, making a very great valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. ⁵ You shall flee by the valley of My mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azel; yes, you shall flee, just like you fled from

before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Yahweh my God will come, and all the holy ones with you. ⁶ It will happen in that day, that there will not be light, cold, or frost. ⁷ It will be a unique day which is known to Yahweh; not day, and not night; but it will come to pass, that at evening time there will be light. ⁸ It will happen in that day, that living waters will go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea; in summer and in winter will it be. ⁹ Yahweh will be King over all the earth. In that day Yahweh will be declared as the one and only, and His name unified. ¹⁰ All the land will be made like the Arabah, from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and she will be lifted up, and will dwell in her place, from Benjamin’s gate to the place of the first gate, to the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananel to the king’s winepresses. ¹¹ Men will dwell therein, and there will be no more curse; but Jerusalem will dwell safely. ¹² This will be the plague with which Yahweh

14:4 This must connect with Christ’s ascension from Heaven from the Mount of Olives, with the Angels promising that He would return in the same way (Acts 1:11). Immediately prior to Christ’s second coming, Jerusalem will have been captured by her enemies; Christ comes when the remnant of Jews left alive repent and cry out to Him; see on 13:9.

14:7 This may suggest that the meaning of time collapses around the time of Christ’s coming. This would provide the answer to many practical questions – e.g. how shall we each stand before Christ’s judgment seat individually and have some time in discussion about our lives; why can’t we fit all the prophecies of the last days into some chronological order?

14:11 *No more curse* – Quoted in Rev. 22:3 about the future Kingdom of God on earth. God will be literally King over all the planet (:9); and there will be topographical changes around Jerusalem (:8).

will strike all the peoples who have warred against Jerusalem: their flesh will consume away while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will consume away in their sockets, and their tongue will consume away in their mouth. ¹³ It will happen in that day, that a great panic from Yahweh will be among them; and they, each of them, will lay hold on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand will rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

¹⁴ Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered together: gold, and silver, and clothing, in great abundance. ¹⁵ So will be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the donkey, and of all the animals that will be in those camps, as that plague. ¹⁶ It will happen that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of Armies,

and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

¹⁷ It will be, that whoever of all the families of the earth doesn't go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of Armies, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt doesn't go up, and doesn't come, neither will it rain on them. This will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike the nations that don't go up to keep the feast of tents. ¹⁹ This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that don't go up to keep the feast of tabernacles. ²⁰ In that day there will be on the bells of the horses, HOLY TO YAHWEH; and the pots in Yahweh's house will be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh of Armies; and all those who sacrifice will come and take of them, and cook in them. In that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of Armies.

14:12 Could this refer to nuclear warfare, used by God to punish those who use it? God will destroy Israel's enemies by turning them against each other (:13).

14:21 *A Canaanite* – This apparently strange ending reflects Zechariah's sadness that in his day, there had been unbelievers and even enemies allowed by God's people to have rooms right in the temple of Yahweh itself (Neh. 13:7,8). He looked forward, as all God's children do, to the time of God's Kingdom when the sheep and goats will finally be divided from each other for ever.

MALACHI

CHAPTER 1 Dec. 29

Jacob Loved, Esau Hated

An oracle: the word of Yahweh to Israel by Malachi. ² I have loved you, says Yahweh. Yet you say, How have you loved us? Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother? says Yahweh, Yet I loved Jacob; ³ but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. ⁴ Whereas Edom says, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places; thus says Yahweh of Armies, They shall build, but I will throw down; and men will call them 'The Wicked Land', even the people against whom Yahweh shows wrath forever. ⁵ Your eyes will see, and you will say, Yahweh is great—even beyond the border of Israel!

Imperfect Sacrifices

⁶ A son honours his father, and a

servant his master. If I am a father, then where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is the respect due me? Says Yahweh of Armies to you, priests, who despise My name. You say, 'How have we despised Your name?' ⁷ You offer polluted bread on My altar. You say, 'How have we polluted You?' In that you say, 'Yahweh's table contemptible'. ⁸ When you offer the blind for sacrifice, isn't that evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, isn't that evil? Present it now to your governor! Will he be pleased with you? Or will he accept your person? says Yahweh of Armies. ⁹ Now, please entreat the favour of God, that He may be gracious to us. With this, will He accept any of you? says Yahweh of Armies. ¹⁰ Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on My altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says

1:4 Edom (Esau) was zealous to return and rebuild the ravaged land which God had once given him, whereas Israel wasn't, for the most part, zealous to return from Babylon to rebuild the land God had given them. And yet God still loved Israel above Edom, by pure grace. So often those who aren't God's people are more zealous for their causes than God's people are for His.

1:7 'The table of the Lord' refers to the altar. At the breaking of bread service, we eat of "the table of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:21), the same phrase used here in the Septuagint. By breaking bread we are therefore like the priests of Israel eating at the altar. His work hasn't been delegated out to a group of specialists; *we* are all the priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

1:8 One doesn't give sub-standard service to their employer. One didn't bring him a defective animal as a gift. And yet Israel gave their God the lame and the blind animals, they only served Him as far as it didn't hurt them. They gave Him what cost them nothing. And yet they should not only have served Him *as* they served their earthly masters; but, because He is the "great God", they should have given Him even more. And so we must ask: the time we give to our careers and development in them,

Yahweh of Armies, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. ¹¹ For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, My name is great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to My name, and a pure offering: for My name is great among the nations, says Yahweh of Armies. ¹² But you profane it, in that you say, ‘Yahweh’s table is polluted, and its fruit, even its food, is contemptible’. ¹³ You say also, ‘Behold, what a weariness it is!’ and you have sniffed at it, says Yahweh of Armies; and you have brought that which was taken by violence, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring the offering. Should I accept this at your hand? says Yahweh. ¹⁴ But the deceiver is cursed, who has in his flock a male, and vows, and sacrifices to the Lord a blemished thing; for I am a great King, says Yahweh of Armies, and My name is awesome among the nations.

CHAPTER 2 Dec. 30

The Priests Admonished

Now, you priests, this commandment is for you. ² If you will

not listen, and if you will not lay it to heart, to give glory to My name, says Yahweh of Armies, then will I send the curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart. ³ Behold, I will rebuke your seed, and will spread dung on your faces, even the dung of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. ⁴ You will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may be with Levi, says Yahweh of Armies. ⁵ My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him that he might be reverent toward Me; and he was reverent toward Me, and stood in awe of My name. ⁶ The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity. ⁷ For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of Yahweh of Armies. ⁸ But you have turned aside out of the way. You have caused many to stumble in the law. You have corrupted the cov-

the *thought* we give to our secular lives, the respect we pay it... how does this compare to our attitude to Divine things?

1:10 There was nobody to even shut the doors of the temple; there was nobody willing to fulfil Ezekiel’s prophecy / command about the temple doors being shut (Ez. 44:1,2; 46:1,2,12), and so the potential situation prophesied by Ezekiel didn’t come true because God’s people in Malachi’s time just couldn’t be bothered. So much potential was wasted at the return of Judah from Babylon, and it is in our age too.

1:13 *Weariness* – The repetitive nature of priestly work led them to treat it as “a weariness”. They got bored with the things of the Kingdom, as in 2:10,11. Familiarity can so easily lead to our not grasping the awe of being in relationship with God.

2:7 The duty of the priests under the Old Covenant was to maintain true understanding of God’s word, witness this to the world around them, and teach it to their brothers and sisters in Israel. Although there was a special priesthood, it was clearly God’s

enant of Levi, says Yahweh of Armies. ⁹ Therefore I have also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according to the way you have not kept My ways, but have had respect for persons in the law.

Judah's Unfaithfulness

¹⁰ Don't we all have one father? Hasn't one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the holiness of Yahweh which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹² May Yahweh cut off out of the tents of Jacob the man who does this, and his descendant; may he not offer an offering to Yahweh of Armies. ¹³ This again you do: you cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, because He doesn't regard the offering any more, neither receives it with good will at your hand. ¹⁴ Yet you say, 'Why?' Because Yahweh has

been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion, and the wife of your covenant. ¹⁵ Did He not make you one, although He had the residue of the Spirit? Why one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. ¹⁶ For I hate divorce, says Yahweh, the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with violence! says Yahweh of Armies. Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you don't deal treacherously.

The Judgment Day

¹⁷ You have wearied Yahweh with your words. Yet you say, 'How have we wearied Him?' In that you say, 'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of Yahweh, and He delights in them;' or 'Where is the God of judgment?'

CHAPTER 3 Dec. 31

Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way be-

intention that all Israel should be like priests; they were to be a "*Kingdom of priests*" (Ex. 19:6), and we are to be likewise (1 Pet. 2:5,9), not assuming others will care for us spiritually, but each of us taking real responsibility.

2:10, 11 This may be a reference to how at the time of the restoration from Babylon, the Jews married unbelievers. This is described in the same terms used here – a breaking covenant with God (Ezra 10:2,10; Neh. 13:27,29). Their marriage to unbelievers led them to accept the gods of their wives – and in this lay the sin of what they did.

2:15 *Make you one* – a reference to how God joins together husband and wife in the course of their married life, not just on their wedding day. The intention is that our children will be "Godly". If we are not united, not companions with each other, or if our partner is an unbeliever, it will be so much harder for us to raise Godly children.

3:6 God does change, as witnessed by men like Moses changing His stated intentions through prayer and intercession. What is unchangeable about Him is His grace to His sinful people.

fore Me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, behold, He comes! says Yahweh of Armies. ² But who can endure the day of His coming? And who will stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like launderer's soap; ³ and He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer to Yahweh offerings in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to Yahweh, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. ⁵ I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be an alert witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the perjurers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and who deprive the foreigner of justice, and don't fear Me, says Yahweh of Armies.

Will a Man Rob God?

⁶ For I, Yahweh, don't change; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. ⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My ordinances, and have not kept

them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, says Yahweh of Armies. But you say, 'How shall we return?'. ⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?'. In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with the curse; for you rob Me, even this whole nation. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says Yahweh of Armies, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough for. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before its time in the field, says Yahweh of Armies. ¹² All nations shall call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says Yahweh of Armies. ¹³ Your words have been stout against Me, says Yahweh. Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'. ¹⁴ You have said, 'It is vain to serve God;' and 'What profit is it that we have followed His instructions, and that we have walked mournfully before Yahweh of Armies?' ¹⁵ Now we call the proud happy; yes, those who work wickedness are built up; yes,

3:14 Nehemiah, seeking for Israel's obedience to Ezekiel's temple vision, tried to get them to 'follow His instructions' (s.w. Neh. 7:3; 12:9,45; 13:20). For Ezekiel had prophesied that in the restored temple, God's instructions would be followed (Ez. 40:46; 44:8,14-16). But now, Judah complained that there was no benefit to them from having kept the charges (Mal. 3:14 s.w.). Partial obedience discouraged them from any further effort, because the fullness of blessing can only come from a way of life conformed to God's Kingdom vision and life. This is why people get disillusioned with religion and lose the faith – because they seek for immediate benefit as a result of keeping a few highly specific aspects of God's law, rather than willingly devoting their whole way of life to the realisation of His vision.

they put God to the test and escape’.

¹⁶ Then those who feared Yahweh spoke frequently one with another; and Yahweh listened, and heard, and a book of memory was written before Him, for those who feared Yahweh, and who honoured His name.

¹⁷ They shall be Mine, says Yahweh of Armies, My very own possession in the day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son who serves him.

¹⁸ Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who doesn’t serve Him.

CHAPTER 4 Dec. 31

The Day of the Lord is Coming

For, behold, the day comes, it burns as a furnace; and all the proud, and all who work wicked-

ness, will be stubble; and the day that comes will burn them up, says Yahweh of Armies, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. ² But to you who fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his rays. You will go out, and leap like calves of the stall. ³ You shall tread down the wicked; for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I make, says Yahweh of Armies. ⁴ Remember the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. ⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

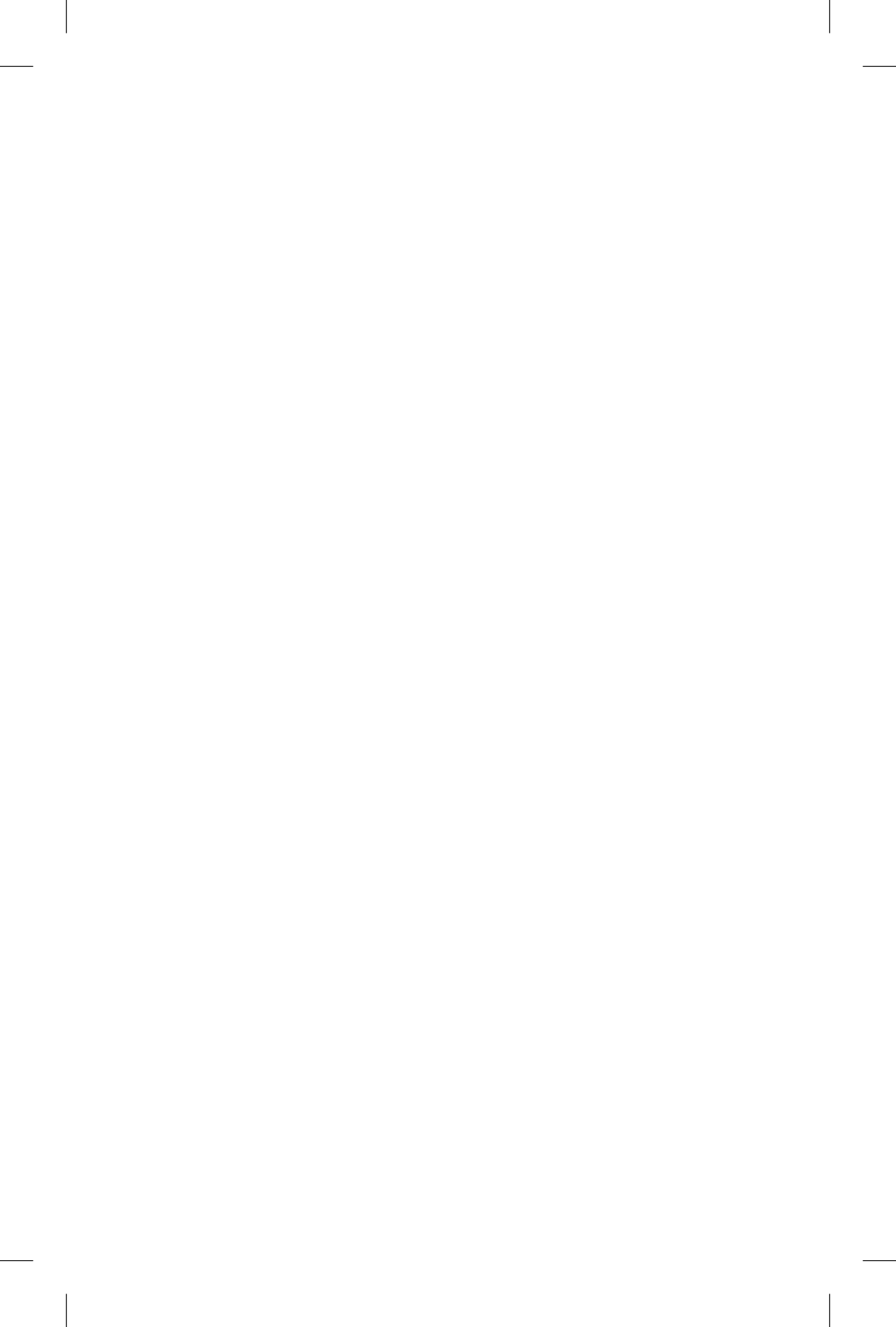
3:16 If we truly love God, we will naturally want to find and communicate with others who also do.

3:17 We are so very valuable to God – His jewels, His “very own”. We can take comfort that we are not alone in this world, He is so intensely with us.

4:2 *The sun* – A prophecy of Christ’s return. He will be like the dawn, chasing away the darkness which is now on the earth.

4:5 It seems that ‘Elijah’ will come to convert some in Israel to Christ before His second coming. John the Baptist was an Elijah prophet (Mt. 11:14); this prophecy of ‘Elijah’ may therefore not necessarily require literal Elijah to appear on earth, but the work of converting some in Israel could be fulfilled by others.

THE NEW TESTAMENT



MATTHEW

CHAPTER 1 Jan. 1 Jul. 2

The Genealogy of Jesus

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah of Tamar and Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab and Boaz begot Obed of Ruth and Obed begot Jesse. ⁶ Jesse begot David the king. And David begot Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ And Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, Abijah begot Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the captivity in Babylon. ¹² And after the captivity in Babylon, Jechoniah begot Shealtiel, Shealtiel

begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Sadoc, Sadoc begot Achim, Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations and from David to the captivity in Babylon fourteen generations and from the captivity in Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not willing to make her a public example, decided to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But as he thought on these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: Joseph you son of David, do

1:1 The Gospel records are transcripts of how e.g. Matthew preached the Gospel. Matthew begins his explanation of the Gospel [“good news”] by demonstrating that Jesus was the descendant of Abraham and David. This is important because the Gospel was contained in the promises to those men (Gal. 3:8) that they would have a literal descendant, who would be God’s Son, Jesus. Therefore Jesus didn’t exist as a physical person before He was born; He had our human nature.

1:19 Joseph could have told others of her situation, and made her a “public example”, or put her through the “law of jealousy” of Numbers 5. But exactly because Joseph was truly “righteous”, he didn’t do that. He was sensitive to her – as we should be to others who are caught up in situations beyond our full understanding.

1:20 *Conceived* – Jesus began within Mary. He didn’t pre-exist. He was born ‘of her’ (1:16).

not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she shall give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. ²² Now all this happened so what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying: ²³ The virgin shall be with child and shall give birth to a son; and they shall call his name Immanuel, which means God with us. ²⁴ And Joseph woke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual intercourse with her until she had given birth to a son; and he called his name Jesus.

CHAPTER 2 Jan. 1 Jul. 2

Wise Men Visit Baby Jesus

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea in the days of Herod the king, astrologers from the east came to Jerusalem, saying: ² Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. ³ And when Herod the king heard it, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where

the Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said to him: In Bethlehem of Judea. For thus it is written through the prophet: ⁶ And you Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the princes of Judah. For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, who shall be shepherd of My people Israel. ⁷ Then Herod secretly called the Magi and learned from them exactly what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said: Go and search carefully for the young child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I may also come and worship him. ⁹ And they, having heard the king, went their way; and the star which they saw in the east went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him, and opening their treasures they offered to him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another route. ¹³ Now when they had departed, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying:

1:21 ‘Jesus’ means ‘Saviour’; ‘Christ’ means ‘Anointed’.

2:5 *Through the prophet* – The prophets wrote the words of God, not just their own words. Hence the significance of *through*. The Bible is the inspired word of God.

2:6 Jesus came forth “out of” Bethlehem – He didn’t come down from Heaven as a person. Note how Matthew so often shows that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.

2:8 The astrologers didn’t obey the King, because God told them not to (:12). We shouldn’t always do what those in authority tell us, if it contradicts God’s word (Acts 4:19).

Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt and stay there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.¹⁴ And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt,¹⁵ and stayed there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt did I call My son.¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the astrologers, was furious and sent out soldiers and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem and in all the borders of it aged two years and under, according to the time which he had determined from the Magi.¹⁷ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying:¹⁸ A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not.¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying:²⁰ Arise and take the young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead that sought the young child's life.²¹ And he arose and took

the young child and his mother and came into the land of Israel.²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee,²³ and he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

CHAPTER 3 Jan. 2 Jul. 3

John the Baptist Baptizes Jesus

And in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying:² Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.³ For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying: The voice of one crying in the wilderness — Make ready the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather girdle about his loins and his food was locusts and wild honey.⁵ Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him.⁶ And they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sad-

2:14 *He arose* – Joseph's immediate obedience to God's word is emphasized (as 1:24; 2:20) – an example to us.

2:15 *Out of Egypt* – As Israel were called out of Egypt. All God's children are to leave 'Egypt' – which is often a symbol of the world.

2:20–22 Joseph was told that it was safe to return. But he doubted. And so God made a concession to his weakness by telling him to go and live in Galilee.

3:6 *Baptized... in the river* – Baptism [Greek *baptizo*] means to dip, to immerse – not to sprinkle. So baptism was performed in a river. Note 3:16 *out of* the water.

3:7 *Offspring of vipers* – They were the descendants of the snake spoken of in Gen. 3:15. There will always be opposition between those in Christ, the descendant of the

ducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the anger to come? ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹ And think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham as our father, for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ And even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ I indeed baptize you in water to repentance, but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire; ¹² whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor and he will gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire. ¹³ Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan, to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John would have stopped him, saying: I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me? ¹⁵ But

Jesus answering said to him: Permit it now, for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he permitted him. ¹⁶ And Jesus when he was baptized immediately came up out of the water, and the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming to rest on him. ¹⁷ And a voice came from the heavens, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

CHAPTER 4 Jan. 2 Jul. 3

Jesus is Tempted

Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. ² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he hungered. ³ And the tempter came and said to him: If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. ⁴ But he answered and said: It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. ⁵ Then the Devil took him into the holy city and set him on

woman, and the descendants of the snake. We will be temporarily wounded by them, but we will triumph in the end.

3:9 *Within yourselves* – The Bible is aware of how we are likely to respond. God's concern is with our state of mind, how we think within. For this is the ultimate source of human sin.

3:12 *Unquenchable fire* – not literally. A symbol of complete destruction (Jer. 17:27).

3:15 Jesus was baptized as an adult by immersion – as an example to us. We should also be baptized.

4:1-8 'The Devil' doesn't exist as a fallen Angel or evil cosmic being – see *Bible Basics*.

Jesus was "tempted in all things like as we are" (Heb. 4:15), and: "each man is tempted... by his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). We are tempted by the "devil" of our own mind, and so was Jesus. We are not tempted by an evil being prompting us to sin – sin and temptation come "from within, out of the heart of men" (Mk. 7:21).

The temptations cannot be literal:

the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to him: If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down. For it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you, and on their hands they shall carry you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said to him: Again it is written, You shall not make trial of the Lord your God. ⁸ Again, the Devil took him to an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. ⁹ And he said to him: All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then said Jesus to him: Away with you Satan! For it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. ¹¹ Then the Devil left him, and angels came and ministered to him.

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹² Now when he heard that John was imprisoned, he withdrew into

Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth, he went and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁵ The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles- ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and the shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. ¹⁷ From that time began Jesus to preach and to say: Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ¹⁸ And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰ And they immediately left the nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he

4:8 implies that Jesus was led up a high mountain to see all the kingdoms of the world in their future glory “in a moment of time” (Mk. 4:5). There is no mountain high enough to see all the world – the earth is a sphere.

- Comparison with Luke 4 shows that the temptations are described in a different order. Mk. 1:13 says that Jesus was “in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan”, whilst Mt. 4:2-3 says that “when he had fasted forty days... the tempter (Satan) came to Him...”. Thus these same temptations kept repeating themselves – e.g. to turn stones into bread.

- It's unlikely the devil led Jesus through the wilderness and streets of Jerusalem and then they scaled a pinnacle of the temple together, all in view of the inquisitive Jews.

- If the devil is a physical person who has no respect for God's Word and is interested in making people sin, then why would Jesus quote Scripture to overcome him? According to the popular view, this would not send the devil away. Jesus quoted a Bible passage each time. Ps. 119:11: “Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin”.

- Jesus was “led of the *spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil”. How could the Spirit of God lead Jesus to be tempted by a superhuman being existing in opposition to God. He had just received the power of the Spirit (3:16). Now He was tempted to use it to turn stones into bread, jump off buildings unharmed etc.

saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. ²² And they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals Many

²³ And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people. ²⁴ Then his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him, those from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from the other side of the Jordan.

CHAPTER 5 Jan. 3 Jul. 4

Jesus Preaches About Kingdom Life

And seeing the crowds, he went into the mountain and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is

the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when men reproach you because of me, and persecute you and falsely accuse you of all sorts of evil. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for likewise they persecuted the prophets that preceded you. ¹³ You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savour, with what shall it be salted? It becomes good for nothing but to be thrown out and trodden under the feet of men. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a basket but on the stand; and it shines for all that are in the house. ¹⁶ Likewise, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

5:5 *Inherit the earth* – The Kingdom of God will be established here on earth at the return of Christ. ‘Inheritance’ refers to the promises to Abraham that his children would inherit the earth. Eternity on earth and not Heaven is promised to those “in Christ” and thus Abraham’s children.

5:15 If a candle is put under a basket, it will go out. If we don’t publically witness to our faith, we will lose it. We can’t be secret Christians.

Jesus Interprets the Law of Moses

¹⁷ Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I came not to destroy but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the law, until all things be accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men to do so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no way enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²¹ You have heard that it was said to those of old: You shall not kill, and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. ²² But I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment, and whoever shall say to his brother Raca shall be in danger of the council, and whoever shall say Moros shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna. ²³ If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are with him in the street. Lest the adversary deliver you to the judge and the judge deliver you to the officer and you be

thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. ²⁷ You have heard that it was said: You shall not commit adultery. ²⁸ But I say to you, that everyone that looks on a woman lustful for her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ And if your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away, for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish and not your whole body be thrown into Gehenna. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away, for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish and not your whole body go into Gehenna.

³¹ It was also said: Whoever shall send away his wife, let him give her a contract of divorce. ³² But I say to you, that everyone that divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever shall marry a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³ Again, you have heard that it was said to them of old: You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord. ³⁴ But I say to you: Swear not at all, neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet. Nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Neither shall you swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your Yes mean Yes, and your No, No. For whatever is more

5:17 The Mosaic law was fulfilled by Christ in His death (Col. 2:14-17). We therefore don't need to keep that law, nor the Sabbath.

than these comes from evil. ³⁸ You have heard that it was said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹ But I say to you: Do not resist him that is evil but whoever hits you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take away your coat, let him also have your cloak. ⁴¹ And whoever shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³ You have heard that it was said: You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you might be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love them that love you, what reward have you? Even the tax collectors do the same! ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what do you more than they. The tax collectors do likewise. ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

CHAPTER 6 Jan. 4 Jul. 5

Jesus Denounces Hypocrisy

Take heed you do not do your good deeds before men, to be

seen by them. Else you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ² When therefore you do alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you do alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, ⁴ that your alms may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you. ⁵ And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, enter into your room and shut your door, pray to your Father who is unseen, and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you.

Jesus Teaches How to Pray

⁷ And in praying do not use vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸ Therefore, do not be like them! Even before you ask Him, your Father knows what things you need. ⁹ In this manner you should pray: Our Father who is in

5:45 Makes His sun – God hasn't wound the world up and left it ticking. Every action within creation is consciously from Him. We are therefore never far from Him – just feel Him acting in nature.

6:3 Left hand know – Don't be conscious of your good works. Do them and forget them. Those accepted into God's Kingdom will honestly not remember the times they fed the hungry (Mt. 25:37).

6:4 Shall reward – when Jesus returns to establish God's Kingdom on earth. "I come quickly and my reward is with me" (Rev. 22:12).

heaven, let Your Name be glorified.
 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

More About Hypocrisy

16 Moreover when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces, so that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so you will not be seen by men to fast, but by your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees in secret, shall reward you.

Jesus Teaches About Treasure in Heaven

19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves cannot break in or steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus Teaches About Light and Darkness

22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is healthy, your whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Jesus Teaches About Money and Possessions

24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. 25 Therefore I say to you: Do not be anxious for your life; what you shall eat, or what you shall drink. Nor for your body; what you shall wear. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the garment? 26 Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow, nor do they reap or gather crops into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they?

6:10 *On earth* – We pray for the Kingdom of God to come on earth, i.e. for Jesus to return soon.

6:18 *Not be seen* – We must consciously try to conceal our good works so that other people do *not* notice them. When was the last time you did this?

6:24 Few would say they “hate” God. But if we love wealth [“mammon”], then in His eyes, we do.

6:26 *Father feeds them* – As 5:45, God is consciously in contact with His creation, and has some kind of relationship with the animals (Job 41:1-5). 7:1 *Judge not* – The

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin! 29 Yet I say to you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is here today but tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not more surely care for you, O you of little faith! 31 Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, How shall we be clothed? 32 For the Gentiles clamour for all these things; even though your heavenly Father knows you have need of them all. 33 So seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

CHAPTER 7 Jan. 5 Jul. 6

Jesus Teaches About Pre-judging

Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you use, it shall be applied to you. 3 And why do you see the splinter that is in your brother's eye but ignore the plank that is in your own eye? 4 Or how will you say to your brother: Let me remove the splinter in your eye, when you have

a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye and then shall you see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye. 6 Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the pigs, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces.

Jesus Teaches About His Generous Father

7 Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. 8 For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened. 9 Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him. 12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus Teaches How to Test for Good and Evil

13 Enter in by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. 14 For narrow is the gate and straight the road that leads to life, but few are

Greek word translated "judge" can mean both to condemn, and to make a judgment of right and wrong. We must not condemn others, but we must judge between right and wrong.

7:14 The majority are usually wrong in spiritual matters.

they that find it. ¹⁵ Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?

¹⁷ Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit but the corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.

²¹ Not everyone that says to me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that pleases my Father who is in heaven.

²² Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name do many mighty works? ²³ And then will I tell them: I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity. ²⁴ Everyone therefore that hears these words of mine and does them, shall be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.

²⁵ And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and

beat upon that house; and it did not collapse, for it was founded upon the rock. ²⁶ And everyone that hears these words of mine and does not obey them, shall be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. ²⁷ And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it collapsed, and great was its collapse. ²⁸ And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words that the crowds were astonished at his teaching. ²⁹ For he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.

CHAPTER 8 Jan. 6 Jul. 7

Jesus Heals a Leper

And when he had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ² And a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying: Lord, if you desire, you can make me clean. ³ And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying: I do desire. Be made clean! And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus said to him: See you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priests and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.

7:22 *Lord, Lord* – There will be people who called Jesus “Lord” and who thought they did miracles in His Name who will be rejected at the last day. They actually did “iniquity”. Possessing the gifts of God is no guarantee of salvation.

7:25 *Floods came* – The day of judgment will be like a storm which shakes us to the core and reveals who we really are. True spiritual progress is slow – like bashing away at the rock of our hard hearts. Quick spiritual progress is likely to be a building upon sand.

8:3 *Touched him* – All would’ve been shocked. Touching a leper made a person ritually unclean, and risked contracting the illness. Jesus did this to show the extent to which He did not believe in “guilt by association”.

Jesus Commends a Roman Soldier

⁵ And when he was entering into Capernaum, there came to him a centurion, begging him, ⁶ saying: Lord, my servant lies in the house paralysed, grievously tormented. ⁷ And he said to him: I will come and heal him. ⁸ And the centurion answered and said: Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers and I say to one: Go! And he goes. And to another: Come! And he comes. And to my servant: Do this! And he does it. ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him: Truly I say to you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast into the outer darkness. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. ¹³ And Jesus said to the centurion: Go your way. As you have believed, so it is done for you. And the servant was healed in that hour.

Jesus Heals Many Sick People

¹⁴ And when Jesus had entered Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵ And he touched her hand and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to him. ¹⁶ And when evening had come, they brought to him many possessed with demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all that were sick, ¹⁷ so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.

Jesus Calms a Great Storm at Sea

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw great crowds about him, he gave commandment to depart to the other side. ¹⁹ And there came a scribe and said to him: Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. ²⁰ And Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. ²¹ And another of the disciples said to him: Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. ²² But Jesus said to him: Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead. ²³ And when he had boarded a boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ And without warning, a furious storm arose on

8:16, 17 'Demon possession' was the language used in the first century to describe mental illness. Note the parallel between 'casting out demons' and being cured of disease. 'Demons' don't in fact exist – see the "Doctrinal Summary".

8:20-22 Jesus, the Lord of all grace, can at times be very demanding. He wants our immediate response. Likewise He exaggerated the situation in :21 – He did often have somewhere to sleep, e.g. the home of Martha and Mary, but that night perhaps He had nowhere.

8:23 *His disciples followed him* – The impression is given of them walking behind Him. They are symbols of us all.

the sea, so much so that the boat was covered with the waves; but he slept. ²⁵ And they came to him and awoke him, saying: Save us Lord! We perish! ²⁶ And he said to them: Why are you fearful? O you of little faith! Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marvelled, saying: What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Jesus Heals a Mad Man

²⁸ And when he had arrived on the other side, in the country of the Gadarenes, there met him two possessed with demons, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could go that way. ²⁹ And they cried out, saying: What have we to do with you, you Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time? ³⁰ Now there was afar off from them a herd of many pigs feeding. ³¹ And the demons begged him,

saying: If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs. ³² And he said to them: Go. And they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the hill into the sea and perished in the waters. ³³ And they that fed them fled, and went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to them that had been possessed with demons. ³⁴ And all in the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to depart from their borders.

CHAPTER 9 Jan. 7 Jul. 8

Jesus Heals and Forgives a Paralysed Man

And he entered into a boat and crossed over and came into his own city. ² And they brought to him a paralysed man, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralysed man: Son, be of good courage. Your sins are forgiven. ³ And certain of the scribes said within

8:25 Awoke Him – Jesus surely only appeared to be sleeping, in a small boat about to sink. But as in our lives, He appears silent only to bring us to the point of realizing our desperation for Him.

8:26 O you of little faith! – Remember the Gospel records were written by the disciples. They are transcripts of their preaching to others. They appealed for others to believe in Christ by pointing out how they had themselves been of such weak belief in Christ. Such humility, recounting our failures to others, is what makes our witness powerful rather than pretending we are perfect. Self-righteousness turns people off.

8:32 Jesus agreed to the mad man's request in order to provide him with a visual *aide memoire* for the rest of his life. Mental illness is usually intermittent, and the man needed assurance that this time the cure was total. His illness may have been caused from eating pig meat.

9:2 Jesus seeing their faith – He cured and forgave a person because of the faith of third parties. If our faith can influence the eternal destiny and wellbeing of others, then we should be making every effort for them, in prayer and practically. Either our efforts and prayers can be a factor in others' salvation and blessing, or they are not. They are. So we should give our lives to prayer and care for others.

themselves: This man blasphemes.⁴ And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts?⁵ For which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, or, Arise and walk?⁶ But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he then said to the paralytic: Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.⁷ And he arose and departed to his house.⁸ But when the crowds saw it they were afraid and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Jesus Mixes with Social Outcasts

⁹ And as Jesus left there he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him: Follow me. And he arose and followed him.¹⁰ And it came to pass, as he sat eating in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples: Why does your Teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners?¹² But when he heard it, he said: They that are sick need a doctor, not they that are healthy.¹³ Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I come not to call the righteous but sinners.¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying: Why do we and the Pharisees often fast but your disciples do

not fast?¹⁵ And Jesus said to them: Can the sons of the bride chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast.¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made.¹⁷ Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl Back to Life

¹⁸ While he spoke these things to them, a ruler came and knelt before him, saying: My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay your hand upon her that she shall live.¹⁹ And Jesus rose and followed him, as did his disciples.²⁰ And a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind him and touched the border of his garment.²¹ For she said within herself: If I only touch his garment I shall be healed.²² But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Daughter, be of good courage. Your faith has healed you. And the woman was healed at that moment.²³ And when Jesus came into the ruler's

9:13 *Not to call the righteous but sinners* – All are sinners, it's just that some think they are righteous. We will never be good enough for God, never morally ready enough for baptism – but the whole purpose of Jesus is to save us who are sinners.

9:17 The new wine represents the new covenant in the blood of Jesus; the old wine is the old covenant, Moses' law. If we have received the new wine of Jesus, we *must* change – otherwise it will destroy us.

house and saw the flute-players and the crowd making a tumult, ²⁴ he said: Leave! For the little girl is not dead but sleeps. And they Laughed at him in scorn. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he entered in and took her by the hand, and the little girl arose. ²⁶ And the fame thereof went into all that land.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men and a Dumb Man

²⁷ And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying out, and saying: Have mercy on us, son of David! ²⁸ And when he had arrived into the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them: Do you believe that I am able to do this? They say to him: Yes Lord. ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying: According to your faith be it done to you. ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus strictly ordered them, saying: See that no one knows it! ³¹ But they went and spread abroad his fame in all that land. ³² And as they were leaving, a dumb man who was possessed with a demon was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke and the crowds marvelled, saying: Such a thing has

never been seen in Israel! ³⁴ But the Pharisees said: By the prince of the demons he casts out demons.

Jesus Preaches with Compassion

³⁵ And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. ³⁶ But when he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. ³⁷ Then said he to his disciples: The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few. ³⁸ Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.

CHAPTER 10 Jan. 8 Jul. 9

Jesus Authorises His Disciples to Preach and Heal

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. ² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these. The first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother. James the son of Zebedee, and John his

9:35 The theme of Christ's preaching was "the gospel of the Kingdom", the good news ['Gospel'] of having God as our King now, and looking forward to the return of His Son to establish God's Kingdom physically here on earth for ever.

9:37 The symbols suggest that the harvest is lost and spoilt because there aren't enough workers to harvest it. The harvest refers to converts, spiritual fruit being given to God, the owner of all. God in some ways chooses to be limited by us. There will be some who will not be harvested for God because the church didn't make enough effort for them, or there were simply not enough of us to reach them. "Few" in Greek can also imply weak, as well as numerically few.

brother. ³ Philip and Bartholomew. Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, ⁴ Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out and ordered them, saying: Do not go unto the Gentiles and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans. ⁶ Instead go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. ⁹ Acquire no gold, nor silver, nor brass for your purses, ¹⁰ no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff; for the labourer is worthy of his food. ¹¹ And into whatever city or village you shall enter, search out who in it is worthy, and stay with them until you go. ¹² And as you enter into the household, greet it. ¹³ And if the household be worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it be unworthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as you go out of that household, or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, it shall

be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. ¹⁶ I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and in their synagogues they will scourge you. ¹⁸ Yes and before governors and kings you shall be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them, and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given to you at that time what to speak. ²⁰ For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you. ²¹ And brother shall deliver up brother to death and the father his child, and children shall rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. ²³ But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next. For truly I say to you, you shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes. ²⁴ A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord.

10:11 *Until you go* – Jesus wished to focus upon families and homes, which later developed into the house churches of the later New Testament. His focus is still very much on the family unit as the foundation for His church.

10:15 *More tolerable* – There will be degrees of reward and punishment at the day of judgment when Jesus returns. All our behaviour in this life will be judged sensitively, nothing will be overlooked and everything will receive an appropriate response.

10:16 *Wise as serpents* – We are not asked to be naive; but the opposite.

10:23 *Gone through the cities of Israel* – This may imply there will be persecution of believers and also a strong witness to the Jews in Israel immediately prior to Christ's return. We should be prepared.

²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household! ²⁶ Therefore fear them not. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and nothing hid that shall not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light, and what you hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸ And do not be afraid of those that kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a very small coin? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Therefore, fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. ³² Therefore, everyone who shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Fa-

ther who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever shall deny me before men I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven. ³⁴ Think not that I came to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I came to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. ³⁶ And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. ³⁷ He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And he that does not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. ³⁹ He that finds his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it. ⁴⁰ He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that sent me. ⁴¹ He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receives a right-

10:25 We should therefore not be surprised to be persecuted; in fact we should expect it, because if this world treated Jesus as they did, they will treat us the same.

10:26 *Revealed* – at the day of judgment (1 Cor. 3:13). If we will be revealed for who we really are eternally, there's no point in acting out a false image to our brothers and sisters in this life.

10:27 *Proclaim upon the housetops* – This is alluding to 1 Sam. 9:15,25, where God speaks “the word of the Kingdom” in Samuel's ear, and then he speaks that word to Saul on the housetop. The Lord is saying that in essence, we are all in Samuel's position; we hear the word of this world's salvation, the word about “the Kingdom” as it was for Saul, and that very fact is in itself the imperative to overcome our natural reservations and share it with those for whom it is intended – even if, as with Saul, we consider them unlikely and unspiritual hearers.

10:28 Gehenna was the rubbish dump outside Jerusalem. The fires were always burning there because new garbage was always being thrown onto it. It became a symbol of complete destruction. Some Bibles translate it [wrongly] as “hell”.

10:40 Peoples' attitude to us is their attitude to Jesus. This means that we, as baptized into the body of Christ, are Him to this world. Our behaviour should be appropriate to this.

eous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple; truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

CHAPTER 11 Jan. 9 Jul. 10

And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Jesus Talks About John the Baptist

² Now when John heard about the works of the Christ while in prison, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him: Are you he that comes, or look we for another? ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: Go and tell John the things which you hear and see. ⁵ The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised up; and the poor have good tidings preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he, whoever shall find no

cause to stumble over me. ⁷ And as these went their way, Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Those that wear soft garments are in king's houses. ⁹ But what did you go out to see? To see a prophet? Yes! And I say to you, much more than a prophet! ¹⁰ This is he, of whom it is written: Listen, I send my messenger before your face; he shall prepare your way before you. ¹¹ Truly I say to you, among those that are born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. Yet he that is the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and men of violence take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, this was Elijah that has to come. ¹⁵ He that has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁶ But unto what shall I liken this genera-

11:1 *Their cities* – Jesus encouraged people to preach to their network of friends and relatives, in their home areas; He visited those places to back up their witness. Witnessing to friends and family is the most difficult yet most important witness we make.

11:11 Whoever is least in the Kingdom of God in the future will be greater, spiritually, than John the Baptist was in his human life. We learn from this that there will be degrees of reward in God's Kingdom – one star will shine brighter than another (1 Cor. 15:41), some will rule over ten cities, others over five (Lk. 19:17-19). Do we have the spiritual ambition to want to shine then as much as possible? If we love and seek God's glory, then we will want to extend it as far as possible, reflecting it as far as we can.

11:12 *Men of violence* – The image is of commandos storming a city. Whatever our position in life, we now have a cause to totally give ourselves to – to enter and take the Kingdom of God for ourselves.

tion? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call to their fellows¹⁷ and say: We piped to you and you did not dance. We wailed and you did not mourn.¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say he has a demon.¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, Look, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! But wisdom is justified by her children.

Jesus Reproves Those Who Fail to Respond

²⁰ Then he began to chastise the cities wherein most of his mighty works had been done, because they had not repented.²¹ Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.²² But I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.²³ And you Capernaum, shall you be exalted to heaven? You shall go down to Hades, for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in you, it would have remained until this day.²⁴ But I say to you, that

it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.

Jesus Prays and Appeals to His Followers

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said: I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You did hide these things from the wise and prudent, and did reveal them to babes.²⁶ Yes Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Your sight.²⁷ All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son save the Father. Neither does anyone know the Father, save the Son and to whomsoever the Son wishes to reveal Him.²⁸ Come to me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

CHAPTER 12 Jan. 10 Jul. 11

Jesus Challenges the Pharisees About the Sabbath

At that time, on the Sabbath day, Jesus went through the grain-fields, and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears of grain to

11:27 Reading the Bible alone will not reveal the Father to us. There's also an element of grace – Jesus reveals His Father to those whom He chooses.

11:30 The heavy weight remains, but Jesus is a yoke, binding us together with many others, and so the weight seems far lighter to us. The purpose of the body and person of Christ is to bind us together with other believers – with all the personal problems and conflicts this can create. Christianity isn't intended to be lived in isolation from others.

12:1 Jesus and the disciples were prefigured by David and those who followed him (12:3). Those who followed David were those in debt and 'distressed' (1 Sam. 22:2). It is the desperate and broken who follow Jesus today.

eat. ² But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said to him: Look, your disciples do what is unlawful on the Sabbath. ³ But he said to them: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him- ⁴ how he entered into the house of God and ate the showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the law, that on the Sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶ But I say to you, that one greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath. ⁹ And he departed from there and went into their synagogue, ¹⁰ and saw a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? So that they might accuse him. ¹¹ And he said to them: Which of you, if having only one sheep, and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath

day, will not grab hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. ¹³ Then said he to the man: Stretch out your hand. And he stretched it out and it was restored whole, as the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him. ¹⁵ And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from there; and many followed him and he healed them all, ¹⁶ and charged them that they should not make him known. ¹⁷ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ Look at My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved in whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit upon him and he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ He shall not strive, nor cry aloud, neither shall anyone hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed he shall not break and a smoking wick he shall not quench, until he sends forth judgment to victory. ²¹ And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.

12:11 The man who had only one sheep was poor; that was why he was so concerned to rescue his only sheep. Yet he represents God and Jesus in their constant search for us. They therefore identify themselves with the very poorest of society. God is in search of man; and we search for Him. Hence the joy of our meeting with Him in baptism.

12:13, 14 *Then* – The pure grace and love of Jesus often produces a harsh reaction and rejection from those who refuse to be moved by it. We can't be passive to it.

12:16 Jesus sometimes did ask people to tell others about what He had done for them. Maybe He asked the extroverts to be quiet, and the introverts to tell others? The preaching of the Gospel in the right spirit is something done against our will; it's difficult (1 Cor. 9:17).

12:20 Jesus tries to fan into life whatever weak spirituality a person has, rather than expecting perfection at His first encounter with them. We should treat people likewise.

Jesus Heals and is Slandered by the Pharisees

²² Then was brought to him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb, and he healed him, so much so that the dumb man spoke and saw.

²³ And all the crowds were amazed, and said: Can this be the son of David? ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said: This man does not cast out demons but by Beelzebul the prince of the demons. ²⁵ And knowing their thoughts, he said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then shall his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. ²⁸ But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man and ruin his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will ruin his house. ³⁰ He that is not with me is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ Therefore

I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³² And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in the age to come. ³³ Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You offspring of vipers, how can you being evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil things. ³⁶ And I say to you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgement. ³⁷ For by your words you shall be justified and by your words you shall be condemned.

Jesus Speaks of Signs, Unspiritual Attitudes and His True Family

³⁸ Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying: Teacher, we would see a sign from

12:28 The kingdom of God will be established literally on earth when Jesus returns; but the essence of the Kingdom is that God is King and that is true today. The sphere of His rulership and authority in the lives of His people can be understood as His Kingdom.

12:32 This is only true for those who saw the miracles of Jesus and blasphemed them. But if a person stops going against the clear evidence provided by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is God's Son, then he is no longer blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

12:34 Therefore control of our thinking is so important. The environment we chose, what music we listen to, affects our thinking.

12:36 The judgement process will involve a recall of our words – and we shall have to explain them.

you. ³⁹ But he answered and said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, one greater than Jonah is here! ⁴² The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, one greater than Solomon is here! ⁴³ When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴ Then it says: I will return to my house from which I came out. And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation. ⁴⁶ While he was yet speaking to the crowds, his mother and his relatives stood outside, seeking to speak to him. ⁴⁷ And someone said to him: Look, your mother and your relatives wait outside, wanting to speak to you. ⁴⁸ But

he answered and said to him that told him: Who is my mother? And who are my relatives? ⁴⁹ And he stretched out his hand towards his disciples, and said: Behold, my mother and my relatives! ⁵⁰ For whoever shall please my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.

CHAPTER 13 Jan. 11 Jul. 12

Jesus Speaks in Parables

The Parable of the Sower

On that day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea side. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he spoke many things to them in parables, saying: Listen, the sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ And others fell upon the rocky places where they had not much earth, and immediately they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth. ⁶ And when the sun had risen, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ And others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ And others fell upon the good ground and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He that has ears, let him hear. ¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to him: Why do you speak to them in parables? ¹¹ And he answered and said to them: To you

13:9 Not everyone has the capacity to hear and understand the Gospel; not all have faith (2 Thess. 3:2). But those of us who do should use the potential we've been given.

13:11 The parables weren't stories with an obvious, easy to understand meaning. Je-

it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ¹² For whoever has, to him shall be given and he shall have abundance, but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which said: By hearing you shall hear and shall in no wise understand, and seeing you shall see and shall in no wise perceive. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and repent, so that I should heal them. ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which you see and saw them not, and to hear the things which you hear and heard them not. ¹⁸ Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and understands it not, then comes

the evil one and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side. ²⁰ And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that hears the word and immediately with joy receives it. ²¹ Yet he does not have root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²² And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that hears the word, and the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³ And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that hears the word and understands it- who truly carries fruit and brings it forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Other Parables of the Kingdom

²⁴ He set another parable before them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. ²⁶ But when the plants sprang up and brought forth fruit, then the weeds appeared also.

sus used them in order to filter out those who didn't want to understand. For them the parables were confusing and obscured His message. There's an upward spiral and also a downward spiral in our relationship with God.

13:12 How can a person who has nothing have what he has taken away from him? Maybe Jesus meant us to read in an ellipsis: 'the person who [thought he] had nothing [even though he does], will have even that taken from him'. This would be like the one talent man of Mt. 25:24. People have more than they think; for God's generosity is greater than we imagine.

13:21 Trial comes into our lives soon after baptism, as Israel were 'baptized' in the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1,2) and very soon encountered problems in the wilderness [no food or water].

²⁷ And the servants of the householder came and said to him: Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds? ²⁸ And he said to them: An enemy has done this! And the servants said to him: Then do you want us to go and gather them up? ²⁹ But he said: No. Lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up the weeds first and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. ³¹ He set another parable before them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. ³² Which indeed is smaller than all seeds, but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the sky come and lodge in its branches. ³³ He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was all raised. ³⁴ All these things spoke Jesus in parables to the crowds, and without a parable he said nothing to them. ³⁵ This was to fulfil what was

spoken by the prophet: I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world. ³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying: Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field. ³⁷ And he answered and said: He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the weeds are the sons of the evil one. ³⁹ The enemy that sowed them is the Devil, the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ As therefore the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. ⁴¹ The Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity, ⁴² and shall cast them into the fiery furnace. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. ⁴⁴ The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and in his joy he went and sold all that he

13:28 Jesus foresaw that His followers would have a tendency towards trying to do God's judgment for Him; He explains (:29) that it's not possible for us to judge who is who. It's therefore a fact that there will be insincere people growing within the field of the church, next to those who are sincere. They have an appearance of growth. But we must leave them until harvest – the return of Jesus.

13:32 From tiny beginnings – reading a Bible, noticing an advertisement, meeting someone 'by chance' – we will come to eternity. We will be a refuge for others then. We will look back on this life and it will seem so disproportionate – that we got 'there' from 'here'.

13:39 *Angels* – First we will know that Jesus has returned is that our Angel will be standing next to us and inviting us to go meet Him.

had and bought that field. ⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a merchant seeking fine pearls. ⁴⁶ And having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹ So shall it be in the end of the world. The angels shall come forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and shall cast them into the fiery furnace. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ Have you understood all these things? They said to him: Yes. ⁵² And he said to them: Therefore every scribe who has been made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a man who is a householder, who brings out from his treasure things new and old.

Jesus Visits His Home Town

⁵³ And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed from there. ⁵⁴ And coming

into his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so much so that they were astonished, and said: From where has this man received this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And his sisters, are they not all with us? From where then did this man get all these things? ⁵⁷ And they were offended by him. But Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, except in his hometown and in his own house. ⁵⁸ And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

CHAPTER 14 Jan. 12 Jul. 13

Herod Murders John the Baptist

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, ² and said to his servants: This is John the Baptist! He has risen from the dead and therefore do these powers work in him. ³ For Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. ⁴ For

13:46 Often Jesus intends us to think how the stories continue or end. So, what did the man do now? No wealth or possessions, just one stone. Surely he looked at it and loved it and treasured it more than anything else. This should be our attitude to the Kingdom of God.

13:50 Banging teeth is a symbol of anger with oneself.

13:55 Jesus never sinned, neither in commission nor omission, for all those 30 years He lived amongst them in Nazareth. But they never noticed He was anything special. This isn't only an essay in His utter humanity. It challenges us, for whenever we appear righteous in the eyes of the world, they perceive it and dislike it. But somehow the perfection of Jesus wasn't outwardly noticeable. Hence He was indeed perfect.

14:4 Should we therefore also rebuke unbelievers for their breaking of God's law? God feels every breach of His law, by whomsoever. His sensitivity, and thereby His pain, sorrow and joy at obedience is far greater than we can perceive.

John had said to him: It is not lawful for you to have her. ⁵ And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. ⁶ But at Herod's birthday party, the daughter of Herodias danced before all and pleased Herod. ⁷ Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she should ask. ⁸ And she, being encouraged by her mother, said: Give me here the head of John the Baptist on a platter. ⁹ And the king was grieved, but for the sake of his oaths and of his dinner guests, he commanded it to be given. ¹⁰ He sent word and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹² And his disciples came and took away the corpse and buried him, and they went and told Jesus.

Jesus Feeds 5000 Men Plus Their Families

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place to be alone; but when the crowds heard, they followed him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them

and healed their sick. ¹⁵ And when evening had come, the disciples came to him, saying: This place is deserted and the day is now over. Send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy for themselves food. ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them: They need not go away. You give them something to eat. ¹⁷ And they say to him: We have here only five loaves and two fishes. ¹⁸ And he said: Bring them here to me. ¹⁹ And he commanded the crowds to sit down on the grass; and he took the five loaves and the two fishes and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were filled, and they collected what was left over of the broken pieces- twelve baskets full! ²¹ And they that ate, besides women and children, were about five thousand men.

Jesus Walks on Water

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side of the sea, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was

14:16 Jesus knew this was impossible for them to do. But He asks them to do it, in order they might learn that whatever little we have can be used by Him; and He challenges our faith and horizons likewise.

14:19 The food was mediated through the disciples; just as His salvation of others is mediated to them through our hands. Note the similarities with how Jesus 'broke bread' at the communion service. The way Jesus prayed with open eyes looking up to Heaven reflects His good conscience with God. Can we do that?

14:23 The way Jesus sent the people away is a window into the power of His personality, the strength of His will and mind.

there alone. ²⁴ But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking upon the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were disturbed, saying: It is a ghost! And they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good cheer. It is I! Be not afraid. ²⁸ And Peter answered, and said: Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you by walking on the water. ²⁹ And he said: Come. And Peter got out of the boat and walked upon the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind was strong, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me! ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him and said to him: O you of little faith, why did you doubt? ³² And when they boarded the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying: Of a truth you are the Son of God. ³⁴ And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Genesareth. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognised him, they sent word

to all in that region and brought to him all who were sick, ³⁶ and they pleaded with him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

CHAPTER 15 Jan. 13 Jul. 14

Jesus Criticises Traditions

Then there came to Jesus Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, saying: ² Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. ³ And he answered and said to them: Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ For God said: Honour your father and your mother, and he that speaks evil of father or mother must surely die. ⁵ But you say: Whoever shall say to his father or his mother: That with which you might have been profited by me is given to God- ⁶ he shall not honour his father. Thus you have made void the word of God because of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying: ⁸ This people honours me with their lips but their heart is far from me. ⁹ But in vain do they worship me,

14:26 The disciples went back to their beliefs in ghosts. People still hold wrong understandings even after they come to Christ.

14:28 *If* – Peter knew that only Jesus would ask such a demanding thing. That’s His style. We see it in our lives too.

14:30 Peter only saw the wind because he must’ve taken his eyes off Jesus and looked at something blowing in the wind – maybe he looked back to the boat. We too will sink if we take our eyes off Jesus.

15:6 Traditions are dangerous. God’s commandments are intended to have an effect upon our lives; human traditions tend to find an easier way, whereby His commands lack cutting edge in our lives.

15:9 Note the parallel between doctrines and commandments (:6). Understanding cor-

teaching doctrines which are the precepts of men.

Jesus Teaches About the Source of Evil

¹⁰ And he called to himself the crowd, and said to them: Hear and understand. ¹¹ It is not what enters into the mouth which defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. ¹² Then came the disciples, and said to him: Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? ¹³ But he answered and said: Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up. ¹⁴ Let them alone. They are blind guides. And if the blind are guided by the blind, both shall fall into a pit. ¹⁵ And Peter answered and said to him: Explain to us the parable. ¹⁶ And he said: Are you still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not understand, that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the belly and is expelled? ¹⁸ But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart, and it is they that de-

file the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immorality, thefts, false witness and slander. ²⁰ These are the things which defile the man — but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

***Jesus Goes to Other Countries
He Heals a Gentile Girl***

²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. ²³ But he did not answer her. And his disciples came and begged him, saying: Send her away, for she cries out after us. ²⁴ But he answered and said: I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying: Lord! Help me! ²⁶ And he answered and said: It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. ²⁷ But she said: Yes, Lord. But even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall

rect doctrine is important because doctrine shapes our lives; it is a commandment.

15:16 We feel Jesus' frustration with the disciples. He expected them to have reached a higher point of perception than they had. He may set similar benchmarks for us, as any good teacher does, and be disappointed at the slowness of our growth. Matthew was telling his hearers that he too, and all the founders of the early church, had been terribly slow to understand, and had been a great disappointment to Jesus. He preached the Gospel with humility and an awareness of his own weakness.

15:19 Sin comes from within; nothing outside of us, e.g. demons or spirits, can enter us and possess us, thereby making us sin. The source of sin is internal and not external. The real battle is for self control and spiritual mindedness. See notes about Satan.

15:27 The dogs were the Gentiles; crumbs were the miracles; the masters were the Jews; the meal or table was Jesus' fellowship and ministry to the Jews. She showed humility and faith by saying this; she knew that even the miracle she so sought was a mere crumb of what Jesus was offering Israel. They refused so much.

from their masters' table. ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her: O woman, great is your faith. Be it done to you even as you wish. And her daughter was healed from that moment.

Jesus Heals and Feeds Many Gentiles

²⁹ And Jesus departed from there and came near to the Sea of Galilee; and he went up the mountain and sat there. ³⁰ And there came to him great crowds, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others; and they put them down at his feet, and he healed them; ³¹ so much so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel. ³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him, and said: I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way. ³³ And the disciples said to him: Where can we get so many loaves in this deserted place to fill so great a crowd? ³⁴ And Jesus said to them: How many loaves have you? And they said: Seven, and a few small fish. ³⁵ And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ He took the seven loaves and the fish; and he gave thanks and broke the bread and

gave it to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷ And they all ate and were filled, and they collected what was left over of the broken pieces- seven baskets full! ³⁸ And besides women and children, they that had eaten were four thousand men. ³⁹ And he sent away the crowds, boarded the boat and went into the region of Magdalla.

CHAPTER 16 Jan. 14 Jul. 15

Jesus Describes Pharisees And Sadducees as Evil

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test him, and asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ² But he answered and said to them: When it is evening, you say: It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. ³ And in the morning: It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴ An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of Jonah. And he left them and departed.

Jesus Teaches the Meaning of Yeast

⁵ When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ And Jesus said to them: Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ⁷ And they discussed this

15:32 Jesus perceived that the crowd was hungry. Jesus is the same today as He was then (Heb. 13:8). He's just as perceptive to our needs as He was then.

15:39 See on 14:23. The power of Jesus' personality and words deeply impressed Matthew.

among themselves, saying: We did not bring any bread. ⁸ And Jesus, aware of it, said: O you of little faith! Why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you still not understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered ¹⁰ nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets you took up? ¹¹ How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ¹² Then they understood that he told them not to be careful concerning the yeast in bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus Leaves Israel Again and Tests His Disciples' Understanding

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying: Who do men say that the Son of Man is? ¹⁴ And they said: Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. ¹⁵ He said to them: But who do you say that I

am? ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to him: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ²⁰ Then he ordered the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples about His Forthcoming Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised ²² And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying: Be it far from you, Lord. This

16:11 Again note Jesus' frustration with His followers' lack of understanding. We should so seek to understand Him, for clearly it's pleasing to anyone who loves us that we understand them. See on 15:16.

16:12 Doctrine is compared to yeast; it influences a large mass of dough, out of proportion to its own volume. This is the power and importance of doctrine. We must understand correctly.

16:18 The rock was the rock of Peter's belief that Jesus was God's Son (:16), and Peter's personal preaching of it. 'Peter' means 'rock'; it was a nickname, something like 'Rocky'.

16:19 This was promised to all the disciples – Mt. 18:18. The Roman Catholics misuse this verse to claim that Peter and therefore the Pope has this power. But there's no reason to think that any authority was passed on from Peter, nor the other disciples, to any subsequent generation.

shall never happen to you! ²³ But he turned, and said to Peter: Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. ²⁴ Then said Jesus to his disciples: If anyone wants to be my follower, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. ²⁶ For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? ²⁷ For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he repay every man according to his deeds. ²⁸ Truly I say to you: There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

CHAPTER 17 Jan. 15 Jul. 16

Jesus is Transfigured

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a

high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone as the sun and his garments became white as the light. ³ And there appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here. If it pleases you, I will make here three tabernacles- one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. ⁵ While he was yet speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him! ⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were terrified. ⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said: Arise and be not afraid. ⁸ And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only. ⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying: Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. ¹⁰ And his disciples asked him: Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? ¹¹ And he answered and said: Elijah indeed comes and shall restore all things.

16:23 Peter is called ‘Satan’, ‘an adversary’, showing that ‘satan’ doesn’t mean a sinful Angel. The word simply means ‘an adversary’. Jesus turned to speak to Peter – Peter had been walking behind Jesus – and tells him to *really* ‘get behind me’. Hence He says in v. 24 that to follow behind Him means taking up a cross. Peter didn’t want Jesus to die on the cross because this meant that those who followed Jesus should also likewise die. But Jesus tells him to *really* get behind Him, to be a real follower of Him, not just externally but in the spirit of carrying His cross. Peter failed badly here, so soon after his spiritual peak of 16:17,18. Our spirituality – and that of our brethren – goes up and down dramatically.

16:28 This is a reference to the transfiguration which we now read of in chapter 17.

17:9 “The vision” [Gk.]. Moses and Elijah weren’t literally there, they were seen by the disciples in a vision.

17:11 An Elijah prophet will come to Israel in the last days to prepare them for the

¹² But I say unto you, that Elijah came already and they knew him not, but did to him whatever they would. Likewise shall the Son of Man suffer by their hands. ¹³ Then understood the disciples that he spoke to them of John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals an Epileptic

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and knelt before him, saying: ¹⁵ Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is epileptic and suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to your disciples but they could not cure him. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said: O faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long must I tolerate you? Bring him here to me. ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked him; and the demon went out of him and the boy was cured from that moment. ¹⁹ Then came the disciples to Jesus privately, and said:

Why could we not cast it out? ²⁰ And he said to them: Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you: If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing shall be impossible for you. ²¹ But this kind will not go out except by prayer and fasting. ²² And while they stayed in Galilee, Jesus said to them: The Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men, ²³ and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up. And they were greatly distressed.

Jesus Teaches About the True Freedom of Sons of God

²⁴ And when they arrived in Capernaum, they that collected the tribute money came to Peter, and said: Does not your teacher pay the tribute money? ²⁵ He said: Yes. And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first of all, saying: Simon. What

return of Christ, just as John the Baptist tried to prepare them for His first coming [see Malachi 4:5,6].

17:15 *Epileptic* – Or ‘lunatic’ [Gk.] – someone struck by the moon. The belief that the moon struck people at night causing them to go mad was a wrong understanding. But Jesus didn’t explicitly correct this. He showed by the magnitude of His miracle that such beliefs, whether or not they had any truth in them, were irrelevant compared to God’s power. Hence references to demon possession decrease throughout the Gospels and New Testament – it became apparent that they don’t exist, or if they do, they are irrelevant compared to God’s power.

17:17 Again Jesus shows His frustration with their lack of spiritual perception – see on 15:16; 16:11. To be frustrated isn’t sinful – for Jesus never sinned. If He so desires understanding from us – let’s give ourselves to trying to understand. And surely He will help us if we ask Him.

17:20 Just a small amount of real faith is very powerful. Faith is so powerful that you don’t need much of it – just a little of the real thing is quite enough.

17:25 Jesus paid tribute tax even when He didn’t have to and when the reasoning behind the demand for it was wrong. We should do the same. We cannot change geopolitics now; we must wait for His return and the coming of God’s Kingdom.

do you think? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? From their own children, or from strangers? ²⁶ And when he said ‘From strangers’, Jesus said to him: Therefore the children are free. ²⁷ However, not to give offence to them, go to the sea, cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a coin. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.

CHAPTER 18 Jan. 16 Jul. 17

Jesus Teaches About Greatness and Humility

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? ² And he called to himself a little child and set him in the midst of them, ³ and said: Truly I say to you, except you turn and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever shall receive one

such little child in my name receives me. ⁶ But whoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him that a great millstone should be hung about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of temptations to stumble! For it is necessary that the temptations occur, but woe to that man through whom the temptation comes! ⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or lame, rather than having two hands or two feet to be thrown into the perpetual fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna. ¹⁰ See you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you, that in heaven their angels do always see the presence of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ For the Son of Man came to save those which were lost.

17:27 Jesus was very sensitive to not making people spiritually stumble. Even people whom we would consider as disinterested in His Gospel.

18:3 Conversion has various levels. The disciples had been converted, but there was a higher level of conversion – to become like children. Baptism isn’t the end of our conversion – it’s part of the process.

18:5 Jesus invites us to see Him as represented by the child. In the 1st Century world, children and women were considered as non-persons. But Jesus paid great attention to them and showed how He valued them as persons.

18:6 Such drowning in the sea as a millstone is Babylon’s judgment (Rev. 18:21). Those who make others sin or stumble will share in Babylon’s punishment at the last day – they will be “condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32). Those rejected by Jesus will be sent back into the world they so loved – and share its judgment.

18:8 Everlasting fire is symbolic of total destruction. Jerusalem was punished with this (Jer. 17:27) – but there is no eternal fire there today. Don’t read ‘eternal fire’ literally.

Jesus Teaches About Sin and Forgiveness

¹² What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the wish of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. ¹⁵ And if your brother sins against you, go show him his fault, between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not hear you, take with you one or two others, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax collec-

tors. ¹⁸ Truly I say to you: Whatever things you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever things you shall release on earth shall be released in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. ²¹ Then Peter came and said to him: Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times? ²² Jesus said to him: I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven. ²³ Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king who would make a reckoning with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered that

18:17 *To you* – you singular [Gk.]. This passage speaks about personal disagreements. If you follow this process, the end result is that you personally will treat the other person as a Gentile and tax collector – both of which groups Jesus especially sought to minister to and win for Him. It doesn't speak about a church disfellowshipping an individual.

18:20 Jesus is with us all the time individually, but He is especially with us when we gather together. Hence the importance of believers meeting together rather than believing in isolation.

18:21, 22 *Sin against* – Peter refers back to :15. Jesus seems to be saying that we can go through the process He outlines in :15-17. But the higher level is to forgive unconditionally. If somebody sins against us 490 times / day and claims each time to have repented, it's clear their repentance is insincere. Jesus is saying we should forgive people without trying to assess nor believe the sincerity of their repentance. For the nature of the forgiveness we show others is what we will be shown.

18:24 There's an element of unreality in this story. How could a person amass such a huge debt? Only because the King kept on and on lending to him, knowing the man could never repay. This speaks of God's forgiveness of us and the enormity of our debt to Him. Realizing our sinfulness will motivate us to forgive others.

he be sold with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell on his knees, saying: Lord, have patience with me and I will pay you all that I owe. ²⁷ And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred denarii, and he laid hold on him and took him by the throat, saying: Pay what you owe. ²⁹ So his fellow-servant fell down and begged him, saying: Have patience with me and I will pay you. ³⁰ But he refused and had him cast into prison, until he should pay that which was due. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him: You wicked servant; because you pleaded with me I forgave you all that debt. ³³ Should not you also have had mercy on your fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on you? ³⁴ And his lord was angry and delivered him to the jailors, until he should pay all

that was due. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

CHAPTER 19 Jan. 17 Jul. 18

Divorce

And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words, he departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. ² And great crowds followed him; and he healed them there. ³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him, by asking: Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? ⁴ And he answered and said: Have you not read, that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? ⁶ So they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, do not let man separate. ⁷ They said to him: Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away? ⁸ He said to them: Moses for your hardness of heart allowed you

18:31 When we see unreasonable behaviour from our brethren, the response is to tell it to the Lord. He knows about it already, but it's good for us psychologically to tell the story to Him in prayer.

19:5, 6 Often partners don't psychologically 'leave' their parents, and only when this is done can they cleave to their partner. As they try to do this, so God will confirm them in 'joining' them. Partners are glued together [Gk.] by God in His own way – often through life circumstances overruled by Him. Adultery is therefore so wrong. It's a fighting against God's work in a couples' life.

19:8 God makes concessions to human weakness. He knows the mind of those He has created. He sets an ideal standard but is willing to accept a lower achievement from us in practice. But this is no reason to abuse this. If we love God we will try to live life on the higher levels rather than be minimalists.

to send away your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever shall send his wife away, except for “porneia” and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he that marries a divorced woman, commits adultery. ¹⁰ The disciples said to him: If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry. ¹¹ But he said to them: Not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs that were born so from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Jesus Teaches the Cost of True Discipleship

¹³ Then little children were brought to him, so that he should lay his hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But Jesus

said: Let the little children come to me and do not prevent them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and departed from there. ¹⁶ And someone came to him and said: Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ¹⁷ And he said to him: Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments. ¹⁸ He said to him: Which? And Jesus said: You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ honour your father and mother and, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. ²⁰ The young man said to him: All these things have I observed from my youth. What do I still lack? ²¹ Jesus said to him: If you would be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come follow me. ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away

19:11 There are different levels. Some people can live on a higher level than others spiritually, especially in this area of marriage and human relationships. We must bear this in mind when forming opinions about those in the church who fail in these areas.

19:17 Jesus is at pains to show that He is not God Himself. The man wanted to know what he could *do* to be perfect. Jesus was perfect; but even then, His standing with God was only what it was by God’s grace.

19:20 The young man said he had kept the commandments from his youth. That’s youthful arrogance! But Jesus loved him (Mk. 10:21) rather than condemning his obvious arrogance and self-contradiction.

19:21 This was a specific command to the young man; it’s not a global command to all Christians to sell literally all they have. The example of converts in the later New Testament shows that they didn’t do this. “The poor” are often poor because of their own bad decisions. But Jesus says that we should still be generous to them with all that we have, rather than blaming them for having got themselves into the hole they have. If a person’s in a hole, however they got there, they still need our help out of it. Just as God does to us.

sorrowful, for he was one that had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus said to his disciples: Truly I say to you: It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁵ And when the disciples heard it, they were surprised, saying: Who then can be saved? ²⁶ And Jesus looking upon them said to them: With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. ²⁷ Then asked Peter, saying: We have left all and followed you. What then shall we receive as a reward? ²⁸ And Jesus said to them: Truly I say to you: You who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone that has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a

hundredfold and shall inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last.

CHAPTER 20 Jan. 18 Jul. 19

Jesus' Parable of Labourers in the Vineyard

For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ² And when he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing in the marketplace idle. ⁴ And to them he said: You go also into the vineyard and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way. ⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour and did likewise. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he said to them: Why do you stand here idle all the day? ⁷ They said to him: Because no one has hired us. He said to them: You go also into the vineyard. ⁸ And

19:24 The needle gate was the small gate in a city wall through which only people could walk. For a camel to pass through it, it had to kneel down and have all its baggage unloaded – and even then it could only just squeeze through. We must shed our wealth and humble ourselves if we are to enter the Kingdom.

19:25 The disciples held the common but wrong idea that wealthy people were wealthy because God had blessed them. Jesus here totally deconstructs the 'prosperity Gospel'.

20:2 The small coin represents salvation.

20:6 Those who don't serve Christ are standing around doing nothing – no matter their intellect and full diaries. It was only the old and weak who were not taken by anyone to work. But they wanted to work – so they stood there all day in the hope someone might be desperate enough for workers that he would take them. God is desperate for workers, and we who are called to Christ in these last days are those weak workers. Like those called at the last moment in Lk. 14:23 are the street people and desperate. That's us.

20:8 We are 'called' by the Angel appearing when Christ returns to gather us to judgment.

when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last to the first.⁹ And when they who were hired about the eleventh hour came, they each received a denarius.¹⁰ And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more, but likewise each received a denarius.¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled at the master of the house, saying:¹² These last have spent only one hour but you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.¹³ And he answered and said to one of them: Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?¹⁴ Take that which is yours and go your way. It is my wish to give to this last even as I gave to you.¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own money? Or is your eye evil, because I am good?¹⁶ So the last shall be first and the first last.

The Importance Of Being A Servant

¹⁷ And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them:¹⁸ Listen, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered to the chief priests and scribes; and they

shall condemn him to death,¹⁹ and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify; and the third day he shall be raised up.²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, kneeling before him and asking a certain thing of him.²¹ And he said to her: What do you desire? She said to him: Command that in your kingdom these my two sons may sit, one on your right hand, and one on your left hand.²² But Jesus answered and said: You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They said to him: We are able.²³ He said to them: You shall drink my cup indeed - but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand, is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brothers.²⁵ But Jesus called them to himself, and said: You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them.²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you- must be your servant.²⁷ And whoever would be first among you shall be your slave.²⁸ Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

20:14 The implication could be that this man is ‘fired’ – he must go his way, away from Jesus, because he thought that he was more worthy than the weak, sick, old or lazy workers who had also been hired. Such spiritual snobbism is *so* repellent to Jesus.

20:28 A radical inversion of human values. We are here to serve, to give; not to be served, get wealthy or receive some benefit for ourselves. The very opposite of the ‘prosperity Gospel’.

Jesus Heals Two Determined Blind Men

²⁹ And as they went out from Jericho, a great crowd followed him. ³⁰ And two blind men who were sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying: Lord, have mercy on us, you Son of David. ³¹ And the crowd rebuked them, that they should hold their peace; but they cried out the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, you Son of David! ³² And Jesus stood still and called them, and said: What do you desire I do for you? ³³ They said to him: Lord, that our eyes may be opened. ³⁴ And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes; and immediately they received their sight and followed him.

CHAPTER 21 Jan. 19 Jul. 20

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them: Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ And if anyone says something to you, you shall say: The Lord has need of

them. And immediately he will send them. ⁴ Now this happened so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying: ⁵ Tell the daughter of Zion: Look, your King comes to you, meek and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass. ⁶ And the disciples went and did as Jesus directed them, ⁷ and brought the ass and the colt and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed shouted: Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest! ¹⁰ And when he had arrived in Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying: Who is this? ¹¹ And the crowds said: This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹² And Jesus entered into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold the doves. ¹³ And he said to them: It is written, my house shall be called a

20:32 Why ask this, when the answer was obvious? To focus those men upon their own need. Jesus does the same with us; through His word and hand in our lives, He brings us to perceive how much we want what we say we want.

21:5 A humble King was a contradiction in terms. A King was supposed to ride upon a battle horse, not a donkey. It's like a President arriving in a battered 20 year old small car, rather than a cavalcade of Mercedes.

21:9 The crowd were so fickle. A few days later they would cry "Crucify him!"; and 6 weeks later claim to have accepted the preaching of Peter. Fickleness is part of our nature; what God and Jesus desire, as we do in any relationship, is stability, loyalty to the end, faithfulness.

house of prayer; but you make it a den of robbers. ¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David!, they were moved with indignation, and said to him: ¹⁶ Do you hear what these are saying? And Jesus said to them: Yes. Did you never read: Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise? ¹⁷ And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Jesus Condemns a Fig Tree

¹⁸ Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the roadside, he went to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only; and he said to it: Let there be no fruit from you again. And immediately the fig tree withered away. ²⁰ And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying: How did the fig tree immediately wither away? ²¹ And Jesus answered and said to them: Truly I say to you, If you have faith and doubt not, you

shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if you shall say to this mountain: Be taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. ²² And all things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

Jesus is Challenged In The Temple

²³ And when he had entered into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said: By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you this authority? ²⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: I also will ask you one question, which if you tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men? And they discussed it among themselves, saying: If we shall say, from heaven, he will say to us, why then did you not believe him? ²⁶ But if we shall say, from men, we fear the crowd, for all hold John as a prophet. ²⁷ And they answered Jesus and said: We do not know. He replied to them: Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

21:14 The blind and lame had been banned from the temple due to a Jewish misapplication of 2 Sam. 5:8. But Jesus welcomed into God's house those whom man had banned from it.

21:18 He hungered for spiritual fruit on Israel, the fig tree. He was prepared to eat even the unripe fruit which the leaves promised to be there. He cursed it because there was an appearance of fruit, i.e. it had leaves, but in reality there wasn't even the beginnings of spiritual fruit. He is satisfied with even our immature spirituality – if we do at least something (Mt. 25:27).

21:22 We should visualize the answer to our prayers and act and feel as if they have been answered. But this verse is only part of the overall Bible teaching about prayer – we can only pray with such confidence if we know it is according to God's will (1 Jn. 5:14).

Jesus' Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said: Son, today go and work in the vineyard. ²⁹ And he answered and said: I will not; but afterward he repented and went. ³⁰ And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said: I go sir; but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father? They replied: The first. Jesus said to them: Truly I say to you, that the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and afterwards when you saw it, you still did not repent and believe him.

Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard and the Husbandmen

³³ Hear another parable. There was a man that was master of a house, who planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen; and went into another

country. ³⁴ And when the harvest season drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the husbandmen took his servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another. ³⁶ Again, he sent other servants more than the first, and they did the same to them. ³⁷ And last of all he sent his son to them, saying: They will respect my son. ³⁸ But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves: This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take his inheritance. ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? ⁴¹ They said to him: He will miserably destroy those miserable men and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall pay him the fruits in their seasons. ⁴² Jesus said to them: Did you never read in the scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. ⁴³ Therefore say I to you: The kingdom of

21:30 Often parables present two kinds of people – those who appear to be righteous and aren't; and those who are openly disobedient but repent. Churches seem full of the first category, but these aren't those whom God accepts. We have to accept that we are serious sinners, and repent.

21:35 These servants represent God's prophets whom He sent to Israel in the Old Testament.

21:37 Here is the hopefulness of God. On one hand, He knew from the beginning that Israel would reject and kill His Son. But He had such hope that they would not. The God who is omnipotent sometimes and in some ways limits His power; and He does the same with His knowledge, His omniscience. He has entered into relationship with us and therefore He has in a way limited Himself in order to conduct that relationship with us on a legitimate, meaningful level. Hence we read of God's shock, hurt and surprise at human actions.

God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. ⁴⁴ And he that falls on this stone shall be broken to pieces, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. ⁴⁵ And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke of them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

CHAPTER 22 Jan. 20 Jul. 21

Jesus' Parable About the Wedding Feast

And Jesus answered and spoke again in parables to them, saying: ² The kingdom of heaven is likened to a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage feast,

but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited: Look, I have made ready my dinner. My oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready. Come to the marriage feast! ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burnt their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants: The wedding is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore, go to the main roads and as many as you shall find, invite them to the marriage feast. ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the highways and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was filled with guests. ¹¹ But when the king

21:44 This refers to how the image of Daniel 2, representing the kingdoms of men, is to be ground to powder by the return of Christ to the earth. He will judge those who reject Him along with the world whose ways they so loved (1 Cor. 11:32). We either fall upon Christ and are broken, through recognizing our sins (1 Pet. 2:8); or He will fall upon us and break us at the last day. So there is a logic to all this – we must be broken people now, or we will be broken then. The true community of believers is one of broken men and women.

22:4 Everything was 'ready' for God's Kingdom in the first century, but the Jews rejected it.

22:5 Just as people today allow the busyness of their lives to stop them from responding to the Gospel.

22:7 Jerusalem was burnt by the Roman armies in AD70. They were *God's* armies in the sense that He controlled and used them. Those who persecute us are also in a sense directly under God's control.

22:10 There will be both bad and good people who accept the invitation; just as the weeds grow together with the wheat in the field of the church (Mt. 13:29). We shouldn't be surprised at the sense that this is the case; but it's not a reason to leave the church. We will not find any pure church.

22:11 The wedding garment represents the righteousness of God which is given to us when we are clothed with Christ in baptism. In weddings of those days, the white

entered to see the guests, he saw there a man who was not wearing a wedding-garment. ¹² And he said to him: Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants: Bind him hand and foot and throw him outside into the darkness, where there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴ For many are called but few chosen.

The Pharisees Try to Trap Jesus – Tribute Money to Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might trap him in his talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to him their disciples, along with the Herodians, saying: Teacher. We know that you are true and teach the way of God in truth and care not for anyone, for you regard not the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us therefore, what you think. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said: Why do you test me? You hypocrites! ¹⁹ Show me the tribute money. And they brought to him a denarius. ²⁰ And he said to them: Whose is this image and superscription? ²¹ They said to him: Caesar's. He then said to them: Therefore give to Caesar the things that are

Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. ²² And when they heard it, they marvelled and left him and went away.

The Sadducees Try to Trap Jesus – Resurrection

²³ The same day Sadducees, that say that there is no resurrection, came to him; and they asked him: ²⁴ Teacher. Moses said that if a man dies having had no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up seed to his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brothers; and the first married and died having no seed, and thus left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ In like manner the second also and the third, to the seventh. ²⁷ And after them all, the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection therefore, whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her. ²⁹ But Jesus answered and said to them: You are mistaken, as you neither know the scriptures, nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying: ³² I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not God of

wedding garment was given to the guests as they entered the feast. To refuse it was arrogant – presumably the person thought that his own clothes were better than the wedding garment offered by the host.

22:21 The coin had Caesar's image on it and therefore should be given to him. Our bodies are what has God's image on it, and we should give them to God.

22:30 We are to be made as the Angels; we will be eternal and unable to sin, therefore the Angels are like that today. There are no sinful Angels in Heaven.

22:32 Those men are dead and unconscious, but their memory lives on with God, to the extent that when He says "I am [still, now, today] the God of... Jacob", He means

the dead, but of the living. ³³ And when the crowds heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

A Pharisee Lawyer Tries to Trap Jesus – The Greatest Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him: ³⁶ Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? ³⁷ And he said to him: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.

Jesus Tests the Pharisees – Who is the Son of David?

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying: ⁴² What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he? They said to him: The son of David. ⁴³ He said to them: How then does David in the Spirit call him Lord,

saying: ⁴⁴ The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies underneath your feet. ⁴⁵ If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son? ⁴⁶ And no one could say a word in reply. From that day nobody dared to ask him any other questions.

CHAPTER 23 Jan. 21 Jul. 22

Jesus Warns About Hypocrisy

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying: ² The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat. ³ Therefore all things whatever they tell you, do and observe; but do not you copy their works, for they say and do not. ⁴ Yes, they bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders; but they will not move them with their finger. ⁵ But they do all their works to be seen by men. For they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long, ⁶ and they love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi. ⁸ But you are not to be called Rabbi- for one is your teacher, and all you are brothers. ⁹ And call no one on the earth your father- for one

that He visualizes Jacob as actually alive. Jacob will be resurrected and given eternal life when Jesus returns; but God speaks about those things which are not yet as if they are, because the future is totally assured from His perspective (Rom. 4:17).

22:39 The Jews were always arguing about which commandment was most important. Jesus answers by saying that there are two commandments which are in fact one – to love God and to love our neighbour. His point is that these two can't be separated. We can't be Christians in isolation from people; we can't love God and be indifferent to our neighbour.

22:45 The Jews thought that David was greater than Messiah; Jesus is saying that it's the other way around.

23:9 The practice of calling a priest 'Father' is therefore totally wrong.

is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called masters - for one is your master, the Christ. ¹¹ But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted. ¹³ But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. ¹⁴ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, while for a pretence you make long prayers. Therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. ¹⁵ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he has become so, you make him two-fold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves. ¹⁶ Woe to you, you blind guides, who say: Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath. ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold, or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And, Whoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing! But whoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is bound by his oath. ¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater: the

gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ He therefore that swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. ²¹ And he that swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him that dwells in it. ²² And he that swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him that sits on it. ²³ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you tithe mint and anise and cumin, yet have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. ²⁴ You blind guides, that strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! ²⁵ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! Cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside of it may become clean also. ²⁷ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. ²⁹ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the

23:13 We can both enable and hinder others from entering God's Kingdom. Causing others not to enter the Kingdom by our words, actions or example is one of the most serious sins. The Pharisees were a very small group, but the Gospel records give much time to describing Christ's interaction with them – for legalism and discouraging others from entering the Kingdom is such a serious sin, which we can so easily commit.

23:22 God is a personal being, located in Heaven – not a whisp of 'spirit' nor an abstraction.

prophets and garnish the tombs of the righteous,³⁰ and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.³¹ Therefore you witness to yourselves, you are the sons of them that slew the prophets.³² Fill up then the measure of your fathers' iniquity.³³ You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how shall you escape the judgment of Gehenna?³⁴ Therefore, look, I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you shall kill and crucify, and some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.³⁵ That upon you may fall the guilt for all the righteous blood shed on the land, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom you slew between the sanctuary and the altar.³⁶ Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

Jesus Laments Over Jerusalem

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often would I have

gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings- but you were not willing!³⁸ Behold, your house is left to you desolate.³⁹ For I say to you, you shall not see me from this time forward, until you shall say: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER 24 Jan. 22 Jul. 23

Jesus Predicts the Temple Destruction, His Return and the End of the Age

And Jesus came out of the temple and was going on his way when his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.² But he answered and said to them: Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you. There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying: Tell us, when shall these things be? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one lead you astray.⁵ For many shall come

23:33 An allusion to the promise in Eden of Gen. 3:15. All who oppose Jesus are the descendants of the serpent, and those in Christ, as the descendants of the woman, will overcome them in the end after suffering from them in the short term.

23:37 Did Jesus think up this idea from watching the hens in his mothers' yard in Nazareth?

23:39 This may mean that when Jesus returns, those who rejected Him will be resurrected and then will recognize Him. But it will be too late. At the day of judgment, nobody will be indifferent. People may shrug their shoulders now or even reject Jesus, but in that day they will desperately want one thing – to be with Him. But for those who rejected Him in this life it will be too late. Hence the rejected will bang their teeth in self-hatred.

24:2 This was fulfilled by the gold of the temple melting and running down between the stones, so that the Romans literally threw down every stone to extract the gold.

in my name, saying: I am the Christ, and shall lead many astray. ⁶ And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. Ensure you are not alarmed, for this must happen- but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ But all these things are the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall kill you; and you shall be hated by all the nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then shall many stumble and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets shall arise and shall lead many astray. ¹² And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the majority shall grow cold. ¹³ But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations- and then shall the end come. ¹⁵ Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him that

is on the housetop not go down to take out things that are in his house. ¹⁸ And let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. ¹⁹ But woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight is not in the winter, nor on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved- but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. ²³ Then if anyone shall say to you, Here is the Christ, or another, Here is the Christ- do not believe them! ²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, which shall show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray- if possible- even the elect. ²⁵ Listen, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ Therefore, if they shall say to you: Look, he is in the wilderness! Do not go. Look, he is in the inner chambers! Do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and is seen even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ Wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles gather together. ²⁹ But immediately after the tribulation of

24:14 This implies that the return of Christ to some extent depends upon our taking the Gospel to all the world. It must be preached for a witness to the world – not all will respond, but all nations will hear. The advent of the internet has enabled this.

24:22 Although there are some stated conditions for the return of Christ to return (see :14), God will shorten the days. 2 Peter 3 says that there is also a delay, so that more may believe. So there are various apparently conflicting factors at work in determining the actual date for Christ to return. The shortening of the days will be because of the prayers of the faithful for Christ to return soon; or in order to save the faithful from falling away, so great will be the temptations and pressure of the last days.

those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven. Then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.³² Now from the fig tree learn her parable. When her branch has become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near.³³ Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that he is near- at the doors.³⁴ Truly I say to you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things are accomplished.³⁵ Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Jesus Warns that the Time of the End is Only Known to God

³⁶ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the Angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.³⁷ And as were the days of Noah, so

shall be the coming of the Son of Man.³⁸ For as in those days which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,³⁹ and they did not realize until the flood came and took them all away. So shall the coming of the Son of Man be.⁴⁰ Then two men shall be in the field. One shall be taken and one left.⁴¹ Two women shall be grinding at the mill. One shall be taken and one left.⁴² Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on what day your Lord comes.⁴³ But know this! That if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Jesus Describes the Wise Servant

⁴⁵ Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household to give them their food in due time?⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing.⁴⁷ Truly I say to you, that he will set him over all that he has.⁴⁸ But if that evil servant

24:31 The Angels will gather us from all over the world – there will be true believers world-wide, as a result of the witness of v. 14.

24:32 The fig tree represents Israel; fruit on the fig tree speaks of the spiritual fruit of repentance. When at least some Jews repent and accept Christ – which is already happening – this will be a sign that we are in the last generation.

24:40, 41 As often in His teaching, Jesus balances examples from the worlds of both men and women. Such was His valuing of all people.

24:48 The Lord *does* delay His coming – the same Greek word is found in 25:5 describing how the bridegroom [Jesus] delays His coming. See on 24:14.

shall say in his heart: My lord's coming is delayed, ⁴⁹ and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants and shall eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he does not expect him and in an hour when he does not know, ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

CHAPTER 25 Jan. 23 Jul. 24

Jesus' Parable of Ten Virgins

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² And five of them were foolish and five were wise; ³ for the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil along with their lamps. ⁵ Now while the bridegroom was delayed they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry: Look! The bridegroom! Come out to meet him. ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise: Give us

some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. ⁹ But the wise answered: Perhaps there will not be enough for us and you. Instead, you should go to them that sell oil and buy some for yourselves. ¹⁰ And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came—and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. ¹² But he answered and said: Truly I say to you, I do not know you. ¹³ Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know the day nor the hour.

Jesus' Parable About the Servants and the Talents

¹⁴ For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants and delivered to them his goods. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one—to each according to his abilities; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ Immediately he that received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents. ¹⁷ In like manner

25:4 Again there are two groups in the parable – the weak, who knew their weakness and took extra oil with them, knowing they'd likely not stay awake; and the arrogant self-assured, who didn't think they would fail.

25:5 There is a delay in Christ's return – see on 24:14. They all fell asleep – but we should be awake and watching when Christ returns (1 Thess. 5:6-8). The last generation before Christ returns will be spiritually weak and sleepy saved only by their recognition of their weakness and lack of oil [a symbol of spirituality?].

25:6 Midnight – an element of unreality in the parable. The bridegroom comes at a most unlikely time – as Christ will.

25:11 Some who call Jesus "Lord" will be rejected. Nobody will be passive in that day – all will wish to be accepted by Jesus.

25:15 Each of us have different abilities given us to use in His service. We all have something. Pray that God shows you what abilities He has given you, what is His hope and expectation for you.

he also that received the two gained other two. ¹⁸ But he that received the one went away and dug in the earth and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the lord of those servants came and made a reckoning with them. ²⁰ And he that received the five talents came and brought another five talents, saying: Lord, you gave me five talents. Look, I have gained another five talents. ²¹ His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, so I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord! ²² And also he that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, you gave me two talents. Look, I have gained another two talents. ²³ His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, so I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord! ²⁴ And also he that had received the one talent came and said: Lord, I knew you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the earth. Here, have what is yours. ²⁶ But his lord answered and said to him: You

wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter seed. ²⁷ You should have deposited my money with the bankers, so that on my return I would have collected my own money with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away. ³⁰ And cast out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There, shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Jesus' Parable About Sheep and Goats

³¹ But when the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the Angels with him, then he shall sit on the throne of his glory. ³² And before him shall be gathered all the nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King shall say to those on his right hand: Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

25:22 The Greek word translated "gained" is elsewhere used about gaining people for Christ.

25:27 Under the Law of Moses, Jews weren't supposed to lend their money for interest. But Jesus is saying that the man should've done at least something, even if it wasn't the best. He will explain to the rejected how they could've entered His Kingdom – but it will be too late. Hence the gnashing of teeth.

25:31 The throne of Jesus is the throne which God promised to give David's great descendant, i.e. Jesus. This throne or place of rulership was literally in Jerusalem, on this earth (Lk. 1:32).

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. ³⁶ Naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. ³⁷ Then the righteous shall answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you? Or thirsty and gave you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you as a stranger and welcome you? Or naked and clothed you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick, or in prison and came to you? ⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say to them: Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these my brothers, even the least, you did it to me. ⁴¹ Then he shall also say to them on the left hand: You who are cursed, depart from me, to the perpetual fire which is prepared for the Devil and his messengers. ⁴² For I was hungry and you did not give me anything to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. Naked and you did not clothe me. Sick and in prison and you did not visit me. ⁴⁴ Then they shall also answer, saying: Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you? ⁴⁵ Then he shall

answer them, saying: Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of these least, you did not do it to me. ⁴⁶ And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life.

CHAPTER 26 Jan. 24 Jul. 25

Jesus Predicts Two Days to His Death

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples: ² You know that after two days the Passover comes, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. ³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered at the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. ⁴ And they plotted together how they might seize Jesus using trickery and kill him. ⁵ But they said: Not during the feast, lest a riot arise among the people.

Jesus is Anointed

⁶ Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. ⁸ But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying: To what purpose

25:37 The righteous did their good works unconsciously, and so totally can't remember them that they disagree with Jesus about these things – they really will be genuinely persuaded they hadn't done them!

25:40 The least of Christ's brethren may refer to the spiritually weakest. Our attitude to them is our attitude to Christ – see too 1 Cor. 12:23.

26:5 The crowds were very pro Jesus, but soon shouted "Crucify Him!". We must try not to be so fickle, even though it's how we tend to be by nature.

26:8 *Disciples* – the other records say that Judas said this. One person can so easily negatively influence a whole group of believers.

is this waste? ⁹ For this might have been sold for much and given to the poor. ¹⁰ But Jesus perceiving it, said to them: Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work upon me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me with you. ¹² For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly I say to you: Wherever in the whole world this gospel is preached, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of as a memorial to her. ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, ¹⁵ and said: What are you willing to give me if I will deliver him to you? And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that time onward he sought opportunity to betray him.

Jesus' Last Supper

¹⁷ Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where do you want us to prepare the Passover for you to eat? ¹⁸ And he said: Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him: The Teacher said, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house

with my disciples. ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus directed them, and they prepared the Passover. ²⁰ Now when evening had come, he was dining with the twelve disciples. ²¹ And as they were eating, he said: Truly I say to you: One of you shall betray me. ²² And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and all began to say to him: Is it I, Lord? ²³ And he answered and said: He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes, even as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better if that man had not been born. ²⁵ And Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said: Is it I, Rabbi? He said to him: You have said it. ²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it, and he gave it to the disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body. ²⁷ And he took a cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying: All of you, drink it. ²⁸ For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I shall not drink of this fruit of the vine from this time forward, until that day when I drink it

26:13 This incident is mentioned in all the Gospel records, confirming our thesis that the Gospels are transcripts of the actual Gospel message which the authors usually preached.

26:15 This suggests that Judas' motivation was largely financial. Hence his throwing down of the pieces of silver in disgust at himself. So many have betrayed Christ for the passing wealth of this world.

26:26 The original breaking of bread was part of a meal.

26:29 Alluding to how the priest on duty wasn't allowed to drink alcohol. Jesus intended us to understand that He will literally drink wine again with us when He returns, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

anew with you in my Father's kingdom. ³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹ Then Jesus said to them: You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written: I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ³² But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. ³³ But Peter answered and said to him: If they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. ³⁴ Jesus said to him: Truly I say to you, that this night, before the cock crows, you shall deny me three times. ³⁵ Peter said to him: Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. Likewise said all the disciples.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples: Sit here, while I go yonder and pray. ³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them: My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with me. ³⁹ And he went forward a little and fell on his face and prayed, saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me. Nevertheless, not as I will

but as You will. ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter: What! Could you not watch with me for one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. ⁴² Again a second time he went away and prayed, saying: My Father, if this cup cannot pass, except I drink it, Your will be done. ⁴³ And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And he left them again and went away and prayed a third time, saying again the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them: Sleep on now and take your rest.

Jesus is Arrested

The hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Arise! Let us be going. He that betrays me is nearby. ⁴⁷ And while he yet spoke, Judas, one of the twelve, came; and with him a great crowd with swords and staves, from the chief priest and elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he. Take him. ⁴⁹ And immediately he came to Jesus, and said, Greetings, Rabbi; and kissed him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus said to him: Friend, do what you came to

26:38 Jesus almost died from sorrow, sorrow that Israel had rejected God's salvation. His heart so bled for others' response to the Gospel, as should ours.

26:39 How long did it take Jesus to pray these words? Were there minutes between each word or clause? Our salvation hung in the balance as He struggled. The will of God was clearly not the same as the will of Jesus in all things – Jesus was certainly not God in person.

26:45 Jesus said this to them as they slept, as if talking to His own sleeping children.

do. Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took him. ⁵¹ And one of those with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then said Jesus to him: Put away your sword into its place, for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot ask my Father and He shall, even now, send me more than twelve legions of Angels? But how then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way? ⁵⁴ In that hour Jesus said to the mob: Have you come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching and you did not take me. ⁵⁵ But all this is happening so that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him and fled. ⁵⁶ And they that had taken Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. ⁵⁷ But Peter followed him afar off, to the court of the high priest; and entered in and sat with the officers, to see the end. ⁵⁸ Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death. ⁵⁹ And they did not find any, though many false witnesses came. But afterwards came two, ⁶⁰ and said: This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. ⁶¹ And the

high priest stood up and said to him: Do you answer nothing? What is it that these testify against you? ⁶² But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said to him: I bind you under oath to the living God, tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. ⁶³ Jesus said to him: You have said it; nevertheless I say to you, from this time forward you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. ⁶⁴ Then the high priest tore his garments, saying: He has spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁵ What is your judgement? They answered and said: He is worthy of death. ⁶⁶ Then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists, and some slapped him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁷ saying: Prophesy to us, you Christ! Who is he that struck you?

Peter Denies he Knows Jesus

⁶⁸ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a maid came to him, saying: You also were with Jesus the Galilean. ⁶⁹ But he denied before them all, saying: I do not know what you say. ⁷⁰ And when he went out to the entrance, another maid saw him and said to the bystanders: This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. ⁷¹ And again he denied with an oath: I do not know the man. ⁷² And after a little while they that stood by came

26:52 A solid argument against Christians taking weapons.

26:60 The Jews had a strange desire to still keep the Law and to be legally correct – whilst destroying the innocent Son of God. This kind of paradox and gross internal contradiction is so often seen in religious people.

and said to Peter: Of a truth you also are one of them, for your dialect makes you known. ⁷⁴ Then he began to curse and to swear: I do not know the man! And immediately the cock crowed. ⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the words which Jesus had said: Before the cock crows, you shall deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER 27 Jan. 25 Jul. 26

Jesus is Brought to Pilate

Now when morning had arrived, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. ² And they bound him and led him away, and delivered him up to Pilate the governor. ³ Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying: I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? See to it yourself. ⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver

into the sanctuary and departed, and he went away and hanged himself. ⁶ And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said: It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is the price of blood. ⁷ And they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field is called to this day, The field of blood. ⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel. ¹⁰ And they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me. ¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? And Jesus said to him: You say it. ¹² And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he said nothing. ¹³ Then Pilate said to him: Do you not hear how many things they testify against you? ¹⁴ And he gave him no answer, not even one word, so much so that the governor was astonished. ¹⁵ Now

26:73 Jesus and His followers were distinguished by their Galilean accents. Another window into the humanity of Jesus.

26:74 These oaths weren't expletives. They were calling down various types of Divine condemnation upon himself if he had ever known Jesus. Peter's bitter weeping in v. 75 is similar to the weeping which Jesus often predicted would be experienced by those whom He rejects at the last day. Peter condemned himself in this life – but repented and was saved. We either go through that process now, in contrition for our sins – or then at the day of judgment when it's too late to change the verdict.

27:3 Judas realized his condemnation and had a change of mind; parallel with Peter (see on 26:74). The difference was that Peter believed in God's grace but Judas wouldn't.

27:5 The way Judas threw down the money suggests he now despised those few coins, for which he had betrayed Jesus and lost his eternal salvation.

27:14 The self controlled silence of Jesus was amazing. May it be our inspiration in times of provocation.

at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ And they had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said to them: Who do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? ¹⁸ For he knew that they had delivered him up out of envy. ¹⁹ And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying: Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Jesus is Condemned

²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. ²¹ But the governor answered and said to them: Which of the two do you want me to release to you? And they said: Barabbas! ²² Pilate said to them: What then shall I do to Jesus who is called Christ? They all said: Let him be crucified! ²³ And he said: Why, what evil has he done?

But they cried out exceedingly, saying: Let him be crucified! ²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying: I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves. ²⁵ And all the people answered and said: His blood is on us and on our children. ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them, but Jesus he scourged and delivered to be crucified. ²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, and the whole battalion gathered around him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. ²⁹ And they plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon his head and a reed in his right hand, and they knelt down before him and mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews! ³⁰ And they spat upon him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they took the robe from him and dressed him in his own garments, and led him away to crucify him. ³² And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Si-

27:17 Pilate appears to genuinely want to save Jesus, and to be the victim of manipulation. Yet history records that he was a conscienceless man who murdered people at will, having no respect at all for justice nor the value of life. The 'contradiction' is only explicable by the strange effect which Jesus' righteousness, love and perfection can have on even the hardest character and most damaged conscience. For the example of Pilate shows that everyone has a conscience.

27:23 This is the same crowd that just recently had been crying "Hosanna!", and whom the Jews feared as supportive of Jesus. We tend to be so fickle in our loyalty to Jesus.

27:25 The fact the Jews said this doesn't mean it happened; for God doesn't punish the children for the sins of their fathers (Ez. 18:1-10).

27:29 There is a set of nerves just beneath the scalp which the thorns would've intentionally pierced as they hit Him on the head with the crown on (:30). Jesus would've been bleeding profusely down His back as a result.

mon by name, whom they forced to carry the cross.

Jesus is Crucified

³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, the place of a skull, ³⁴ they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when he had tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶ And they sat there and watched him. ³⁷ And over his head they put the written accusation against him, which read: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. ³⁸ Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right hand and one on his left. ³⁹ And they that passed by derided him, wagging their heads, ⁴⁰ and saying: You that would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. ⁴¹ In like manner also the chief priests with the Scribes and elders mocked him, saying: ⁴² He

saved others; he cannot save himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God, let Him deliver him now- if He desires him. For he said: I am the Son of God. ⁴⁴ And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach. ⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ⁴⁷ And some of them standing there, when they heard it, said: This man calls Elijah. ⁴⁸ And immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ And the rest said: Let him be. Let us see whether Elijah comes to save him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bot-

27:34 Because He wanted to share completely in our feelings; nobody, therefore, can say that Jesus doesn't know how they feel. Maybe nobody on earth does; but He knows.

27:44 The one thief's repentance was therefore literally a last minute repentance just before he died.

27:46 The Old Testament is clear that God will not forsake those faithful to Him, but will forsake those who sin. Jesus felt forsaken by God. He felt as if He had sinned, even though He hadn't. This was because of the intensity of His association with us who have sinned, just as men like Daniel and Nehemiah spoke and felt to God as if they had sinned Israel's sin. So even when we fail, Jesus still knows how we feel in the separation from God which sin brings. He never sinned, but in His final horror of aloneness He felt as if He had.

27:48 The reeds in that area aren't very long. Therefore Jesus' cross was not that large. The Catholic impressions of a cross towering far above us is wrong. His feet would've been only a metre above the ground; remember how He communicated with Mary and John.

tom; and the earth quaked and the rocks were split. ⁵² And the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ Now the centurion and those that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that happened, were terrified, saying: Truly this was the Son of God. ⁵⁵ And many women were there watching from afar, those who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. ⁵⁶ Among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus is Buried

⁵⁷ And when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded it to be given him. ⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the

rock; and he rolled a great stone as the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. ⁶² Now the next day, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together before Pilate, ⁶³ saying: Sir, we remember that that deceiver said when he was still alive, After three days I will rise again. ⁶⁴ Therefore, command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal him away and say to the people, He is risen from the dead; and so the last error will be worse than the first. ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them: You have a guard. Go make it as secure as you can. ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

CHAPTER 28 Jan. 26 Jul. 27

Jesus is Resurrected

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And there was a great earthquake, for an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ His appear-

27:55 *From Galilee* – The idea is that they didn't just follow Him when the going was good, amidst the crowds of Galilean peasants who thronged Him; but also followed to the cross. We too are to follow the Lamb wherever He leads.

27:56 *Mary the mother of James* – A reference to Mary the mother of Jesus; for He had two half brothers called James and Joses (Mt. 13:55).

27:58 Only close relatives could beg the body of the crucified. But this was how Joseph felt. He wanted to associate the dead body of Jesus with his own dead body, laying Jesus where his body should lay. This was the essence of baptism, whereby we identify ourselves with the death of the body of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5).

28:1 The other Mary is surely a reference to Mary the mother of Jesus – see on 27:56.

ance was as lightning and his garment white as snow,⁴ and for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.⁵ And the angel said to the women: Do not be fearful, for I know you seek Jesus, who has been crucified.⁶ He is not here, for he is risen, even as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay.⁷ And go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and that he goes ahead of you into Galilee. There you shall see him. Look, I have told you.⁸ And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring this message to his disciples.⁹ And Jesus met them, saying: Greetings! And they came and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them: Fear not. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there shall they see me.¹¹ Now while they were going, some of the guard came into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had happened.¹² And when they were assembled with the elders and

had taken counsel, they gave much money to the soldiers,¹³ saying: You are to say that his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept.¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and keep you out of trouble.¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were told; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Jesus Commissions His Disciples

¹⁶ But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.¹⁸ And Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you; and I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

28:7 The Lord's original intention to meet His followers in Galilee (as in 28:10) seems to have been changed. Presumably because even in Divine nature, He was simply so excited and eager to get together with His brethren.

28:8 Women weren't valid witnesses in first century legal circles. But Jesus chose women to be the primary and initial witnesses of His resurrection.

28:17 The doubt and unbelief of the disciples is a strong theme in all the resurrection accounts. Yet these are transcripts of the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles. They were emphasizing how *they* had had difficulty believing these things, and had been incredibly slow and dumb to grasp what had happened. And on this basis their appeal for others to believe had more power to it.

28:19 As the good news of the Lord's resurrection had been spread from the women to the disciples, now it was to be spread by all the disciples worldwide. The Gospel preaching of Matthew concludes with an appeal for baptism. Acts records how people were baptized into the name of Jesus – for the Name of the Father has been given to Him.

28:20 After baptism there was to be a teaching of the baptized person.

MARK

CHAPTER 1 Feb. 5 Aug. 6

John the Baptist

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Look, I send My messenger before your face, he will prepare your way. ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁴ John came and baptized in the wilderness, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ And there went out to him all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem: and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ And John was clothed with camel's hair and had a leather girdle about his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He preached, saying: There comes after me he that is mightier than I, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptized you in water, but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit. ⁹ And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee

and was baptized by John in the river Jordan. ¹⁰ And immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens open and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him. ¹¹ And a voice came out of the heavens: You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased. ¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels took care of him.

Calling the Disciples

¹⁴ Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying: The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. ¹⁶ And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ¹⁸ And immediately they left the nets and fol-

1:3 The way of Jesus was prepared in the wilderness by John baptizing people in the wilderness (:4).

1:5 John baptized in a river – by immersion, not sprinkling of water.

1:7 Truly preaching Christ involves telling others of our own unworthiness.

1:10 *Up out of* – Baptism is by immersion, not sprinkling. Jesus was baptized as an adult to set us an example – that we also should be.

1:12 *Immediately* – Many such words occur in the early chapters of Mark (1:10,18,20,21,28,29,42). The impression is created of a hectic, exhausting time for Jesus with everything moving at high speed. When we're in those situations, remember that He knows how it feels.

1:16 Jesus called them at the most inconvenient time – just as they were casting their nets. But they let the nets sink, v. 18, and followed Him. Jesus too calls us to uphold His principles and do His work often at the most humanly inconvenient moments.

lowed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after him. ²¹ And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ²⁴ saying: What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Nazarene? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are- the Holy One of God. ²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying: Hold your peace and come out of him. ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so much so they questioned each other, saying: What is this? What a new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him! ²⁸ And the report of him went out immediately everywhere into all the region of Galilee and thereabout.

At Simon's Home

²⁹ And immediately, when they had come out of the synagogue,

they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she served them. ³² When evening came, and when the sun had set, they brought to him all that were sick and those possessed with demons. ³³ And all the city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many that were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and he did not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵ And in the morning, a great while before day-break, he rose up and went out, and departed into a deserted place; and there prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. ³⁷ And they found him, and said to him: All are seeking you. ³⁸ And he said to them: Let us go elsewhere, into the next towns, so that I may preach there also; for this is why I came. ³⁹ And throughout all Galilee he went into their synagogues, preaching and casting out demons.

Healing a Leper

⁴⁰ And a leper came to him, begging him as he knelt down before him, saying to him: If you will, you can make me clean. ⁴¹ And being moved with compassion, he stretched out

1:27 The authority and credibility of Jesus' teaching was given by His works. And so with us. Teaching people ideas about God will have little power nor conviction until they see them lived out in our lives.

1:35 This regular quiet time with God at the start of busy days was the key to the Lord's spiritual success, as it can be for ours.

his hand and touched him, and said to him: I will. Be cleansed. ⁴² And immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was made clean; and ⁴³ he immediately sent him away with a stern warning, ⁴⁴ saying to him: See you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news, so much so that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but stayed in deserted places. But still they came to him from every quarter.

CHAPTER 2 Feb. 6 Aug. 7

Healing a Paralyzed Man

After some days, when he entered again into Capernaum, it became known that he was in the house. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even about the door; and he spoke the word to them. ³ And they

came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ And when they could not come near to him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the paralyzed man lay. ⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the paralyzed man: Son, your sins are forgiven. ⁶ But some of the scribes sitting there questioned in their hearts: ⁷ Why does this man speak so? He blasphemes. Who can forgive sins but one- God! ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit what they questioned within themselves, said to them: Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which one is easier to say to the paralyzed man? Your sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, pick up your bed and walk- ? ¹⁰ But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he said to the paralyzed man): ¹¹ I say to you! Arise, pick up your bed and go to your house. ¹² And he arose and immediately picked up

1:41 Touching the leper would've been a very radical thing to do. The man had probably not been touched by a human being for many years. We too should be unafraid to be associated with those whom others are scared of and have rejected.

1:44 Nobody was cleansed of leprosy and so the priests would've been amazed that someone was bringing them the offering proscribed in the Law for a cleansed leper. Jesus would've appeared unrealistically hopeful in thinking that the priests might respond; as they were the very class who were opposed to Him and later killed Him. But His hopefulness for people worked – many of the priests did later repent and accept Him (Acts 6:7).

2:5 The man was healed because of the faith of his friends. To some extent we can save others, obtain their forgiveness or bring about their betterment in this life. As this is the case, we should give ourselves to prayer and caring practical effort for others; for we really can make a difference to the salvation of others.

2:8 Was this ability to read others' minds given to Jesus as a blast of insight from the Holy Spirit? Or was there a process of perception going on, whereby His intense sensitivity to others, even His enemies, enabled Him to know their minds?

the bed, and went out in full view of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying: We have never seen anything like this before!

The Call of Levi

¹³ And he went out again by the sea side; and all the crowd went to him and he taught them. ¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office; and he said to him: Follow me. And he arose and followed him. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, that as he was dining in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many, and they followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples: How is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them: They that are whole have no need of a doctor, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Old and New Wine

¹⁸ And John's disciples and the

Pharisees were fasting; and they came, and said to him: Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? ¹⁹ And Jesus said to them: Can the sons of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them. In that day, they will fast. ²¹ Nobody sews a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. New wine must be put into new wineskins. ²³ And it came to pass, that he was going on the Sabbath day through the grain fields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of grain. ²⁴ And the Pharisees said to him: Look, why do they do on the Sabbath day what is not lawful? ²⁵ And he said to them: Have you never read what David did when he had need and was hungry- he and

2:14 Tax collectors were seen as collaborators with the Romans and were hated. Jesus also called a Zealot, a hard line nationalist terrorist, to His group of followers (Lk. 6:15). The body of Christ is comprised of people very different from each other. Yet our tendency is to attend a church or group comprised of those from our own class, background and personality type. But the body of Christ is so different.

2:16 In 1st century Palestine, to eat with someone was a sign that you fellowshiped them. Jesus ate / fellowshiped with sinners in order to bring them to Him; rather than only fellowshiping those whom He considered fit for His table. His 'table manners' were deeply controversial and offensive to traditional Jews and were a factor in their mad hatred of Him.

2:25 What David did when he was needy and hungry justified what Jesus did; we have an insight here into His poverty.

they that were with him? ²⁶ How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and gave also to those that were with him? ²⁷ And he said to them: The Sabbath was designed for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ Therefore the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.

CHAPTER 3 Feb. 7 Aug. 8

Healing a Withered Hand

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had a withered hand. ² And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day- so that they would have an excuse to accuse him. ³ And he said to the man that had the withered hand: Come here. ⁴ And he said to them: Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil? To save a life, or to kill? But they remained quiet. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man: Stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and his hand was

restored. ⁶ And the Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel against him with the Herodians, how they might destroy him.

Establishing a Core Group of Disciples

⁷ And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea; and a great crowd from Galilee and from Judea followed, ⁸ and from Jerusalem and from Idumaea and on the other side of the Jordan and about Tyre and Sidon, a great crowd, hearing what great things he did, came to him. ⁹ And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, in case they crushed him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many; so much so that as many as had illnesses pressed upon him that they might touch him. ¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried, saying: You are the Son of God! ¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. ¹³ And he went up into the mountain and called to himself whomever he would; and they came

2:28 Jesus is greater than the Sabbath; we don't need to keep the Sabbath today (Col. 2:14-17) because Jesus has fulfilled all the Jewish regulations.

3:2 Jesus appears to have intentionally sought controversy over the Sabbath issue. On some things (e.g. the popular belief in demons) He didn't challenge His audience; but on issues of legalism, He did.

3:10 The desire to touch Jesus and His desire to touch people comes out frequently in the Gospels. People believed that through touching a holy man, they would receive blessing; rather like Catholics and Orthodox travel far to touch relics. Jesus went along with this, but always emphasized that it was faith in Him, and His Father's power, which were responsible for the miracle, and not the touching in itself.

3:13 He alone went up into the mountain and then sent word to His followers to come to Him. They had to make quite some effort to come to Him. He thus filtered out those who really wanted to come to Him from those who were merely inquisitive. He does the same with people today.

to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ And Simon he surnamed Peter. ¹⁷ And James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James he surnamed Boanerges, which means, sons of thunder. ¹⁸ And Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus and Simon the Cananaean, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. And then he went home. ²⁰ And the crowd gathered again, so many people that they could not so much as eat bread. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying: He is out of his mind.

False Allegations from the Scribes

²² And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said: He has Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons he casts out the demons. ²³ And he called them to him, and said to them in parables: How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a family be divided against itself, that family will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but has

an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter into the home of a strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his home. ²⁸ Truly I say to you: All the sins of the sons of men shall be forgiven and their blasphemies with which they shall blaspheme. ²⁹ But whoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is never forgiven but is guilty of an eternal sin. ³⁰ He said this because they had said: He has an unclean spirit. ³¹ And then came his mother and his brothers and standing outside, they sent a message to him, calling him. ³² And a crowd was sitting about him, and they said to him: Look, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you. ³³ And he answered them, saying: Who is my mother and my brothers? ³⁴ And looking round on them that sat round about him, he said: Behold my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.

CHAPTER 4 Feb. 8 Aug. 9

The Parable of the Sower

And again he began to teach by the sea side. There gathered to him a very great crowd, so he entered into a boat and sat in the sea, and all the crowd were gathered along the shore. ² And he taught them many

3:26 *If Satan...* Satan as a personal sinful being doesn't exist [see notes at the end], but Jesus reasoned with them within the frames of their beliefs, even if those beliefs were wrong. He met people where they were, as He does today.

3:33 This must've been *so* painful for Mary to hear. This is one of a number of conflict points between Jesus and Mary during His ministry. It seems she had a mid-life crisis of faith, but returned to full belief after His resurrection. Mary wasn't the sinless superhuman which some believe she was.

things in parables, and said to them in his teaching: ³ Listen! Behold, the sower went forth to sow. ⁴ And it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. ⁸ And others fell into the good ground and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. ⁹ And he said: Who has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁰ And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them: To you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those that are without, all things are done in parables- ¹² that seeing, they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn again and it should be forgiven them. ¹³ And he said to them: Do you not understand this parable? And how will you

understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower, sows the word. ¹⁵ And these by the way side, where the word is sown, represent those who, when they have heard, have Satan immediately come and take away the word which has been sown in them. ¹⁶ And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But they have no root in themselves and only endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they stumble. ¹⁸ Others are represented by those that are sown among the thorns. These are they that have heard the word, ¹⁹ and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰ And these are they that were sown upon the good ground: such as hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

The Purpose of the Parables

²¹ And he said to them: Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a lamp stand? ²² For there is nothing hid,

4:10 Jesus revealed Himself to those who bothered to come to Him and enquire further (as in v. 34) – see on 3:13. Those with a merely passing interest in Him will not find Him.

4:14 The word of God is a seed – we are born again by it, it has the power of life within it (1 Pet. 1:23). The Bible is on one level black print on white paper; but it is so very much more, unique amongst literature to the point that it shouldn't really be classified as 'literature' in the secular sense. God's word gives life to people. It should be our meditation all the day as it was for David (Ps. 119:97).

4:19 Wealth is deceitful in that we think that money can buy all things; it can't.

save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret but that it should come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. ²⁴ And he said to them: Pay attention to what you hear. What measure you use shall be applied to you, and more shall be given to you. ²⁵ For he that has, to him shall be given. And he that has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he has. ²⁶ And he said: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, immediately he puts forth the sickle, because the harvest comes. ³⁰ And he said: To what shall we compare the kingdom of God? Or in what parable shall we set it forth? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the earth, ³² yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes greater than all the herbs, and puts out great branches so that the birds of the sky

can lodge under the shadow of it. ³³ And with many such parables he spoke the word to them, according as they were able to understand it. ³⁴ Without a parable he did not speak to them, but in private he explained all things to his own disciples.

Jesus Calms the Storm

³⁵ And on that day, when evening had come, he said to them: Let us go over to the other side of the lake. ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And there arose a great wind storm and the waves slammed into the boat, so much so that the boat was now filling. ³⁸ And he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke him, and said to him: Teacher, do you not care that we perish? ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace! Be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ And he said to them: Why are you fearful? Do you still not have faith? ⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said to each other: Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!

4:22 If throughout eternity we will be shown to be who we really are, it's senseless to be hypocritical now.

4:24 The measure we apply to God's word will have a recompense. If we pay little attention to it, we will be given little; if we give our mind and life to it, then we will receive an appropriately large recompense.

4:29 As soon as the harvest is ripe, it's harvested. This could mean that once the body of Christ has matured to the level God expects, Jesus will return, and the harvest of judgment will begin.

4:33 Jesus spoke to people as they were able to hear it, not as He was able to expound to them. The fact we know more than some other people doesn't mean we must tell them all we know. We should be sensitive to them and at times restrain our superior knowledge, because our end aim is their spiritual growth to the glory of God.

CHAPTER 5 Feb. 9 Aug. 10***Jesus Heals a Mad Man***

And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when he got out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ³ who had his dwelling in the tombs; no one could any more bind him, even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him, ⁷ and crying out with a loud voice, he said: What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I solemnly implore you by God, do not torment me. ⁸ For Jesus had said to him: Unclean spirit, come out of the man! ⁹ And he asked the spirit: What is your name? And the spirit replied: My name is Legion. For we are many. ¹⁰ And he pleaded earnestly with him not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now there was

there on the mountain side a great herd of pigs feeding. ¹² And they pleaded with him, saying: Send us into the pigs, let us enter into them. ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the hill into the sea and were drowned in the sea. ¹⁴ And they that fed them fled and told it in the city and in the country. And they came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw him who had been possessed with demons, that previously had the legion, sitting, clothed and in his right mind- and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And they that saw it described to them what had happened to him that was previously possessed with demons, and about what had happened to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg him to depart from their borders. ¹⁸ And as he was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with demons pleaded with him that he might go with him. ¹⁹ But Jesus did not permit him. Instead he said to him: Go to your home, to your family, and tell them how great things the Lord has

5:4 The man's illness had bad episodes, it was intermittent. He had thought many times that he was cured of it, that he could be restrained – but then it broke out again. So the herd of pigs were sent over the cliff as a dramatic *aide memoire* which he would never forget, showing how permanent and total was his cure.

5:6 The sick man worshipped Jesus by recognizing Him as Son of God (v.7). And yet, in his illness, he also spoke aggressively to Jesus. But God understands mental illness and focused on the positive, accepting the correct parts of his understanding as “worship”. Men other than Jesus are described as being ‘worshipped’; the fact Jesus also was worshipped doesn’t mean He was God Himself.

5:9 *My name... We are many* – The man was schizophrenic, thinking he was possessed by multiple personalities. The language of demon possession is used to describe mental illness; demons don’t ultimately exist.

done for you and how he had mercy on you. ²⁰ And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis the great things Jesus had done for him, and all men marvelled.

Jesus Heals Jairus' Daughter

²¹ And when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great crowd was gathered to him; and he was by the sea. ²² And there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet, ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying: My little daughter is at the point of death. I beg you to come and lay your hands on her, that she may be made whole and live. ²⁴ And Jesus went with him; and a great crowd followed him, and they pressed upon him. ²⁵ And a woman, who for twelve years had an issue of blood, ²⁶ and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse, ²⁷ having heard the things about Jesus, came from the crowd behind

him, and touched his garment. ²⁸ For she said: If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole. ²⁹ And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her illness. ³⁰ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in himself that the power proceeding from him had gone forth, turned towards the crowd and said: Who touched my garments? ³¹ And his disciples said to him: You saw the crowd pressing upon you and you ask, Who touched me? ³² And he looked around to see who had done this thing. ³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth. ³⁴ And he said to her: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace and be free of your illness. ³⁵ While he was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying: Your daughter is dead. Why do you trouble the Teacher any further? ³⁶ But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, said

5:20 The man was told to go and witness to his family, but instead he went around the 10 cities of the Decapolis preaching. Often when a command is given to preach, God's people don't obey it fully. The command to go and teach the Gentiles wasn't obeyed by the apostles initially – they only went to the Jews. Those told not to tell others of their healing often did. And do we obey the call we have received to share the good news as God wishes?

5:28 The woman had the common idea that merely touching a holy man would give her healing. Jesus didn't refuse her because she understood wrongly; but He explained that it was her faith and not the touch in itself which had cured her (v. 34). See on 7:33.

5:31 The disciples are almost ridiculing Jesus. Yet Mark's account of the Gospel includes this, as if to say to his audience: 'Look how badly we treated the Lord Jesus, how we misunderstood Him, what a low level we were on compared to Him!'. And this integrity, humility and human honesty was what made their message so attractive and credible to their hearers.

to the ruler of the synagogue: Fear not, only believe. ³⁷ And he permitted no one to follow him, save Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ And they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and he saw a tumult, and many weeping and wailing greatly. ³⁹ And when he had entered, he said to them: Why make you a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeps. ⁴⁰ And they laughed him to scorn. But he, having put them outside, took the father of the child and her mother and those that were with him, and went to where the child was. ⁴¹ And taking the child by the hand, he said to her: Talitha cumi, which means, little girl, I say to you, rise! ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³ And he strictly ordered them that no one should know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

CHAPTER 6 Feb. 10 Aug. 11

Jesus in Nazareth

And he left there and went to his own country; and his disciples followed him. ² And on the Sabbath

he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying: Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom given to him? What mighty works are done by his hands! ³ Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended by him. ⁴ And Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, save in his hometown, and among his own kin, and in his own family. ⁵ And there he could not do his mighty work, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

Jesus Sends Out the Disciples

⁷ And he called the twelve and began to send them out in pairs; and he gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸ And he instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a staff. No bread, no wallet, no money in their purse; ⁹ but to go wearing sandals, and not to wear two coats. ¹⁰ And he said to them: Whenever you enter into a

5:40 Jesus was 'laughed to scorn' – implying He had the usual human reactions of embarrassment and awkwardness. He really had our nature.

5:43 Note His thoughtfulness in reminding them to give her something to eat. She'd been dead, so she'd not eaten for some time. This same thoughtful, sensitive Jesus is the same today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

6:1 *His own country* is another indication of Christ's humanity (also in v. 4). He "came to His own" (Jn. 1:11). He had a home area, and spoke with a Galilean accent.

6:3 The translation "carpenter" is unfortunate. The Greek *tekton* can mean any manual worker. He could've been a stonemason or a casual building labourer.

6:10 Jesus loves families and homes, and wanted them to be the nucleus for the new community He was developing.

house as a guest, remain there until you leave town. ¹¹ And whatever place shall not receive you and they will not hear you, as you leave there, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony against them. ¹² And they went out and preached that all should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Herod and John the Baptist

¹⁴ And king Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become well known; and he said: John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these powers work in him. ¹⁵ But others said: It is Elijah; and others said: It is a prophet, even as one of the prophets. ¹⁶ But Herod, when he heard of it, said: It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen. ¹⁷ For Herod himself had had John arrested and thrown into prison to please Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. ¹⁸ For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. ¹⁹ And Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; but she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles,

military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² And when the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests, and so the king said to the girl: Ask of me whatever you will, and I will give it to you. ²³ And he made an oath to her: Whatever you shall ask of me, I will give it to you, to the half of my kingdom. ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother: What shall I ask? And she said: The head of John the Baptist. ²⁵ And she rushed to the king and asked, saying: Here and now, I want you to give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. ²⁶ And the king was exceeding sorry; but for the sake of his oaths and his dinner guests, he could not reject her request. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent a soldier of his guard and commanded that he bring John's head. And the soldier went to the prison and beheaded John, ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ And when his disciples heard of it, they went and took his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

Jesus Feeds 5000 Men

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And he said to them: Come, we shall depart for a deserted place and rest for a while. For there were many coming and going, and

6:12 Repentance means 'a change of mind'. It doesn't as a word necessarily refer to stopping sinning – God is described as 'repenting'. We may be simply too weak to stop sinning; but we can repent in that we change our mind, we strongly repudiate our sins, we try not to do them, our deepest heart is with the Lord and not with the flesh.

they had no leisure time, even to eat.
³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognised them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ And when Jesus came ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when the day was far spent, his disciples came to him and said: The place is deserted and the day is now far spent. ³⁶ Send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat. ³⁷ But he answered and said to them: You give them something to eat. And they said to him: Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat? ³⁸ And he said to them: How many loaves have you? Go and see. And when they knew, they reported: Five loaves and two fishes. ³⁹ And he commanded that all should sit down in groups upon the green grass. ⁴⁰ And they sat down in groups of hundreds or of fif-

ties. ⁴¹ And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke the loaves; and he gave them to the disciples to set before them; and the two fish he divided among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were filled. ⁴³ And they collected twelve basketfuls of leftovers, and also of the fish. ⁴⁴ There were five thousand men that ate the loaves.

Jesus Stills a Storm

⁴⁵ And immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and to go without him to the other side to Bethsaida, while he sent the crowd away. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when evening had come, the boat was in the midst of the sea and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ And seeing they were having difficulty rowing, for the wind was against them, about the fourth watch of the night he went to them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them. ⁴⁹ But they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost and cried out.

6:37 Jesus asks the question to try to elicit faith and spiritual ambition from the disciples. But they couldn't see beyond the immediate problems. The possibility that Jesus could do a miracle and multiply what little bread they had... just didn't occur to them. All they could think of was the cost of buying the bread.

6:41 Blessing and breaking bread, then giving it to the disciples, is so similar to the last supper. Through the breaking of bread, we show our faith in the fact that Jesus provides for our needs.

6:48 Jesus made as if He would walk past them in order to make them cry out to Him for help. Because so far they'd not thought of praying to Jesus for help, because He wasn't with them. He works like that with us today, bringing us into situations which have no human way out, and appears to ignore us – only so that we will pray and call out to Him the more fervently. This is one reason for the apparent silence of God which we find so difficult to accept.

⁵⁰ For they all saw him and were disturbed. But he immediately spoke to them and said to them: Be of good courage! It is I! Be not afraid. ⁵¹ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly amazed, ⁵² because they did not understand the miracle of the loaves; their heart was hardened. ⁵³ And when they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴ And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognised him, ⁵⁵ ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and pleaded with him that they be allowed to touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched him were cured.

CHAPTER 7 Feb. 11 Aug. 12

Controversy with the Pharisees

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had

come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus; ² and they saw that some of his disciples ate with unclean hands, that is, unwashed. ³ The Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they first wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴ and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they first purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze. ⁵ And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him: Why don't your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with unclean hands? ⁶ And he said to them: Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honour me with their lips but their heart is far from me. ⁷ But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men. ⁹ And he said to them: You are good at rejecting the commandment of God so that you can establish your

6:52 They didn't reflect upon the miracle, and so they lacked faith to face the next trial which came along in their lives. The incidents in our lives are arranged by God in a certain order. We are intended to reflect upon the great things He has done in our experience, not just benefit from them and go onwards in life without remembering them or thinking about them. Ingratitude and lack of reflection on life's events are typical of human beings; and we must try to do better.

6:56 They thought that by touching a holy man they would be cured. This is a wrong idea, but Jesus went along with it. See on 5:28.

7:6 Isaiah spoke to the people of his generation, but Jesus says he spoke about those of the first century. God's word is living and relevant and speaks to each of us. Thus the Old Testament ceases to be mere history – it is speaking to us today.

7:7 The fact people worship God doesn't mean they are therefore with God – there's such a thing as worshipping Him in vain, if we have the wrong understanding of Him.

7:9 The Jews would've been shocked to hear that they rejected God's commandments.

tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said: Honour your father and your mother, and, He that speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death. ¹¹ But you say: If a man tells his father or his mother: Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban (that is to say, an offering to God), ¹² you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother- thus ¹³ making void the word of God by your tradition which you have delivered; and you do many similar things.

The Source of Sin

¹⁴ And again he called to him the crowd, and said to them: Hear me all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. ¹⁶ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁷ When he had entered a house away from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them: Are you without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever from without goes into the man, it cannot defile him; ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart but into his belly and is eliminated [this he said, thus making all foods clean].

²⁰ And he said: That which proceeds out of the man is what defiles the man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

Jesus Responds to Requests for Healing

²⁴ From there he arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and wanted no one to know it; but he could not be hidden. ²⁵ But immediately a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. And she pleaded with him to cast out the demon from her daughter. ²⁷ And he said to her: Let the children first be filled, for it is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. ²⁸ But she answered and said to him: Indeed, Lord. But even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. ²⁹ And he said to her: For this saying go your way. The demon is gone out of your

Jesus' generation were one of the most Torah observant there has been in Israel's history. But to follow human tradition as well as God's commandments is to effectively reject them. The Bible presents human failure in very stark terms.

7:11 We shouldn't try to get around God's intentions by legalistic interpretations.

7:18 It's good to try to imagine the tone of voice with which Jesus said these written words. Was it with frustration, anger, sadness or disappointment?

7:19-21 Sin comes from within. The human mind is a constant source of temptation. This is the real 'Satan' or adversary which we face.

7:29 Jesus is so thrilled when people understand correctly.

daughter.³⁰ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.³¹ And again he left from the borders of Tyre and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis.³² And they brought to him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand upon him.³³ And he took him aside from the crowd, and in private put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue;³⁴ and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him: Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.³⁶ And he ordered them that they should tell no one. But the more he ordered them, the more widely they proclaimed it.³⁷ And they were astonished beyond measure, saying: He has done all things well. He even

makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

CHAPTER 8 Feb. 12 Aug. 13

The Feeding of the 4000

In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him, and said to them:² I pity the crowd, because they have continued with me for three days and have nothing to eat.³ And if I send them away to their homes without food, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from far away.⁴ And his disciples answered him: Where shall one be able to find bread for these men here in such a desolate place?⁵ And he asked them: How many loaves have you? And they said: Seven.⁶ And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disci-

7:33 The saliva of Jesus represents His words. The people thought that merely touching a holy man would effect a cure (v. 32). So Jesus shows that actually far more intimate contact with Him is required than mere touch of itself. He puts His fingers in the man's ears and spits onto his tongue. See on 5:28.

7:34 Jesus could pray with eyes open looking up at the sky. Can we do this? He sighed, as He groaned whilst healing Lazarus (Jn. 11:38). This may have been the intensity of His prayer – and even now He prays for us in Heaven with such groaning (Rom. 8:26). In this sense Jesus is the same today as He was then (Heb. 13:8). Or His sighing and groaning may have been the result of how deeply He entered into others' situations, and so longed for the pain of humanity to end.

7:37 *He has done all things well* – Echoes the comment on creation, that it was “very good”. Jesus was and is making a new creation, of people.

8:3 This situation is similar to that of 6:37. Jesus was hoping the disciples would have learnt from the experience they had then of Him multiplying their bread. This is why life situations repeat, in essence; because God plans them all for our spiritual education. We are intended to learn from one experience in order to spiritually succeed the next time that situation occurs. Sadly it seems the disciples didn't learn, just as we often don't.

ples to set before them; and they set them before the crowd. ⁷ And they had a few small fishes; and having blessed them, he commanded to set these also before them. ⁸ And they ate and were filled, and they gathered seven baskets of broken pieces that remained over. ⁹ And they were about four thousand; and he sent them away. ¹⁰ And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went into the region of Dalmanutha. ¹¹ And the Pharisees came and began to question him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, testing him. ¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said: Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, No sign shall be given to this generation. ¹³ And he left them, and again got into the boat and departed for the other side of the lake. ¹⁴ And they forgot to take bread; and they did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. ¹⁵ And he ordered them, saying: Take heed! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. ¹⁶ And they reasoned one with another, saying: It is because we have no bread. ¹⁷ And Jesus perceiving it said to them: Why do you so

reason, because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart so hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes, can't you see? And having ears, can't you hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you gather? They said to him: Twelve. ²⁰ And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces did you gather? And they said to him: Seven. ²¹ And he said to them: How is it that you do not yet understand?

The Identity of Jesus

²² And they went to Bethsaida. And they brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. ²³ And he took hold of the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village; and when he had spat on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴ And he looked up, and said: I see men. But I see them as trees, walking. ²⁵ Then Jesus put his hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And his sight was restored, and he saw everyone clearly. ²⁶ And he

8:12 *No sign* – The four Gospels are parallel accounts of the same incidents. In Matthew's record, we read that Jesus said they would be given no sign *except* the sign of Jonah (Mt. 12:39; 16:4). This shows that we have to read the whole Bible to get the complete message. We have to make some effort to understand. God wants us to read His word carefully, just as we appreciate it when someone listens to us carefully rather than assumes they understand what we're saying when they don't.

8:17 Jesus had twice taught them in the feeding miracles that physical bread is no issue to Him. He was disappointed they hadn't reflected further about this – for they were still thinking about bread on the literal, physical level.

8:23, 25 The two stage healing process was for the man's benefit, not because Jesus was limited in power. The man was given sight, but he had never seen trees nor people before – and so he confused them. He needed to have the gift of understanding / inter-

sent him away to his home, saying: Do not even enter into the village. ²⁷ And Jesus went with his disciples into the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he questioned his disciples, saying to them: Who do men say that I am? ²⁸ And they told him, saying: John the Baptist, and others, Elijah; but others, one of the prophets. ²⁹ And he asked them: But who do you say that I am? Peter answered and said to him: You are the Christ! ³⁰ And he ordered them that they should tell no one about him. ³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he spoke these things openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But he, turning about and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said to him: Get behind me, Satan! For you are mindful of the things of men instead of the things of God. ³⁴ And he called to him the crowd with his disciples, and said to them: If any of you wants to be my follower, let him deny himself and take up his

cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, he shall save it! ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? ³⁷ For what should a man give in exchange for his life? ³⁸ For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

CHAPTER 9 Feb. 13 Aug. 14

The Transfiguration

And he said to them: Truly I say to you: There are some standing here, who shall in no way taste death, before they see the kingdom of God come with power. ² And after six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John and brought them to a high mountain where they could be alone; and he was transfigured before them. ³ And his garments became radiant, exceedingly white, whiter than any launderer could whiten them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they

pretation also. The man was taught by this that even if we are given the one thing we so desire, this isn't enough. We need Jesus to give us understanding.

8:31 This is one of the clearest predictions of Christ's sufferings. Why then did He ask for the cup of suffering to be removed from Him in Gethsemane? He understood from Old Testament examples that God's intended program for a person can be changed by their prayers, and it seems that He tried this. But it also shows that even if we know something in theory, in the heat of the moment our understanding becomes clouded. Jesus was human, but never sinned. Therefore this kind of intellectual failure, even panic, isn't always sinful. It's just part of being human.

8:35 The sake of the Gospel – i.e. preaching the Gospel?

8:38 Jesus even after His resurrection still has the capacity to feel ashamed. We are made in God's image, and so shame on behalf of another is an emotion He also has.

were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus: Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. ⁷ And there came a cloud overshadowing them, and there came a voice out of the cloud: This is My beloved Son. Hear him. ⁸ And suddenly, looking round about, they no longer saw anyone with them, except Jesus. ⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, he ordered them that they should tell no one about the things they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept these words to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. ¹¹ And they asked him: Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? ¹² And he said to them: Elijah indeed comes first and restores all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nothing? ¹³ But I say to you, that Elijah came, and they have also done to him whatever they wanted, even as it is written of him. ¹⁴ And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd about them, and

scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed; and running to him saluted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them: What are you arguing about with them? ¹⁷ And one of the crowd answered him: Teacher, I brought to you my son, who has a dumb spirit. ¹⁸ And wherever it takes him, it dashes him down and he foams and grinds his teeth and pines away: and I spoke to your disciples that they should cast it out, and they were not able. ¹⁹ And he answered them saying: O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I tolerate you? Bring him to me. ²⁰ And they brought him to him, and when he saw him, immediately the spirit tore at him grievously and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ And he asked his father: How long has this been happening to him? And he said: From a child. ²² And often it has cast him both into the fire and into the waters to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. ²³ And Jesus said to him: Rather, if you can! All things are possible to him that believes. ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child

9:7 Hear Him – Judaism so venerates Moses [symbol of the law] and Elijah [symbol of the prophets]. Peter wanted to build booths so that Moses and Elijah would stay; but God tells him of the need to listen to His Son. The cloud and the voice out of the cloud is similar to what happened to Moses in Ex. 34. The Divine voice in the cloud proclaimed the Name and characteristics of Yahweh; now God proclaims His Son. Because Jesus had a perfect character, He manifested the Name of God completely.

9:22 If you can – The man was unsure about the total abilities of Jesus. ‘Do what’s in your power to do’ was his idea. Jesus replies by saying that God’s action in our lives doesn’t depend upon Him, it depends upon us. If we can believe, then everything’s possible. It is us and not God who have our finger as it were on the volume control.

9:24 We both believe and disbelieve at the same time. We don’t have complete faith.

cried out, and said: I believe! Help my disbelief! ²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter no more into him. ²⁶ And having cried out and torn him much, it came out; and the boy became as one dead. So much so that the many said: He is dead. ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had come into the house, his disciples privately asked him: Why could we not cast it out? ²⁹ And he said to them: This kind can come out by nothing except by prayer and fasting.

The Importance of Humility

³⁰ And they went from there and passed through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know it. ³¹ For he taught his disciples, and said to them: The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again. ³² But they did not understand the

saying and were afraid to ask him. ³³ And they went to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them: What were you reasoning about on the way here? ³⁴ But they kept quiet. For they had disputed one with another on the way about who was the greatest. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them: If anyone would be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. ³⁶ And he took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them: ³⁷ Whoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives not me but Him that sent me. ³⁸ John said to him: Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us. ³⁹ But Jesus said: Do not forbid him. For there is no one who shall do a mighty work in my name and then be able straight afterwards to immediately speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For he that is not against us, is for us. ⁴¹ For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because

The man's humility and honesty are impressive. There is no personal Satan figure out in the cosmos; God is in control 100%. But within the human mind, there are desires to do both good and evil. Paul speaks of this in Romans 7. The man here realized this too, by recognizing his belief and disbelief within him. We should recognize it within us, too; and not be phased when we perceive it within others too.

9:34 They argued about who should be the greatest immediately after Jesus had told them of His upcoming death (v. 31). Whenever Jesus told the disciples about His death, they started arguing amongst themselves. They had a psychological barrier to the message of the cross. We tend to also; we would rather become inward looking, compare ourselves against ourselves, rather than against the standard set in the crucifixion of Jesus.

9:38 *In your name* – A disciple of John the Baptist who for some reason didn't want to associate with the Jesus' disciples.

9:40 Here Jesus makes it clear for all time that we should not be exclusive against

you are Christ's- truly I say to you, he shall in no way lose his reward.

Teaching About Offences

⁴² And whoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is good for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having your two hands and to go into Gehenna- into the unquenched fire, ⁴⁴ where their worm does not die and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is good for you to enter into life lame, rather than having your two feet and to be cast into Gehenna, ⁴⁶ where their worm does not die and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out. It is good for you to enter into

the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes and to be cast into Gehenna, ⁴⁸ where their worm does not die and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁹ For everyone shall be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 14 Aug. 15

Teaching About Divorce

And he left there and went into the regions of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. Crowds gathered around him again, and as was his custom he taught them. ² And there came to him Pharisees, who asked him: Is it lawful for a man to send away his wife? They asked this to test him. ³ And he answered and said to them: What did Moses command you? ⁴ And they said: Moses permit-

those who in truth bear His Name (v. 39). If they exclude us, they have made the decision. But we shouldn't exclude them.

9:43 Whatever causes us to stumble on our path to God's Kingdom we must cut out of our lives, although this will be very painful and demands an unusual self-possession and strong will.

9:45 Gehenna was the rubbish dump outside Jerusalem, where the fires were always burning because fresh garbage was always being put onto it. But the individual items thrown onto it were destroyed and turned into dust. Likewise Jerusalem was threatened with the eternal fire of God's anger, due to the sins of Israel: "Then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jer. 17:27). Jerusalem being the prophesied capital of the future Kingdom (Is. 2:2-4; Ps. 48:2), God did not mean us to read this literally. The houses of the great men in Jerusalem were burnt down with fire (2 Kings 25:9), but that fire did not continue eternally. Fire represents the anger/punishment of God against sin, but His anger is not eternal (Jer. 3:12). Fire turns what it burns to dust; and we know that the ultimate wages of sin is death, a turning back to dust. This perhaps is why fire is used as a figure for punishment for sin.

9:47 Who we will eternally be in God's Kingdom is a function of the efforts we have made in this life to cut off our sources of temptation and stumbling.

ted a man to write a bill of divorce-ment and to send her away. ⁵ But Jesus said to them: For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation: Male and female made He them. ⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cling to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh; so that they are no more two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, do not let man divide. ¹⁰ And in the house the disciples asked him about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them: Whoever shall send away his wife and marry another, commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she herself shall send away her husband and marry another, she commits adultery. ¹³ And they were bringing to him little children, that he should touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said to them: Permit the little children to come to me; forbid them not. For to such belongs the kingdom of

God. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no way enter into it. ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

The Rich Young Man

¹⁷ And as he was proceeding along the road, a man ran to him and kneeled before him, and asked him: Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him: Why do you call me good? None is good save one- God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honour your father and mother. ²⁰ And he said to him: Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth. ²¹ And Jesus observing him, loved him; and said to him: One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. ²² But this teaching saddened him,

10:9 Husbands and wives can divide what God has joined together in their marriage by arguing, insisting upon their way, criticizing, attachment to other things or partners. But other people can also divide them by things like manipulating one partner against another, poisoning the mind of one against the other etc.

10:14 Those who enter God's Kingdom will have the characteristics of children – trust, hope, willingness to learn.

10:19 The commandments which Jesus chose to list are all those which can be ticked off as done or not done. The man thought he was legally righteous. But Jesus taught that perfection isn't a matter of legalistic obedience. It's about taking up His cross and following Him.

10:21 By giving our wealth to the poor we are as it were transferring that wealth from earth to Heaven. The invitation to take up a cross was shocking to first century people – for death by crucifixion was the death of criminals, and the cross was despised as a symbol of shame. Jesus is asking us to join Him in a condemned man's last walk to the place of death. Following Him means following Him to death.

and he went away sorrowful. For he was one that had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus looked around, and said to his disciples: How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus continued and said to them: Children! How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁶ And they were astonished exceedingly, saying to him: Then who can be saved? ²⁷ Jesus, observing them, said: With men it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God. ²⁸ Peter began to say to him: We have left all, and have followed you. ²⁹ Jesus said: Truly I say to you. Whoever leaves house, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands for my sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ will receive in return, in this present season, a hundredfold houses and brothers and

sisters and mothers and children and lands, and with them persecutions; but in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many that are first shall be last and the last, first.

Jesus Talks About His Death

³² And they were on the road heading up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve aside, he began to tell them what was to happen to him: ³³ We will go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they shall mock him and shall spit upon him and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again. ³⁵ And there came near to him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying to him: Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we shall ask of you. ³⁶ And he said to them: What would you wish that

10:24 Trusting in riches is paralleled with having riches (v. 23). Having them is the same as trusting in them because this is the very nature of wealth. It's impossible to have it without trusting in it. Yet despite these grave warnings about the spiritual dangers of wealth, many Christians earnestly desire to have it!

10:30 We receive these blessings in the church now, in fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters there. If we chose not to fellowship with others, or if the church is dysfunctional, then these promised blessings won't come true.

10:31 Our society is like an elevator; once you get into it, the thrust is always upwards. People want to be upwardly socially mobile, to improve their position, to get ahead in the race. But the further we get ahead now, the further back we will be eternally.

10:35 Again, straight after the prediction of Christ's death, the disciples start arguing. The message of the cross was so lost on them at that time. And Mark is telling this story to an audience, showing them that the preachers themselves 'didn't get it' initially, and on that humble basis appealing for the hearers to do better than their teachers and 'get it' more quickly.

I should do for you? ³⁷ And they said to him: Grant to us that we may sit, one on your right hand and one on your left hand, in your glory. ³⁸ But Jesus said to them: You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? Or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? ³⁹ And they said to him: We are able! And Jesus said to them: The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. ⁴⁰ But to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it will be given to them for whom it has been prepared. ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him, and said to them: You know that they who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it is not to be so among you; but whoever would become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all; ⁴⁵ for the Son of Man came not to be served by others, but to serve- and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus Heals Bartimaeus

⁴⁶ And they arrived in Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his

disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say: Jesus! You Son of David, have mercy on me! ⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, saying that he should hold his peace. But he cried out more zealously: You, Son of David, have mercy on me! ⁴⁹ And Jesus stood still and said: Call him. And they called to the blind man, saying to him: Be of good courage! Rise, he calls for you! ⁵⁰ And he, casting away his garment, sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And Jesus said: What will you have me do for you? And the blind man said to him: Rabbi- that I may receive my sight. ⁵² And Jesus said to him: Go your way. Your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight and followed him in the way.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 15 Aug. 16

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, ² instructing them: Go into the village in front of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³ And if anyone says

10:40 *Not mine* – Again we see the subjection of Jesus to the Father.

10:43 So we should be looking for opportunities to serve others every day. “Brother, sister, let me serve you” should be the heartbeat of our daily lives.

10:47 *Son of David* – He recognized that the promises to David of a future descendant of David who would also be God’s Son had come true in Jesus (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

10:50 His garment was probably his only possession.

to you: Why are you doing this? You are to say: The Lord has need of him; and immediately he will send him back here. ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And those that stood there said to them: What are you doing, untying the colt? ⁶ And they said to them just as Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus, and put on it their garments; and he sat upon it. ⁸ And many spread their garments upon the road, and others spread branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And they that went ahead and they that followed, cried, Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest! ¹¹ And he entered into Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked at everything, it being now evening, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus and the Fig Tree

¹² And the next day, when they left Bethany, he felt hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf,

he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves- for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Jesus addressed it: Henceforth, no one will eat fruit from you again. And his disciples heard it. ¹⁵ And they came to Jerusalem, and he entered into the temple and began to throw out those that sold and those that bought in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money exchangers and the seats of those that sold the doves. ¹⁶ And he would not permit anyone to carry any merchandise through the temple. ¹⁷ And he taught and said to them: Is it not written: My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves! ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought a way to destroy him. For they feared him, for all the crowd were astonished at his teaching. ¹⁹ And every evening he left the city. ²⁰ And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to him: Rabbi, look at the fig tree which you cursed. It is withered away! ²² And Jesus answering said

11:15 Making money out of religion is so obnoxious to Jesus.

11:16 *Not permit* – Jesus did all this without being stopped; and He did it single-handed. We see here the power of His personality; it was with this same authority that He could command the eager crowds to go home after He had fed them. This was partly a gift from God, but partly a result of His intense focus and strength of mind.

11:17 This prophecy is about the future Kingdom of God. But Jesus understood that we should be living the Kingdom life now. We should do the same; there will be no huge difference between the type of life we now live, and the life we will eternally live. In this sense we “have eternal life” in that we live today the kind of life we will eternally live.

11:22 *Have faith* – They were amazed at *His* faith, but Jesus tells them not to just ad-

to them: Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I say to you, Whoever shall say to this mountain: Be removed and thrown into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that what he said will happen- he shall have it. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you: All things, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you will receive them- and you shall have them. ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, forgive those you have something against; so that your Father who is in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

The Question of Authority

²⁷ And they arrived in Jerusalem. And as he was walking into the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ²⁸ They said to him: By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you authority to do these things? ²⁹ And Jesus said to them: I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ The baptism of

John, was it from Heaven, or from men? Answer me. ³¹ And they reasoned among themselves, saying: If we shall say: From Heaven- he will say: Why then did you not believe him? ³² But if we say: From men- they were in fear of the people. For all truly held John to be a prophet. ³³ And they answered Jesus, saying: We do not know. And Jesus said to them: Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 16 Aug. 17

The Parable of the Vineyard

And he began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it, and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower; and rented it to husbandmen. Then he went into another country. ² And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, so he might receive from the husbandmen the fruits of the vineyard. ³ And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty handed. ⁴ And again he sent to them another servant- and him they wounded in the head and handled shamefully. ⁵ And he sent

mire His faith, as people admire a picture or image of Jesus, but see that His faith and life is to be our pattern. If He had such faith, then His followers also ought to.

11:26 Therefore forgiveness of others is vital for our own salvation. We ask God to forgive us our “secret sins”, those we don’t even recognize we have committed; and therefore we are wiser to forgive others without demanding their repentance.

12:1 God is the vineyard owner, the vineyard is Israel. God did everything so that they might bring forth spiritual fruit; as He does for us. The servants He sent are the prophets.

12:2 *At the season* – there were many times when the harvest could have come; the Kingdom of God could have been established earlier, but God has given us genuine freewill, and so He awaits the time when His people give Him the fruit. This could imply that Jesus will only return once Israel have repented and are giving spiritual fruit to God.

another- and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶ He had one other, a beloved son. He sent him last to them, saying: They will reverence my son. ⁷ But those husbandmen said among themselves: This is the heir! Come, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. ⁸ And they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not read in the scripture: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner? ¹¹ This was from the Lord and it is marvellous in our eyes? ¹² And they sought to arrest him; but they feared the crowd. For they perceived that he had spoken that parable against them; and they left him and went away.

The Jews Try to Trap Jesus with Trick Questions

¹³ And they sent to him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him out in his teaching. ¹⁴ And when they arrived, they said to him: Teacher, we know you are truthful and do not care about

anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them: Why do you test me? Bring me a denarius, that I may look at it. ¹⁶ And they brought it. And he said to them: Whose is this image and inscription? And they said to him: Caesar's. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at him. ¹⁸ And there came to him Sadducees (these say that there is no resurrection) and they asked him: ¹⁹ Teacher, Moses wrote to us: If a man's brother dies and leaves a wife behind him and leaves no children, then his brother should take his wife and raise up seed to his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died leaving no seed. ²¹ And the second took her, and died leaving no seed behind him, and the third likewise. ²² And the seven left no seed. Last of all the woman also died. ²³ In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be? For the seven had her as wife. ²⁴ Jesus said to them: Is not the reason you err

12:7 *This is the heir* – Implies the Jews recognized who Jesus really was (11:28-33 implies the same). The Jewish conscience about Jesus is apparent today too.

12:9 *Others* – The Gentiles.

12:12 Mark emphasizes how “the crowd” were supportive of Jesus (11:18,32; 12:37; 14:2). But this same crowd were soon shouting “Crucify him!”. We must battle against this same fickleness of human nature – to love and adore Jesus one moment, and deny Him the next.

12:17 We are made in God's image and so we should give our bodies and lives to God.

12:24 *You do not know the scriptures* – But they did know them, many could recite the

that you do not know the scriptures, nor the power of God? ²⁵ For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven. ²⁶ But concerning the dead, that they are raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You do err greatly. ²⁸ And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing; and knowing that he had answered them well, he asked him: What commandment is the first of all? ²⁹ Jesus answered: The first is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. ³¹ The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. ³² And the scribe said to him: Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, that He is one and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with

all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him: You are not far from the kingdom of God. And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. ³⁵ And Jesus asked, as he taught in the temple: Why do the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself said in the Holy Spirit: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ³⁷ David himself calls him Lord; and how is he therefore his son? And the common people heard him gladly. ³⁸ And in his teaching he said: Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes and to have salutations in the marketplaces, ³⁹ and the chief seats in the synagogues and chief places at feasts. ⁴⁰ They that devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers, these shall receive greater condemnation. ⁴¹ And he sat down over against the treasury, and watched how the crowd threw money into the treasury; and many that were rich threw in a lot. ⁴² And there came a poor widow, and she threw in two small copper coins,

entire Old Testament from memory. We can know the Bible and yet not know it at all if we don't personally believe in the power of God which it teaches.

12:31 To love our neighbor as ourselves we must love ourselves; in the sense of perceiving our own value and meaning in God's eyes. We all tend in some ways to have too negative a view of ourselves.

12:33 The whole burnt offerings involved every part of the animal being burnt to God. To love God and our neighbour involves giving our entire lives to God; the life of faith can't be a hobby, a book we read occasionally out of interest, a church meeting we occasionally attend, a social circle we move in.

12:40 *Greater condemnation* – there will be degrees of both reward and punishment given to people by Jesus when He returns and judges us.

which make a penny. ⁴³ And he gathered his disciples, and said to them: Truly I say to you, this poor widow threw in more than all they that are throwing money into the treasury. ⁴⁴ For they threw in money they didn't need, but she though needy threw in all that she had- all her livelihood.

CHAPTER 13 Feb. 17 Aug. 18

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple

And as he left the temple, one of his disciples said to him: Teacher, look what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings! ² And Jesus said to him: Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another. All will be thrown down. ³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately: ⁴ Tell us, when will these things occur, and what shall be the sign when these things are about to happen? ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them: Take heed that no one lead

you astray. ⁶ Many shall come in my name, saying, I am he; and shall lead many astray. ⁷ And when you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be disturbed. These things must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there shall be earthquakes in various places, there shall be famines. These things are the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ But be warned. For they shall deliver you up to councils, and in synagogues they shall beat you, and before governors and kings shall you stand for my sake, to bear witness before them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Say whatever shall be given you in that hour, for it is not you that will speak but the Holy Spirit. ¹² And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children shall rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And you

12:43 Jesus was very observant to notice those two coins going into the box. He is the same today – He notices the quiet devotion and sacrifice for Him which nobody else does. This is why He teaches against doing good deeds which others see, and was so against how the Scribes behaved (12:39).

13:2 This chapter, known as the Olivet prophecy, gives signs which were fulfilled immediately before the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD70. However it is clear that Jesus was also thinking about the signs which would be seen in Israel and the world leading up to His return. We can therefore say that what happened in AD70 is a type of our last days.

13:8 *Birth pains* – The bringing to birth will be when Jesus returns and we are fully 'born again' and enter His Kingdom with immortal nature (Jn. 3:3-5). Living in the last days just before He returns will therefore be a painful and frightening time for the believers.

13:10 The quicker we preach the Gospel to all nations, the quicker the end will come.

13:13 It seems the believers will be persecuted in the last days.

shall be hated by all for my name's sake; but he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. ¹⁴ But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not (let him that reads understand), then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ And let him that is on the housetop not go down, nor enter in to take anything out his house. ¹⁶ And let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ But alas for women who are pregnant, and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ And pray that it is not in the winter. ¹⁹ For those days shall cause distress, such as there has never been similar, from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be again. ²⁰ And except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved; but for the elect's sake, which He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone shall say to you: Look, here is the Christ! or Look! There he is!- do not believe them. ²² For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead

astray (if possible) the elect. ²³ But be warned, I have told you all things beforehand. ²⁴ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, ²⁵ and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. ²⁶ And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then shall he send the angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. ²⁸ Now from the fig tree learn its lesson. When its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. ²⁹ So you also, when you see these things happening, you will know that he is near- at the doors. ³⁰ Truly I say to you: This generation shall not pass away, until all these things happen. ³¹ Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away. ³² But of that day or that hour knows no one except the Father, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son. ³³ Be warned, watch and pray. For you do not know

13:18 The actual timing of events in both AD70 and in the last days can be affected by our prayers.

13:19 This alludes to Dan. 12:1, which speaks of a "time of trouble such as never was" for Israel. This means that a situation worse than the Nazi holocaust must yet happen to Israel. We can therefore expect world opinion to increasingly turn against the Jews.

13:24,25 Sun, moon and stars are used in the Bible as symbols for the rulers of a nation, especially Israel (Gen. 37:9).

13:32 If God knows something which Jesus doesn't, then Jesus can't be God Himself.

13:33 We cannot know the exact time when Jesus will return; therefore we must watch [be alert] and pray. Ignore the various claims that we can work out from Bible prophecy which year Jesus will return in.

when the time is. ³⁴ Like a man going on a journey; on leaving his house, he puts his servants in charge, each according to his assigned tasks. He also commands the gatekeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake. For you do not know when the lord of the house comes, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. ³⁶ In case he comes suddenly finding you asleep. ³⁷ what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!

CHAPTER 14 Feb. 18 Aug. 19

The Anointing of Jesus

Now it was two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might arrest him using trickery and kill him. ² For they said: Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. ³ And while he was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of ointment of pure nard—very expensive. She broke the vial and poured it over his head. ⁴ But there were some

that had indignation among themselves, saying: For what purpose has this waste of the ointment been made? ⁵ For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred denarii and given to the poor. And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said: Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work upon me. ⁷ For you have the poor always with you, and whenever you want you can do them good, but me you do not have always. ⁸ She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for the burying. ⁹ And truly I say to you: Wherever in the whole world the gospel shall be preached, what this woman has done shall be spoken of as a memorial to her. ¹⁰ And Judas Iscariot, he that was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests, that he might betray him to them. ¹¹ And they, when they heard it, were glad; and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Jesus Prepares to Eat the Passover

¹² And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the

13:34 *Assigned tasks* – Each of us has a specific part within the body of Christ. If you don't know what it is, what God's hope of you and expectation of you is, then pray to find out.

13:37 *Stay awake* – But according to the parable of Mt. 25:5, even the faithful in the last days will fall asleep. We will be saved by grace.

14:5 The lesson is not to have a utilitarian approach to life. If our love of Jesus is strong, we will feel like doing things which others consider senseless and not sensible. But do them.

14:8 That woman perceived that Jesus was going to die; she had heard and believed Jesus' predictions about this. But the disciples had tuned out those predictions. Mark is showing in his preaching of the Gospel how slow the preachers had been to 'get it' themselves. And this gave the preaching more appeal and credibility.

Passover, his disciples said to him: Where will you have us prepare for you the Passover to eat? ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them: Go into the city and there you shall meet a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him. ¹⁴ And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house: The teacher asks, where is the guest room in which I can eat the Passover with my disciples? ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare it for us. ¹⁶ And the disciples went into the city and found as he had said to them. And they made ready the Passover. ¹⁷ And when it was evening he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they sat and were eating, Jesus said: Truly I say to you, one of you shall betray me- even he that eats with me. ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one by one: Is it I? ²⁰ And he said to them: It is one of the twelve. He that dipped in the dish at the same time with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes, even as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born.

The Last Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread and when he had blessed it, he broke it and gave it to them, and said: Take, eat, this is my body. ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And he said to them: This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly I say to you: I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God. ²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them: All of you shall fall away. For it is written: I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. ²⁸ However, after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. ²⁹ But Peter said to him: Although all shall fall away, I will not! ³⁰ And Jesus said to him: Truly I say to you, yes to you today, that this night, before the cock crows twice, you shall deny me three times. ³¹ But Peter said emphatically: Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same.

14:13 Women and not men were the water carriers. This person was one of Jesus' followers; the liberation of women within the teaching and practice of Jesus was one of the factors which led to the explosion of Christianity amongst first century women.

14:19 At the breaking of bread, we should examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28). This was prefigured by how the disciples each asked Jesus "Is it I [who will betray you]?"; and by how the Jews had to search their homes for yeast [representing sin] before they ate the Passover.

14:29 There is a tradition, and also some internal evidence, that Mark was writing down Peter's account of the Gospel. Although Mark is the shortest Gospel, the account of Peter's denials is most detailed in Mark. This shows how Peter was focusing upon his own weaknesses as he retold the Gospel; as we should.

Jesus in Gethsemane

³² And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples: Sit here while I pray. ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them: My soul is exceeding sorrowful even to death. Stay here and watch. ³⁵ And he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. ³⁶ And he said: Abba, Father, all things are possible for You; remove this cup from me. However, not as I will but what You will. ³⁷ And he returned and found them sleeping, and said to Peter: Simon, why do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he returned and found them sleeping. Their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he returned a third time and said to them: Sleep on now and take your rest. It is enough. The hour comes, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Arise! Let us be going. He that betrays me is nearby. ⁴³ And immediately, while he yet spoke, Judas

came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders bearing swords and staves. ⁴⁴ Now he that betrayed him had given them a signal, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he. Take him and lead him away safely. ⁴⁵ And when he arrived, immediately he came to him and said: Master, Master; and kissed him. ⁴⁶ And they arrested him and took him away. ⁴⁷ But one of the disciples that was standing nearby drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them: Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching and you did not arrest me; but this is done that the scriptures might be fulfilled. ⁵⁰ And all the disciples left him and fled. ⁵¹ And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him. ⁵² But he left the linen cloth and fled naked.

The Trial of Jesus

⁵³ And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and there came together all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and

14:36 ‘Abba’ has been interpreted as meaning ‘Daddy’. This is how close Jesus felt to God; and we can also.

14:37 *One hour* – His brief prayer of 14:36 took one hour to pray. We read those words too quickly.

14:51 Was this young man Peter (see v. 54)? Jesus speaks of him as “young” in Jn. 21:18.

warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council sought evidence against Jesus to put him to death, and did not find it. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying: ⁵⁸ We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. ⁵⁹ But not even then did their testimony agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in their midst and asked Jesus: Do you answer nothing? What is this that these witnesses say against you? ⁶¹ But he held his peace and said nothing. Again the high priest questioned him, saying: Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? ⁶² And Jesus said: I am, and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. ⁶³ And the high priest tore his clothes and said: What further need have we of wit-

nesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy. What think you? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death. ⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him and to cover his face, striking him and saying to him: Prophesy! And the guards took him and beat him with their hands.

Peter's Denials

⁶⁶ And as Peter was downstairs in the courtyard, there came one of the maids of the high priest. ⁶⁷ And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said: You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus! ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying: I neither know, nor understand what you say; and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. ⁶⁹ And the maid saw him and began again to say to them that stood by: This is one of them! ⁷⁰ But he again denied it. And after a little while, again they that stood by said to Peter: Of a truth you are one of them; for you are a Galilean. ⁷¹ But he began to curse and to swear

14:68 *The cock crew* – Peter should've seen the warning sign. Did he psychologically ignore it; or did he resolve that next time he would not fail? He should've removed himself from temptation; but like us so often, he didn't. He, like us, thought he was stronger than he was.

14:68 He “went out” from the Lord. “Went out” is the language of Judas going out (Jn. 13:30 – in essence, Peter and Judas did the same thing at the same time). Other prototypes of the rejected likewise had gone out from the Lord. Cain “went out” (Gen. 4:16), as did Zedekiah in the judgment of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:4; 52:7). Esau went out from the land of Canaan into Edom, slinking away from the face of his brother Jacob, sensing his righteousness and his own carnality (Gen. 36:2-8). Yet Peter in this life “went out” from the Lord and then some minutes later further “went out and wept bitterly” (Lk. 22:62), living out the very figure of condemnation – and yet was able to repent and come back. In this life we can be judged, condemned, weep...but still repent of it and thereby change our eternal destiny. But at the final judgment: it will be just too late. That ‘judgment’ will be a detailed statement of the outcome of the ongoing investigative judgment which is going on right now.

under oath: I do not know this man of whom you speak. ⁷² And immediately the second time the cock crew. And Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him: Before the cock crows twice, you shall deny me three times. And as he thought upon it, he wept.

CHAPTER 15 Feb. 19 Aug. 20

The Trial Before Pilate

And immediately in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole council, made their decision and bound Jesus and took him away and delivered him up to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? And he answering said to him: So you say. ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And

Pilate again asked him: Have you no answer to make? See how many accusations they make against you. ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate marvelled. ⁶ Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man named Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And Pilate answered them saying: Will you have me release to you the King of the Jews? ¹⁰ For he knew that because of envy the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, that instead he should release Barabbas to them. ¹² And Pilate again an-

14:72 *Three times* – Mark’s record of the Lord’s trial is not merely a historical account. It’s framed in terms of our need to testify for our faith too. The Lord’s example in His time of suffering was and is intended to be our example and inspiration, in that we are to in a very practical sense enter into His sufferings. Mark records the Lord’s prediction that His people would have to witness before both Jewish and Gentile authorities (Mk. 13:9-13) – and then Mark goes on in the next chapter to describe Jesus doing just this. The Lord asked His suffering followers not to prepare speeches of self-defence – perhaps exemplified and patterned for us in the way that He remained silent before His accusers. Peter is recorded as denying Christ three times – just as the Romans interrogated Christians and asked them to three times deny Christ. The Christians were also asked to curse, or *anathematizein*, Jesus. And when we read of Peter’s cursing, the same word is used. We’re left with the impression that Peter actually cursed Christ. And so Mark, who was likely writing the Gospel on Peter’s behalf, is showing that Peter, the leader of the church, actually pathetically failed to follow his Lord at this time. And yet the Gospel of Mark was being distributed to Christians who were being dragged before Jewish and Roman courts. The idea was surely to give them an example and encouragement from Peter’s failure, rather than portray a positive example of a man overcoming the temptation to curse and deny Christ. But this was how the Lord used Peter – as an example from failure for all of us.

15:10 Envy and jealousy were the real reasons why Jesus was killed. Every time we suffer from them, we are fellowshipping the sufferings of Jesus. If we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him. This is what the symbol of baptism shows – we go under the water, but come up out of it with Christ.

swered and said to them: What then shall I do to him whom you call the King of the Jews? ¹³ And they cried out again: Crucify him! ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them: Why? What evil has he done? But they cried out exceedingly: Crucify him! ¹⁵ And Pilate, wishing to calm the crowd, released to them Barabbas and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. ¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute

him: Hail, King of the Jews! ¹⁹ And they hit his head with a rod and spat upon him, and kneeled down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple cloak and dressed him in his own garments. And they led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

²¹ And they compelled a passer-by to carry his cross, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² And they brought him to the place named Golgotha, which means, Place of the skull. ²³ And

15:15 The moment of the Lord being delivered over by Pilate is so emphasized. There are few details in the record which are recorded verbatim by all the writers (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:25; Jn. 19:16). The Lord had prophesied this moment of handing over, as if this was something which He dreaded (Mk. 9:31; 10:33); that point when He was outside the legal process, and must now face His destruction. The Angels reminded the disciples: "Remember *how* he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men" (Lk. 24:6,7). The emphasis is on "*How*", with what passion and emphasis. Rom. 4:25 makes this moment of handing over equivalent to His actual death: "Who was *delivered* (s.w.) for our offences, and raised again for our justification". So much stress is put on this moment of being delivered over to crucifixion. The Gospel records stress that Pilate delivered Him up; but in fact God did (Rom. 8:32); indeed, the Lord delivered Himself up (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25). Always the same word is used. These passages also stress that He delivered Himself up, and was delivered up, *for us*. It was our *salvation* which motivated Him at the moment of being delivered up. Perhaps it was at that moment that He had the greatest temptation to walk through the midst of them and back to Galilee. As the crowd surged forward and cheered, knowing they'd won the battle of wills with Pilate..." take ye him and crucify him" ringing in His mind...this was it. This was the end.

15:22 John says that the Lord went out bearing His cross. Luke says that Simon was asked to carry the hinder part of the cross behind Him. Matthew and Mark say Simon carried the cross. Mk. 15:22 (Gk.) says that the soldiers carried Jesus to Golgotha. J.B. Phillips renders it: "They got him to a place Golgotha". It would seem that the Lord collapsed, perhaps fainting. If He was crucified on an olive tree (excavations of crucified men suggest this is what was used), it would not have been simply because of the weight of the stake. Take a picture of Him lying there, with the face that was marred more than the children of men pressed into the hot dust of that Jerusalem street. And

they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not accept it. ²⁴ And they crucify him and part his garments among themselves, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read: The King of the Jews. ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right hand and one on his left. ²⁸ And the scripture was fulfilled, which said: And he was numbered with the transgressors. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying: Ha! You that

would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself and come down from the cross! ³¹ In like manner also the chief priests mocked among themselves and the scribes, saying: He saved others. Himself he cannot save! ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so we may see and believe! And they that were crucified with him ridiculed him. ³³ And when the sixth hour had come, darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which means: My God, my God, why have

some human fool probably said something like ‘Come on, get up’ (doubtless with embellishments). If indeed He did faint, there would have been that sense of ‘coming round’, the “Where am I?”, the memory and consciousness flooding back. “Have I died and been resurrected?” No, as some nameless soldier kicked Him and told Him to get up.

15:23 Significantly, very few actual details are given by the Gospel writers of both the scourging and the crucifixion. It could be that they felt it impossible to dwell upon these things; or it could be that they and their readers knew what was involved in these practices, and we are left to dwell upon them in our own imagination. We are intended to reconstruct in our own minds what may have happened... We have a solemn duty towards Him to do this. This is perhaps why the tenses change so dramatically in the records. Take just Mk. 15:23-26: “They offered...they crucify...and part...casting lots...crucified...was written”. These arresting changes are surely to encourage us to re-live it all. Mark speaks of “they crucify him”, going on to say that “then are there two crucified with him” (Mk. 15:25 RV), whereas Luke records the act in the past tense. Mark’s present tenses are arresting: “plaiting...they clothe him...they smote...” (Mk. 15:17,19 RV). Perhaps Mark is seeking consciously to make us imagine it all as going on before our eyes.

15:34 Mt. 27:46 says that at “*about* the ninth hour, Jesus cried” those words about being forsaken. Mark says it was *at* the ninth hour, and we know it was at the ninth hour that Christ uttered His final words of victory. Yet it must have been only a few minutes before the ninth hour when Christ faltered; hence Matthew says that it was “*about* the ninth hour”. What is a few minutes? Only a few hundred seconds, only moments. Only moments before the sweetness of the final victory, “It is finished” or accomplished, the Son of God was faltering. The conclusion is that *at the very last moment* our Lord faltered. It was 11:59, into injury time, and He faltered. Enter, *please*, into the sense of crisis and intensity. This is the only time that he prays to God as “God” rather than

you forsaken me? ³⁵ And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said: Look, he calls Elijah. ³⁶ And one ran and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a rod and gave it to him to drink, saying: Leave him be. Let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down. ³⁷ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the veil of the temple was torn in two- from the top to the bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw how he breathed his last breathe, he said: Truly this man was the Son of God.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴⁰ And there were also women watching from afar, among whom were both Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; ⁴¹ who, when he was in Galilee, had also followed him and ministered to him; and many other women that also had come with him up to Jerusalem. ⁴² And when evening had come, because it was the Preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a councillor of honourable rank, who also was looking for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ And Pilate

wondered if he were already dead, and called the centurion. He asked him whether he was already dead. ⁴⁵ And when it was confirmed by the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where he was laid.

CHAPTER 16 Feb. 19 Aug. 21

The Resurrection

And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun was risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were talking among themselves: Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us? ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled aside. ⁵ And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them: Do not be

“Father” / *abba*. This itself reflects the sense of distance that enveloped Him. For He was your Lord and your Saviour hanging there, it was your salvation which hung in the balance. The more we appreciate this wavering at the last minute, the more fully we will appreciate the wonder of the final victory.

16:3 The women who came to the tomb weren't looking for the risen Lord; they came to anoint the body. But their love of the Lord was counted to them as seeking Him (Mt. 28:5). The Bible is full of how God counts people as righteous although they are not. This is what love is, in some ways. As God counts us as righteous, so we should recognize that our weak brethren are counted righteous by Him.

alarmed. You seek Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here! See the place where they laid him! ⁷ Go tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goes ahead of you into Galilee. There shall you see him, just as he told you. ⁸ And they went out and ran from the tomb. Trembling and astonishment had come upon them, and they said nothing to anyone. For they were afraid. ⁹ Now when he had risen from the dead early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹ And they, when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, disbelieved. ¹² And after these things he was manifested in another guise to two of them as they walked on their way into the countryside. ¹³ And they went away, and told it to the rest, who did not believe them either. ¹⁴ And later he was

manifested to the eleven themselves as they were eating; and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those that had seen him after he had risen. ¹⁵ And he said to them: You are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieves shall be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall accompany them that believe- in my name shall they cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues, ¹⁸ they shall pick up snakes, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no way hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. ¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen.

16:7 Jesus was so concerned for the spiritual welfare of Peter, the one who had denied Him. The risen Lord especially wanted the women to tell *Peter* that He was ‘going before him’ to Galilee – with the implication that even in his weakness and dejection, He wanted Peter to still try to follow Him and re-live the cross in his life. We who also deny Jesus can take comfort from this loving concern He has even for us. And we can learn to treat others who fail likewise.

16:16 Baptism is therefore very important if we wish to be saved.

16: 17 The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given in the first century, but they were later withdrawn (1 Cor. 13:8).

LUKE

CHAPTER 1 Mar. 10 Sep. 9

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, ² even as they delivered them to us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ³ it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

The Conception of John the Baptist

⁵ There was in the days of Herod, king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah, and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elisabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷ And they had no child, because Elisabeth was barren and they both were now well stricken in years. ⁸ Now it came to pass, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the

temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole crowd of the people were praying outside in the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² Zacharias was disturbed when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him: Fear not, Zacharias, because your prayer is heard; your wife Elisabeth shall carry a son and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you shall have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord. And he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall be turned to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. ¹⁸ And Zacharias said to the angel: How shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years. ¹⁹ And the angel answering said to him: I am Gabriel who stands

1:6 Zacharias was "blameless" in God's sight, even though in this very period of his life he was in some ways lacking faith that his prayers would be answered. He was counted by God as righteous – "righteous before God".

1:13 He had prayed so long for a child that maybe it became a formality and he couldn't believe the answer had come. Our prayers may be heard and answered, but it may take years for the answer to be delivered. And all that time we think God's not answered. Daniel had a similar experience in Daniel 10.

1:19 Angels are sent all the way from God's presence to earth in order to answer our

in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you these good tidings. ²⁰ And you shall be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. ²¹ And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² And when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, and he continued making signs to them and remained dumb. ²³ And it came to pass, when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. ²⁴ And after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying: ²⁵ Thus has the Lord done to me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men.

The Conception of Jesus

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city

of Galilee, named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came in to her and said: Greetings, you that are highly favoured, the Lord is with you! ²⁹ But she was greatly disturbed at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary. For you have found favour with God. ³¹ And you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. ³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be, seeing I do not know a man? ³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her: The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow

prayers. A guy standing at a bus stop praying to God can call forth an Angel to be sent to earth in answer to his prayers.

1:30 *Found favour* – She had the spiritual ambition to ask to be the mother of Messiah. Hence her reaction was joy rather than “Oh no! I’m pregnant without a husband!”. And she was likely an illiterate, barefoot teenager. She was of low social status (:48,53).

1:32 *Shall be* – Note all the future tenses. Jesus didn’t pre-exist as a person before His birth. Jesus was “conceived” within Mary (v. 31). He didn’t literally come down from Heaven as a person. He began inside Mary. David was his father or ancestor because Mary too was an ordinary woman, who was in the line of David. Jesus only became God’s Son when He was born (v. 35). The Son of God therefore didn’t exist from creation, as the false doctrine of the Trinity requires.

1:35 The Holy Spirit is paralleled with the power of “the Most High”. The Holy Spirit refers to God’s power; it isn’t a person. God is “the highest”, and therefore neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit are equal to Him; they are lower than Him as He is the highest.

you. Therefore also the holy thing which is begotten within you shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And Elisabeth your kinswoman, she who was called barren, has in her old age also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month of her pregnancy. ³⁷ For no word from God shall be void of power. ³⁸ And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it unto me according to your word! And the angel departed from her. ³⁹ And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elisabeth. ⁴¹ And it came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the baby jumped within her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the baby jumped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord. ⁴⁶ And Mary said: My soul

does magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸ because He has looked upon the low estate of His handmaid. For from this time forward all generations shall call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For He that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is His name, ⁵⁰ and His mercy is to generations and generations on them that fear Him. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart, ⁵² He has put down princes from their thrones and has exalted them of low station in life. ⁵³ The hungry He has filled with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has given help to Israel His servant, that He might remember mercy ⁵⁵ (as He spoke to our fathers) toward Abraham and his seed for ever. ⁵⁶ And Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned home.

The Birth of John

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ And her neighbours and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified His mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ And it came to pass on the eighth day, that

1:36 Often God arranges that someone else, e.g. a family member, has a similar experience to us – so that by fellowship with them we can find comfort and encouragement.

1:46 Mary's song is full of allusion to the song of Hannah when she was enabled to conceive Samuel (1 Sam. 2). Although she was illiterate, she knew her Bible well. She had memorized it and felt herself into it. She saw the similarities between herself and Hannah. We too should ponder Scripture and see the similarities between ourselves and others we read of there, so that they become our heroes and inspirations.

1:53 The rich Jewish women no doubt wanted to be mother of Messiah. But God delights to work through the low, poor and humble who love His word.

they came to circumcise the child, and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of the father, ⁶⁰ but his mother answered and said: No, he shall be called John. ⁶¹ And they said to her: There are none of your kindred that are called by this name. ⁶² And they made signs to his father, what he wanted him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, saying: His name is John. And they all marvelled. ⁶⁴ And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵ And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What then shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him. ⁶⁷ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying: ⁶⁸ Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David ⁷⁰ (as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been since the world began), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, ⁷² to show mercy towards our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant. ⁷³ The

oath which He spoke to Abraham our father, ⁷⁴ to grant to us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. ⁷⁶ Yes, and you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High. For you shall go before the presence of the Lord to make ready His ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, when the sunrise shall dawn upon us, ⁷⁹ to shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace. ⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the desert until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

CHAPTER 2 Mar. 11 Sep. 10

The Birth of Jesus

Now it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This census first took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to register themselves, everyone to his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because

1:74 Zacharias shared the common Jewish misunderstanding of Messiah as the One who would bring salvation from the Romans. But it's also possible to understand his words spiritually, in terms of our freedom from sin. A faithful man can still hold misunderstandings, and God didn't reject him because of it.

1:77 If we really feel God's forgiveness, then we know salvation; but such wonderful experience comes from appreciating the seriousness of our sins. The proud and self-righteous have no feeling for the wonder of God's forgiveness.

he was of the house and family of David) ⁵ to enrol himself with Mary, who was engaged to him, being great with child. ⁶ And it came to pass, while they were there, the time came that she should give birth. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. ⁸ And there were shepherds in the same region staying in the field and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were terrified. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them: Be not afraid. For I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign to you: You shall find a baby wrapped in birth clothes and lying in a manger. ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a crowd of the heavenly host praising God, and saying: ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those in whom He is well pleased. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other:

Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. ¹⁶ And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they told people about the saying which was spoken to them about this child. ¹⁸ And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken to them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ And Mary treasured up all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, just as it had been spoken to them. ²¹ And after eight days, when he was circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which name was given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Simeon and Anna Meet Jesus

²² And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of

2:7 From birth, Jesus knew rejection from men; for surely somebody could have found a better bed for a heavily pregnant woman. When we experience rejection, He knows how we feel.

2:8 Shepherds were one of the most despised classes in Palestinian society. But God chose to use them as the witnesses to the birth of His Son.

2:15 *That has come to pass* – Faith is believing what we can't see but what has been revealed to us by God's word. The shepherds are a classic example of faith. Therefore the shepherds rejoiced because their faith had been rewarded – they found everything exactly as had been said and as they had believed (v. 20). This was and is the joy of faith rewarded.

the Lord: A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. ²⁵ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, ²⁸ then he took him into his arms and blessed God, and said: ²⁹ Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ which You have prepared before the presence of all peoples; ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel. ³³ And his father and his mother were marvelling at the things which were spoken concerning him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against. ³⁵ Yes, and a sword shall pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. ³⁶ And there was one Anna, a

prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, ³⁷ and she had been a widow eighty four years. She departed not from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up to worship at that very same hour, she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all those that were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. ³⁹ And when they had accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

Jesus at Twelve Years Old

⁴¹ And his parents went up every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to the tradition of the feast. ⁴³ And when they had finished the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not. ⁴⁴ Supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and then they looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ And when they did not find him, they

2:32 *A light for revelation* – The Gentiles will only see that light if we reveal Him to them in our witness.

2:35 When the spear pierced the side of Jesus, the heart of Mary was pierced too as she watched. Our reaction to the cross is that the thoughts of our hearts are revealed. Hence the breaking of bread service, when we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus, is a time for self-examination because quite naturally the thoughts of our hearts are revealed as we stand before the cross (1 Cor. 11:28).

returned to Jerusalem, seeking him.
 46 And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions. 47 And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when they saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him: Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. 49 And he said to them: How is it you searched for me? Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house? 50 And they did not understand what he spoke to them. 51 And he left with them and went to Nazareth, and was subject to them; and his mother treasured all these sayings in her heart. 52 And Jesus developed both in wisdom and body, and in favour with God and men.

CHAPTER 3 Mar. 12 Sep. 11

The Preaching of John the Baptist

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² in the highpriesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³ And he came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: The voice of one crying, In the wilderness make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked paths shall become straight, and the rough

2:47 Jesus would've had a natural aptitude for His Father's words. He would've searched for His Father just as any child does for the father they have never seen. As God's Son, His intellect would've been surpassing. His exposition of Scripture at 12 would've been very mature. Note His humility, though, in asking questions – of the men who later would hate and murder Him.

2:48 *Your father...* Jesus rebukes her by saying that she should've guessed that He was to be found in the house of God, His true Father (v. 49). Mary had become so used to the idea of Joseph being the father of Jesus that she had perhaps lost the intensity of persuasion she had when the Angel visited her 13 years ago – that Jesus' Father was God. Time and the incorrect views of others about Jesus and God can likewise make us view them as the world around us does.

2:52 The growth of Jesus in favour with God makes a nonsense of Trinitarian claims. Likewise His growth in wisdom and knowledge is understood quite naturally if we accept Him as God's begotten Son. "God the son" and "Trinity" aren't found in the Bible.

3:5 The leveling of the wilderness is symbolic. Those who were proud like the mountains were brought down low, and those with too negative a view of themselves, as low as the valleys, were lifted up to a higher level. The key in all this was repentance and acceptance of the reality of God's forgiveness and acceptance.

ways smooth. ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. ⁷ He said to the crowds that went out to be baptized by him: You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you, that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹ And even now, the axe also lies at the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bring forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. ¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, saying: What then must we do? ¹¹ And he answered and said to them: He that has two coats, let him give to him that has none, and he that has food, let him do likewise. ¹² And there came also tax collectors to be baptized; and they said to him: Teacher, what must we do? ¹³ And he said to them: Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.

¹⁴ And soldiers also asked him, saying: And we, what must we do? And he said to them: Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages. ¹⁵ And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he was the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered, saying to them all: I indeed baptize you with water, but there comes he that is mightier than I, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to untie. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ Whose fan is in his hand, to cleanse his threshing-floor thoroughly, and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire. ¹⁸ With many other appeals he preached good tidings to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for marrying Herodias his brother's wife, and for all the evil things which Herod had done, ²⁰ also added this, that he locked John up in prison.

3:8 Repentance isn't a matter of words so much as actions, or "fruit". Baptism is part of our process of repentance and forgiveness; but we must attempt to change in practice too.

3:8 *To say within yourselves* – The Bible focuses upon and addresses our internal and very private thought processes. Verse 15 also talks about how people reasoned within themselves. This is the essence of Christianity – to change our spirit, the way we think deep within. The real 'Satan' or adversary is our own innermost mind, and not any external cosmic being.

3:14 John didn't tell the soldiers to stop being soldiers, but to act within moral principles. God meets us where we are, calls different people in different states, and asks them within their contexts to act accordingly. But the military shouldn't be the occupation of choice for a Christian.

3:17 The idea of gathering wheat and destroying the chaff is the language of the final judgment, when Jesus returns. But Jesus was ready to begin that at His first coming. All believers down the centuries have therefore lived in the expectation of His imminent judgment coming; we should live constantly with the awareness that Jesus may return today.

The Genealogy of Jesus

²¹ Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also having been baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in a bodily form as a dove, and a voice came out of heaven: You are My beloved Son. In you I am well pleased. ²³ And Jesus, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was legally reckoned) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷ the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Jesus, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Symeon, the son of Judas, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the

son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, ³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

CHAPTER 4 Mar. 13 Sep. 12***The Wilderness Temptations***

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² being tempted by the Devil for forty days. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were completed, he was hungry. ³ And

3:20 *Added this* – God doesn’t just switch off watching sinners keeping on sinning. Each and every sin is a felt offence against Him, even if performed by Gentile unbelievers. His sensitivity to sin is amazing, and we should live our lives before Him recognizing it.

3:21 *Jesus also* – The idea is that Jesus was baptized along with all the other people, by full immersion as an adult. If He was baptized, so should we be.

4:1-8 See comments on Matthew 4 and notes about Satan at the end.

4:3 Jesus answers the three temptations with three quotations from Deuteronomy. Those quotations are close to each other – twice from Deuteronomy 6 and once from Deuteronomy 8. These passages were in the context of Israel being 40 years in the wilderness, tested by God and tempted to be disobedient to Him. Jesus perceived the similarities with Himself – 40 days in the wilderness, tested by God and tempted,

the Devil said to him: If you are the Son of God, command these stones that they become bread. ⁴ And Jesus answered him: It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. ⁵ And he led him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the Devil said to him: To you will I give all this authority and the glory of them. For it has been delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. ⁷ Therefore, if you will worship me, it shall all be yours. ⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him: It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. ⁹ And he led him to Jerusalem, set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: He shall give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you, ¹¹ and on their hands they shall carry you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. ¹² And Jesus answering said to him: It is said, you shall not test the Lord your God. ¹³ And when the Devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Jesus in Nazareth

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and the news about him went out throughout all the region. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. ¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And there was delivered to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, ¹⁹ to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. ²⁰ And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them: Today has this scripture been fulfilled in your hearing. ²² And all bore him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said:

led by "the Spirit" (v. 1) as Israel were led by an Angel. We too should look for the similarities between our positions and those of others we read about in the Bible. The more we are familiar with the Bible text, the more easily in times of crisis will we find strength and find warning and encouragement directly for us. This is why we should persevere in Bible reading even if at the time we don't understand or feel any immediate benefit. Slowly, God's word becomes a living word, speaking directly to us.

4:15 The popularity of Jesus was huge. But He knew what people were like (Jn. 2:25) and so He avoided the pitfalls of success and popularity. We should handle any popularity or success in the way He did. His focus was upon glorifying God, getting that job done, and whether we stand with our backs to the world or have adulation of men, that must be our focus.

Is this not Joseph's son? ²³ And he said to them: Doubtless you will say to me this proverb: Physician, heal yourself. Whatever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in your hometown. ²⁴ And he said: Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own hometown. ²⁵ But of a truth I say to you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land. ²⁶ And to none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. ²⁸ And they were all filled with anger in the synagogue as they heard these things. ²⁹ And they rose up and threw him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. ³⁰ But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

Jesus in Capernaum

³¹ And he came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was

teaching them on the Sabbath day. ³² And they were astonished at his teaching; for his word was with authority. ³³ And in the synagogue, there was a man that had a spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice: ³⁴ Leave us alone! What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! The Holy One of God! ³⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying: Hold your peace and come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt. ³⁶ And amazement came upon all, and they spoke together, one with another, saying: What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out. ³⁷ And there went a rumour concerning him into every place of the region round about. ³⁸ And he rose up from the synagogue and entered into the house of Simon. And Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of him concerning her. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever; and it left her, and immediately she rose up and served them. ⁴⁰ And when the sun was setting, they brought to him all

4:23 *Heal yourself* – Did Jesus have some physical weakness, illness or deformity? He had “no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2).

4:27 There were no lepers healed in Israel in Elisha's time. The young Israelite maid who told her Syrian mistress that Elisha was able to cure leprosy was therefore speaking in faith, the faith which believes what hasn't yet been seen (2 Kings 5:3).

4:30 Jesus was therefore able to escape persecution and personal harm. He could've escaped from the cross. This was His agony in Gethsemane. But He resisted that temptation and willingly gave His life for us.

4:35 Jesus rebuked a demon and then rebuked a fever (v. 39). ‘Demons’ was the language of the day for illnesses.

that were sick with various diseases; and he laid his hands on everyone of them and healed them. ⁴¹ And demons also came out from many, crying out and saying: You are the Son of God! But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. ⁴² Now when it was day, he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought him and came to him, and tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said to them: I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for this is why I was sent. ⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 14 Sep. 13

The Call of the Disciples

Now it came to pass, while the crowd pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. ² And he saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. And he sat down and taught the crowds out of the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon: Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.

⁵ And Simon answered and said: Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets. ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great many fishes; and their nets were breaking. ⁷ And they beckoned to their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. ⁹ For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken. ¹⁰ And so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon: Fear not. From this time forward you shall catch men. ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him.

Jesus Cures a Leper and a Paralyzed Man

¹² And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, that there was a man full of leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. ¹³ And he stretched forth his hand and touched him, saying: I will. Be made clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him, ¹⁴ and he ordered

5:5 Fishermen don't like being told by carpenters what to do; they 'know it all' about their trade. So Peter had to humble himself to obey Christ's word just as we do; it goes against the grain of our natural instincts.

5:10 Success in preaching, like (in this instance) Peter's success in fishing, comes from obeying Christ's word, being guided by that rather than our natural instincts. We may appear fools in the eyes of men by doing so.

him: Tell no one, but go your way and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing according as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. ¹⁵ However, the report went around concerning him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he withdrew himself into the desert and prayed. ¹⁷ And it came to pass on one of those days that he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who had come out of every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ And men brought on a bed a man that was paralyzed; and they sought to bring him in and to lay him before him. ¹⁹ But not finding by what way they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went to the housetop and let him down through the tiles with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. ²⁰ And seeing their faith, he said: Man, your sins are forgiven you. ²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying: Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? ²² But Jesus, perceiving their reasoning, answered and said to them: Why reason you so in your hearts? ²³ Which

is easier to say: Your sins are forgiven; or to say: Arise and walk? ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he said to him who was paralyzed): I say to you, arise and take up your bedding and go to your house. ²⁵ And immediately, he stood up before them, picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶ And they were all amazed, and they glorified God; and they were filled with fear, saying: We have seen strange things today.

The Need for Change

²⁷ And after these things he went and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and said to him: Follow me. ²⁸ And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him. ²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and of others that were dining with them. ³⁰ And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying: Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners? ³¹ And Jesus answering said to them: They that are in health have no need of a doctor, but they that are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. ³³ And

5:16 If Jesus needed to make time to be alone with God, so do we. It may require us to set the alarm clock 10 minutes earlier each morning.

5:20 Jesus knew they wanted a healing. But first He forgave the man's sins – to show that physical benefit from association with Him is secondary to the forgiveness of our sins. That is our primary and greatest need.

5:31 We are the sick, in need of healing. We will therefore never be ready or good enough for God. We shouldn't delay being baptized or not serve God because we feel we are spiritually sick. It is for us that He died.

they said to him: The disciples of John fast often and make supplications, likewise also the disciples of the Pharisees; but your disciples eat and drink. ³⁴ And Jesus said to them: Can you make the wedding guests fast, while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵ But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; then will they fast, in those days. ³⁶ And he spoke also a parable to them: No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment, else he will tear the new, and also the piece from the new will not agree with the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wine-skins, or else the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilt, and the skins will perish. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins. ³⁹ And no one having drunk old wine immediately then desires new wine; for he says: The old is good.

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 15 Sep. 14

Sabbath Controversies

Now it came to pass on a Sabbath that he was going through the

grain fields; and his disciples plucked the ears and ate, rubbing them in their hands. ² But certain of the Pharisees said: Why do you do what is unlawful on the Sabbath day? ³ And Jesus answered them, saying: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and they that were with him? ⁴ How he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him? ⁵ And he said to them: The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath. ⁶ And it came to pass on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ And the scribes and Pharisees watched him closely, whether he would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against him. ⁸ But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man that had his hand withered: Rise up and stand in the midst. And he arose and stood. ⁹ And Jesus said to them: I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm? To save a life,

5:35 Are we fasting because we want Jesus, the bridegroom, to return? Fasting doesn't only mean abstaining from food; fasting means forgiving people and trying to ease the weight of the burdens they carry (Is. 58:6).

5:39 Jesus here recognizes the basic conservatism of human nature; real change is so hard for us.

6:4 Jesus compared those who follow Him to the priests. We are all priests within the new community Jesus has established (1 Pet. 2:9). We all have responsibility for the spiritual welfare of each other; we are not to leave it to a class of specialists to care for them.

6:7 Do you feel in some contexts that everything you do is being watched critically by someone? Jesus knows how you feel.

6:9 Jesus speaks of omitting to do good (in this case, healing the man) as doing harm and destroying life. Sins of commission aren't the only sins; sins of omission are as bad as proactively murdering or harming someone.

or to destroy it? ¹⁰ And he looked round about on them all, and then said to him: Stretch out your hand. And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Jesus Calls and Teaches His Disciples

¹² And it came to pass in these days that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. ¹³ And when it was day, he called his disciples, and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles. ¹⁴ Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became the betrayer. ¹⁷ And he came down with them and stood on a level place; and a great crowd of his disciples, and a great number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon,

came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. ¹⁸ And they that were disturbed with unclean spirits were healed. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power went out from him and healed them all. ²⁰ Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples, and said: Blessed are you poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed are you that hunger now; for you shall be filled. Blessed are you that weep now; for you shall laugh. ²² Blessed are you, when men shall hate you, and when they shall reject you, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy; for your reward is great in heaven. For in the same manner did their fathers treat the prophets. ²⁴ But woe to you that are rich! For you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you, you that are full now! For you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now! For you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you, when all men shall speak well of you! For in the same manner did their fathers do to the false prophets. ²⁷ But I say to you that hear: Love

6:11 *Rage* – Often acts of goodness provoke anger in others; they look at us with an evil eye because we have done good. This often happened to Jesus (Mt. 20:15). This kind of spiritual jealousy led to His death, and we will face it too.

6:19 Healing people was so demanding upon Jesus; He felt the power going out of Him (as in 8:46). If we feel exhausted by serving others – Jesus has ‘been there’.

6:20-22 It's paradoxical that Christians want to be happy, wealthy, popular and well fed. We may take a second job or a very demanding one which leaves us no time or energy for Divine things – just because we want to ‘buy’ those very things which we are blessed if we don't have. This is a huge inversion of values.

6:23 *Is great* – God is watching our lives closely, and sacrificing things for His sake means we accrue some ‘reward’ immediately with Him. Salvation is a gift, by grace. But the nature of who we will eternally be is a function of the degree of sacrifice and service we have achieved in this life.

your enemies, do good to them that hate you, ²⁸ bless those that curse you, pray for those that mistreat you. ²⁹ To him that hits you on the cheek offer also the other, and from him that takes away your cloak- withhold not your coat also. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back; ³¹ and as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise. ³² For if you love those that love you, what praise do you have? For even sinners love those that love them. ³³ And if you do good to those that do good to you, what praise do you have? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those of whom you hope to receive, what praise do you have? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and you shall be sons of the Most High. For He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. ³⁷ Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be

condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. ³⁸ Give; and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they pour into your lap. For with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you again. ³⁹ And he spoke also a parable to them: Can the blind guide the blind? Shall they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is perfected, shall be as his teacher. ⁴¹ And why do you see the splinter that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam that is in your own eye? ⁴² Or how can you say to your brother: Brother, let me cast out the splinter that is in your eye- when you yourself do not perceive the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite! Cast out first the beam out of your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to cast out the splinter that is in your brother's eye. ⁴³ For there is no good tree that brings forth corrupt fruit, nor a corrupt tree that brings forth good fruit. ⁴⁴ For each tree is known by its own fruit. For from thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush do

6:29 When Jesus was struck on the cheek He asked "Why do you smite me?" (Jn. 18:23). He didn't literally offer His other cheek. So we must interpret this in principle rather than literally.

6:32 Let's think what acts of love we can do today to those who do *not* love us and will not recompense us.

6:38 *They* – The Angels at the day of judgment. For this doesn't come true in this life.

6:40 We will be "perfected" when Jesus returns and we are given God's nature (Heb. 11:40). Then, we will be like Jesus. 'We shall be like *Him*' (1 Jn. 3:2). The wonder of the Kingdom will not simply be that we won't die – but that we will be like Jesus, with His love, sensitivity, authority, ability to talk with God with no barriers between... Oh how rich the promise.

6:41 If Jesus was a carpenter, He may have thought up this idea one day whilst working, with His mind always on the things of God.

they gather grapes. ⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ⁴⁶ And why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do the things which I say? ⁴⁷ Everyone that comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you to whom he is like. ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when the flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it; because it had been founded upon a rock. ⁴⁹ But he that hears and does not do is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation, against which the stream broke- and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 16 Sep. 15

A Centurion’s Servant Cured

After he had ended all his sayings in the ears of the people, he entered into Capernaum. ² And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and at the point of death. ³ And when he heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, pleading with him to come and

heal his servant. ⁴ And they, when they came to Jesus, pleaded earnestly, saying: He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation and he built our synagogue. ⁶ And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him: Lord, trouble not yourself. For I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; ⁷ therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to you. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers; and I say to one: Go! And he goes. And to another: Come! And he comes. And to my servant: Do this. And he does it. ⁹ And when Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that followed him: I say to you, I have not found so great a faith, not even in Israel. ¹⁰ And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant healed.

Jesus Raises a Dead Man

¹¹ And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² Now when he came near to the gate of the city, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and

6:45 We may think that we’re clever enough to think evil of a person but say nice things to their face. The culture of niceness is no more than hypocrisy, and God will judge it. Our thoughts *will* eventually be reflected in our words. We must change our hearts and not our outward appearances.

7:6 *I am not worthy* – But the people said openly that he was “worthy” (v. 4). Even if others think and speak well of us, let us not think that we are worthy of Jesus; but always maintain our sense of sinfulness and humility before Him.

she was a widow; and many people of the city were with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her: Weep not. ¹⁴ And he came near and touched the coffin; and the bearers stood still. And he said: Young man, I say to you, arise. ¹⁵ And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. ¹⁶ And fear took hold of all, and they glorified God, saying: A great prophet has arisen among us, and God has visited His people! ¹⁷ And this report about him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

Jesus Gives His Opinion About John

¹⁸ And the disciples of John told him of all these things. ¹⁹ And John calling to himself two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, asking: Are you he that comes, or look we for another? ²⁰ And when the men came to him, they said: John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask: Are you he that comes, or do we look for another? ²¹ In that hour he cured many of diseases and illnesses and evil spirits, and on many that were

blind he bestowed sight. ²² And he answered and said to them: Go and tell John the things which you have seen and heard. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is he, whoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me. ²⁴ And when the messengers of John had departed, he began to say to the crowds concerning John: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? ²⁵ But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft clothing? Look, they that are gorgeously apparelled and live delicately, are in kings' courts. ²⁶ But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is he of whom it is written: Look, I send My messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way before you. ²⁸ I say to you, among those that are born of women- there is none greater than John. Yet he that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he. ²⁹ When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they ac-

7:14 To touch coffins or dead bodies made a person unclean under Jewish law; but Jesus touched lepers and now touched the coffin to show His identification with the unclean. Those who realize they too are unclean will be comforted by this.

7:19 This could imply a collapse of faith in John. He doubted whether his cousin Jesus really was Messiah as he had earlier taught; because Jesus wasn't acting as he had expected Messiah to act. God and Jesus are not to be defined by our expectations of them; but we are to accept them for who they present themselves to be in reality. Hence Jesus sent a message back to John warning him that blessed is that man who doesn't stumble over Jesus (v. 23). The Bible records the failings of great men of faith. There are no white faced saints. Although John was weak at this point, Jesus goes on to speak very positively of him in v. 28. We should also be positive about each other despite being aware of each others' weaknesses.

knowledge of God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.³⁰ But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized by him.³¹ And the Lord said: Unto whom shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like?³² They are like children that sit in the marketplace and call to each other, who say: We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.³³ For John the Baptist came eating no bread nor drinking wine, and you say: He has a demon.³⁴ The Son of Man comes eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!³⁵ But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Jesus at the Home of Simon

³⁶ And one of the Pharisees requested him to eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house and sat down to the meal.³⁷ And a woman who was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he was dining in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,³⁸ and

standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.³⁹ Now when the Pharisee that had invited him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying: This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that touches him, that she is a sinner.⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him: Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said: Teacher, speak.⁴¹ A certain lender had two debtors. The one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty.⁴² When they had nothing with which to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?⁴³ Simon answered and said: He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said to him: You have rightly judged.⁴⁴ And turning to the woman, he said to Simon: Saw you this woman? I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wetted my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss

7:30 if we refuse to be baptized, this is what we are doing.

7:32 The children invited other children to play sad funerals, and they refused; so they asked them to play happy weddings, and they still refused. God appealed to all kinds of people through the different style of Jesus and John; but the Jews refused to really respond.

7:35 *All her children* – Both the converts of Jesus and of John.

7:43 The point is that we are all sinners and so the amount we owe is really the degree to which we perceive our sinfulness. The more we realize our sins, the more we will love Jesus for forgiving us.

7:44 Jesus therefore spoke with His back to Simon. He was being intentionally rude to His host to emphasize the degree to which He accepted and respected that repentant woman.

my feet. ⁴⁶ My head with oil you did not anoint, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, that her sins, which are many, are forgiven (for she loved much). But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. ⁴⁸ And he said to her: Your sins are forgiven. ⁴⁹ And they that sat at food with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that even forgives sins? ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman: Your faith has saved you. Go into peace.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 17 Sep. 16

The Parable of the Sower

And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God; and companying with him were the twelve, ² and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to them out of their means. ⁴ And when a great crowd came together, and they of every city had come to him, he

spoke by a parable: ⁵ The sower went to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷ And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸ And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried: He that has ears to hear, let him hear. ⁹ And his disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ And he said: To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest the parables remain as parables; so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. ¹¹ Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the way side are they that have heard; then comes the Devil and takes away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; but these have no root, they for a while believe, but in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ And that which fell among

7:48 She already knew this, without Jesus having told her, because she loved Him so much. And He observed that her love was because she had been forgiven so much. When we are forgiven, we're not always told so directly by Jesus; but we feel it, as she did.

8:3 Jesus attracted a group of poor men and wealthy women. He calls very different people into contact with Him and therefore each other, making the true church of Jesus an example of extraordinary unity; it's not composed of just one psychological type, one social class, colour, race or gender. It's a wonderful mixture. It's the very opposite of a social club, which attracts the same types together.

8:8 *He cried* – Jesus so desperately wanted – and wants – people to understand His teaching.

the thorns, these are those that have heard, but as they go on their way, they are choked with cares and riches and the pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵ And that in the good ground are those with an honest and good heart, who having heard the word, hold it fast and bring forth fruit with patience. ¹⁶ Nobody, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed; but puts it on a stand, so that they that enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hid, that shall not be revealed; nor anything secret, that shall not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Take heed therefore how you hear. For whoever has, to him shall be given; and whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he thinks he has.

Jesus Calms the Storm

¹⁹ And there came to him his mother and relatives; and they could not come to him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And it was told him: Your mother and your relatives stand outside, desiring to see you. ²¹ But he answered and said to them: My mother and my relatives are these that hear the word of God and do it. ²² Now it came to pass on one of those days that he boarded a boat, he and his disciples, and he said to them: Let us go over to the other side of the lake. And

they cast off. ²³ But as they sailed, he fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filling with water; and were in danger for their lives. ²⁴ And they came to him and woke him, saying: Master, master, we perish! And he awoke, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ And he said to them: Where is your faith? And being afraid they marvelled, saying to each other: Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?

The Healing of Legion

²⁶ And they arrived in the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ And when he had arrived upon the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had demons, and for a long time he had worn no clothes and abode not in any house, but in the tombs. ²⁸ And when he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said: What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me. ²⁹ For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him, and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the chains

8:16 If we hide our spiritual light, it will go out. Witnessing to our faith is for our benefit as well as that of those who receive our preaching.

8:21 Do we perceive our spiritual family as even more significant for us than our natural family? This is very hard to do, as hard as it was for Jesus to speak as He did here.

8:28 If Jesus is Son of the Most High God, then He cannot be equal to God in a Trinitarian sense; for God is the *most* high.

apart, he was driven by the demon into the desert. ³⁰ And Jesus asked him: What is your name? And he said: Legion. For many demons had entered into him. ³¹ And they begged him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain, and they begged him that he would give them leave to enter into them. And he gave them permission. ³³ And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine, and the herd rushed down the hill into the lake and were drowned. ³⁴ And when the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and reported it in the nearby town and in the countryside. ³⁵ And they went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man, from whom the demons had left, sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus; and they were afraid. ³⁶ And they that saw it told them how he that was possessed with demons had been healed. ³⁷ And all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into a boat and returned. ³⁸ But the man from whom

the demons had left pleaded with him that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying: ³⁹ Return to your family, and declare what great things God has done for you. And he went his way, publishing throughout the whole city how great were the things Jesus had done for him. ⁴⁰ And when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him. For they were all waiting for him.

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl

⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue; and he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged him to come into his house. ⁴² For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age; and she was dying. But as he went, the crowds crushed him. ⁴³ And a woman who had suffered from chronic bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood upon doctors and could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴ came behind him and touched the border of his garment; and immediately her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said: Who is it that touched me? And when all denied, Peter and they that were with him said: Master, the crowds press upon you and crush you. ⁴⁶ But Jesus

8:32 Keeping pigs was illegal for Jews as pigs were unclean animals.

8:42 Often we have been rushing to do something very important, and then somebody or something else demands our attention. The phone rings as we are rushing out of the door; a child insists upon having our attention as we are in the middle of an important conversation. In those moments of frustration, remember Jesus here. How calm He was, never flustered; how caring for people, to the point that He never ultimately ignored anyone's genuine need.

8:45 Jesus knew who had touched Him. But He wanted the woman to come out openly in front of the crowd and declare her faith. Jesus works in our lives to ensure that we openly declare our faith before the world, even when we try not to.

said: Someone did touch me. For I perceived power going out from me. ⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people for what reason she touched him, and how she was healed immediately. ⁴⁸ And he said to her: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace. ⁴⁹ While he yet spoke, there came one from the house of the ruler of the synagogue, saying: Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher. ⁵⁰ But Jesus hearing it, responded: Fear not. Only believe, and she shall be made whole. ⁵¹ And when he came to the house, he did not permit anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John and James, and the father and mother of the girl. ⁵² All were weeping and bewailing her, but he said: Weep not. For she is not dead but sleeps. ⁵³ And they laughed at him with scorn, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he, taking her by the hand, called, saying: Little girl, arise. ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned and she rose up immediately, and he commanded that something be given

her to eat. ⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but he ordered them to tell no one what had been done.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 18 Sep. 17

The Twelve are Sent Out to Preach

And he called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. ² And he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ And he said to them: Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money. Neither have two coats. ⁴ And into whatever house you enter, there stay and from there depart. ⁵ And as many as do not welcome you, when you depart from that city, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them. ⁶ And they departed and went throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. ⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done; and he was very worried, because of what was said by some, that John had risen from the dead; ⁸ and by some, that Elijah had appeared, and by others, that one of the old

8:50 Fear is the opposite of faith.

8:54 *Taking her by the hand* – Jesus knew the girl would be scared when she woke up alive, without any human touch. We see His total faith that the miracle would happen; and also His extreme sensitivity to people, how He thought ahead to how they were going to feel. Likewise with His command to get her something to eat. May His sensitive spirit be ours, always thinking ahead to how others will be feeling in response to events.

9:2 The frequent connection between preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing was because the healings were foretastes of how things would be when the Kingdom of God is established upon earth.

9:5 Jews were supposed to shake off the dust of Gentile areas from their feet. Jesus is saying that the Jews who didn't accept Him were no better than Gentiles. If we reject Christ, we will be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:28).

prophets had arisen. ⁹ And Herod said: John I beheaded, but who is this, about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him.

Jesus Feeds 5000 Men

¹⁰ And the apostles, when they had returned, declared to him what things they had done. And he took them and withdrew to a city called Bethsaida. ¹¹ But the crowds knew it, and they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and those that had need of healing he cured. ¹² And the day began to wear away; and the twelve came and said to him: Send the crowd away, that they may go into the villages and countryside and lodge and get provisions. For we are here in a deserted place. ¹³ But he said to them: You give them something to eat. And they said: We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless we go and buy food for all these people. ¹⁴ For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples: Make them sit down in groups, about fifty in each. ¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶ And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them and broke them, and gave them to the disciples

to set before the crowd. ¹⁷ And they ate and were all filled, and there was taken up of the leftovers twelve baskets.

Jesus Talks Privately with the Disciples

¹⁸ And it came to pass, as he was praying alone, that his disciples joined him; and he asked them, saying: Who do the crowds say that I am? ¹⁹ And they answering said: John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and others, that one of the old prophets has risen. ²⁰ And he said to them: But who do you say that I am? And Peter answering said: The Christ of God. ²¹ And he ordered and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²² saying: The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and the third day be raised up. ²³ And he said to all: If anyone would follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life shall lose it, but whoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit his life? ²⁶ For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed

9:12 Jesus preached in a “deserted place” so that the people had to make some effort to go to Him. We have to make some effort on our part to hear the word of God, even though salvation is of grace.

9:18 *Praying alone* – We must find time to pray alone, and not have a prayer life which is simply saying “Amen” to the prayers of others.

9:23 *Daily* – We should rise each day and remind ourselves that we are to pick up the cross of Jesus, accompanying Him on His ‘last walk’ to death. How we start each day is important.

9:24 How can we lose our lives for His sake today?

when he comes in his own glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you a truth: There are some that stand here, who shall in no way taste death, until they see the kingdom of God.

The Transfiguration

²⁸ And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter, John and James and went up into the mountain to pray.

²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered and his garment became white and dazzling. ³⁰ And talking with him were two men, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. ³³ And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus: Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us

make three booths, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Not knowing what he said. ³⁴ And while he said these things, there came a cloud that overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered into the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is My Son, My chosen. Hear him. ³⁶ And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone. And they kept quiet and told no one in those days any of the things which they had seen. ³⁷ And it came to pass, the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸ And a man from the crowd cried, saying: Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son; for he is my only child. ³⁹ And a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. ⁴⁰ And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not. ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said: O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall

9:35 *Hear Him* – Alluding to the prediction of Dt. 18:15 that the faithful would hear the voice of the Messiah. This Old Testament prophecy is quoted about Jesus in Acts 3:22. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about Himself; He was “the word made flesh” (Jn. 1:14).

9:37 We also at times ‘come down from the mountain’ of intense spiritual experience to face the crowds of this world, lack of faith, human need and argument. We may have a wonderful Sunday service, but have to return into the world on Monday or Sunday evening. In those moments, remember Jesus went through the same. He understands.

9:39 *Bruising him* – The child bruised himself, as in v. 42 “dashed him”. The language of demon possession simply refers to mental illness, in this came epilepsy and self-harm.

9:41 *How long?* – This is a phrase often found on the lips of God’s people in the Bible. We long for the day when human weakness will be no more, when Jesus has returned and established His Kingdom on earth.

I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here. ⁴² And as he was coming, the demon dashed him down and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all astonished at the majesty of God. But while all were marvelling at all the things which he did, he said to his disciples: ⁴⁴ Let these words sink into your ears. For the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men. ⁴⁵ But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

Who is the Greatest?

⁴⁶ And there arose a dispute among them, which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷ But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child and set him by his side, ⁴⁸ and said to them: Whoever shall receive this little child in my name receives me, and whoever shall receive me, receives Him that sent me. For he that is least among you all, the same is great. ⁴⁹ And John answered and said: Master, we saw one casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he follows not with us. ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him: Forbid not. For he that is not against you is for you.

The Challenge of the Cross

⁵¹ Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵² and sent messengers before his face; and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. ⁵³ But they did not receive him, because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said: Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did? ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them, saying: You know what kind of Spirit you have. ⁵⁶ And they went to another village. ⁵⁷ And as they were going along the road, someone said to him: I will follow you wherever you go. ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. ⁵⁹ And he said to another: Follow me. But he said: Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. ⁶⁰ But he said to him: Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but you go and publish the kingdom of God. ⁶¹ And another also said: I will follow you Lord, but first permit me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. ⁶² But Jesus said to him: No one, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

9:51 In Luke, Jesus is described as always ‘going up to Jerusalem’ even when He was going geographically away from it. We too may take two steps backwards at times, but our overall direction is ultimately towards God’s Kingdom.

9:60 At times, Jesus is very demanding. To bury your father was seen as a Jew’s greatest domestic obligation. But Jesus and His work must come first.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 19 Sep. 18***The Sending of the 70***

Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two by two ahead of him into every city and place, where he was about to go. ² And he said to them: The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He send out labourers into His harvest. ³ Go your way. See, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. ⁵ And into whatever house you shall enter, first say: Peace to this house. ⁶ And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it, but if not, it shall return to you. ⁷ And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give. For the labourer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ And into whatever city you enter, if they welcome you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick that are therein, and say to

them: The kingdom of God comes near to you. ¹⁰ But into whatever city you shall enter and they do not welcome you, go out into the streets of it and say: ¹¹ Even the dust from your city, that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God comes near. ¹² I say to you, it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. ¹³ Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, shall you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. ¹⁶ He that hears you hears me; and he that rejects you rejects me, and he that rejects me rejects Him that sent me. ¹⁷ And the seventy returned with joy, saying: Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name! ¹⁸ And he said to

10:2 The harvest of people for God's Kingdom will not be reaped if there aren't enough workers or we work poorly. The salvation of others has therefore been delegated to us, to some extent. Let's go and reap the harvest and pray that others will assist the work.

10:3 Jesus was "the lamb of God"; in our preaching Him, we are Him to this world. And so in the context of their preaching work in the world, Jesus called His followers "lambs". The principle is stated in v. 16 – whoever hears us hears Jesus personally.

10:4 *Greet no one* – Greetings in the East took a long time. Jesus didn't intend them to be rude, but to be urgent about their mission, and dispense with niceties to fulfill it. Do we have that intensity and urgency about our preaching the Gospel?

10:13 *They would have repented* – God knows all possible futures and possible pasts, and His Son had some of this ability. This knowledge of 'what could have been' must give God such huge sadness; for the reason why we weep is because of our sense of 'what could have been'. It must be so hard being God.

10:18 Jesus has just used the figure of falling from Heaven to earth in v. 15. It means

them: I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ See, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall in any way hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. ²¹ In that same hour he rejoiced in spirit, and said: I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You hid these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father. For so it was pleasing in Your sight. ²² All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son wills to reveal Him. ²³ And turning to the disciples, he said privately: Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see. ²⁴ For I say to you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ And a certain lawyer stood up, and to test him, asked: Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

²⁶ And he said to him: What is written in the law? How do you read it? ²⁷ And he answered saying: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself. ²⁸ And he said to him: You have answered correctly. This do and you shall live. ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour? ³⁰ Jesus answered and said: A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he encountered robbers who both stripped him and beat him, and departed leaving him half dead. ³¹ And by chance a certain priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine, and he put him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the host, and said: Take care of him, and if you spend

to lose power, and shouldn't be read literally. The power of the adversary ['Satan' is a Hebrew word meaning 'adversary'] had been taken away.

10:20 Our names are written in God's book of life, but they can be removed from it if we fall away (Rev. 3:5).

10:35 *Two denarii* – The wage for one day's work was one denarius (Mt. 20:2). Maybe the implication was that the Samaritan would "come again" after two days. If a day with God is as a thousand years, it could be that Jesus, the Samaritan, will return after 2000 years from when He first bound up wounded humanity and put us in the "inn" of the church.

more, I, when I come back again, will repay you. ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved a neighbour to him that encountered the robbers? ³⁷ And he said: The one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him: Go and do likewise. ³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and heard his word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said: Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. ⁴¹ But the Lord answered and said to her: Martha, Martha, you are anxious and disturbed about many things. ⁴² But one thing is needful. For Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.

CHAPTER 11 Mar. 20 Sep. 19

Teaching about Prayer

And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. ² And he said to them: When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³ Give us day by day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins. For we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation. ⁵ And he said to them: Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived from a journey and I have nothing to set before him. ⁷ And he from within shall answer and say: Do not trouble me! The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise

10:37 *Do likewise* – The Samaritan was symbolic of Jesus and His saving work for sinners, which the representatives of the Jewish law did not do. But He asks us to not only benefit from His work, but go out into the world and do the same, taking risks and sacrificing our own safety to do so. The Jews claimed Jesus was a Samaritan – a mixed race of people whom ‘pure’ Jews despised (Jn. 8:48).

10:42 Here for all time we are encouraged to give more importance to hearing Christ's word than to domestic duties.

11:2 When God declared His Name to Moses in Ex. 34:4-8, He gave Moses a list of His characteristics – grace, justice, judgment, mercy, forgiveness etc. Our first request of God should be that those characteristics – His Name, what He stands for – be revealed and glorified in our lives by whatever situations we are in, and our reactions to them. If this is our first desire, then all else will fall into place ultimately. The next request is for God's Kingdom to come – for Jesus to return to earth and establish God's Kingdom here. We tend to make prayer a list of specific requests, but Jesus teaches us to be less specific initially, and focus always upon those essential principles and have them as our greatest desires.

11:4 It is good for us to tell God in prayer that we forgive our enemies. But this makes this simple prayer hard to pray truthfully. For we must forgive others if we hope for forgiveness ourselves.

and give anything to you? ⁸ I say to you, though he will not want to rise and give anything to him, yet because he is his friend, and because of the man's persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹ And I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a snake? ¹² Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

The Controversy About Beelzebub

¹⁴ And he was casting out a demon that was dumb. And it came to pass, when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke and the crowds marvelled. ¹⁵ But some of them said:

By Beelzebub the prince of the demons he casts out demons. ¹⁶ And others, testing him, sought from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a family divided against a family falls apart. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹ And even if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. ²⁰ But if I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe. ²² But when one stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him his whole armour in which he had trusted, and divides his spoils. ²³ He that is not with me is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters. ²⁴ When the unclean spirit has gone out of a

11:9 The 'asking' is for the reasons given in the parable – the man asks for things in order to give them to someone else in need (v. 6). If we ask for things in order to assist others, then God's promise will hold true. But it's not a promise that whatever we ask for ourselves will be given to us.

11:10 We knock on God's door, but He through Jesus knocks on our door (Rev. 3:20). There is a mutuality between God and us. We knock on His door, He knocks on ours.

11:13 *Give the Holy Spirit* – The parallel Mt. 7:11 says that God will give "good things" to those who ask Him. Being given the special power of God ("Holy Spirit") doesn't mean that we will be able to speak in tongues / languages, do miracles etc. – those gifts have been withdrawn (1 Cor. 13:8-10). But this doesn't mean that He doesn't amazingly answer prayer, and those answers are in a way a gift of Holy Spirit.

11:23 *Scatters* – Sins of omission are understood by Jesus as active opposition to Him. How we live life is crucially important; our inaction is seen as actively working against the Lord's work.

person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says: I will return to my house from which I came. ²⁵ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. ²⁷ And it came to pass, as he said these things, that a certain woman out of the crowd lifted up her voice and said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which you did suck. ²⁸ But he said: Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Jesus Criticizes the Jews

²⁹ And when the crowds were gathering together to him, he began to say: This generation is an evil generation. It seeks after a sign, but there shall no sign be given to it, except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them. For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a

greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. ³³ No one when he has lit a lamp puts it in a cellar, neither under a bucket, but on the lightstand, so that they who enter in may see the light. ³⁴ The lamp of your body is your eye. When your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵ Look therefore whether the light that is in you is not darkness. ³⁶ If therefore your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining gives you light. ³⁷ Now as he spoke, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, and he went in and sat down to eat. ³⁸ And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. ³⁹ And the Lord said to him: Now you the Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and plate, but your inward part is full of extortion and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You foolish ones, did not He that made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give for alms those things which are within, and behold, all things are clean to you.

11:28 Mary, mother of Jesus, did hear God's word and kept it in her heart (Lk. 2:19). This was the side of Mary that Jesus wanted people to honour, rather than her physically having been His mother.

11:32 At the day of judgment, we will be judged in full view of others. The Ninevites will watch the judgment process of the first century Jews. We therefore shouldn't be hypocritical in front of others now, because in the end they will see us revealed at judgment day for who we really are.

11:34 Our perceptions, our filtering process which we apply to life, are so important.

⁴² But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint, rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; but these you should have done and not to leave the other undone. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it. ⁴⁵ And one of the lawyers answering said to him: Teacher, in saying this you reproach us also. ⁴⁶ And he said: Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and consent to the works of your fathers; for they killed them and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said: I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation: ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanc-

tuary. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. ⁵² Woe to you lawyers! For you took away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those that were entering in, you hindered. ⁵³ And when he got out from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

CHAPTER 12 Mar. 21 Sep. 20

Jesus Repeats the Teaching of the Sermon on the Mount

In the mean time, when the many thousands of the crowd were gathered together, so much so that they trod one upon another, he began to say to his disciples first of all: Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² But there is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have said in the darkness shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. ⁴ And I say to you my friends, do not be afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can

11:52 We can hinder or stumble people from entering the Kingdom. This is perhaps the greatest sin. We therefore need to be so careful how we treat people, so that we do nothing which may lead them to turn away from the hope of the Kingdom because of our actions, exclusion of them or hypocrisy.

12:1 Hypocrisy is like leaven (yeast). Once one person starts being hypocritical, others tend to be; it spreads easily and has a huge effect, just as leaven does on bread. Jesus taught “first of all”, most importantly, to beware of hypocrisy. We need to ask ourselves daily whether we are being hypocritical; because it’s so important not to be. All will be revealed anyway (:2,3) – at the day of judgment.

do. ⁵ But I will warn you about whom you shall fear. Fear Him, who after He has killed has power to cast you into Gehenna. Yes, I say to you, fear Him! ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two very small coins? And not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not! You are of more value than many sparrows. ⁸ And I say to you, every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. ⁹ But he that denies me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but to him that blasphemizes against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven. ¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what you should say. ¹³ And one out of the crowd said to him: Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. ¹⁴ But he said to him: Man! Who made me a judge or a divider over you? ¹⁵ And he said to them: Take heed and keep yourselves from

all covetousness. For a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. ¹⁶ And he spoke a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. ¹⁷ And he reasoned within himself, saying: What shall I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops? ¹⁸ And he said: This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater ones, and there will I store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry. ²⁰ But God said to him: You foolish one, this night is your soul required from you, and the things which you have prepared, whose shall they be? ²¹ So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. ²² And he said to his disciples: Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for life, what you shall eat. Nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. ²³ For the life is more than the food, and the body more than the clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, how they do not sow nor reap. They have no store nor barn, but God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to the measure

12:7 God sees and knows absolutely everything – even within the animal creation. Let's live with that awareness, that He is so intensely watching. Knowing this shouldn't frighten us but rather encourage us – “fear not!”.

12:19 The ‘soul’ here refers to the self; Jesus piercingly analyzes the self-talk of materialistic people. It's our self-talk that we need to watch; what are the conversations that we carry on with ourselves as we walk, travel, prepare food... ? The words “I”, “my” and “soul” occur often in this story – circle them in your Bible. The man was totally self-centred.

of his life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do even that which is least, why are you anxious concerning the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin. Yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God does so clothe the grass in the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, O you of little faith? ²⁹ And do not seek what you shall eat and what you shall drink, neither be of doubtful mind. ³⁰ For all these things the nations of the world seek after, but your Father knows you have need of these things. ³¹ Seek His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. ³² Fear not little flock. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell that which you have and give alms. Make for

yourselves purses which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief draws near nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Readiness for Christ's Return

³⁵ Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants, whom the master when he comes shall find awake. Truly I say to you, that he shall dress himself for service and make them sit down to eat, and shall come and serve them. ³⁸ And if he shall come in the second watch and if in the third and find them waiting, so blessed

12:30 God knows our basic need for food and clothing and will provide, as He did for Israel after their 'baptism' in the Red Sea and journey through the wilderness. Their shoes didn't get worn out, and He gave them bread and water daily. David says he never saw the children of the righteous begging bread (Ps. 37:25). We must really believe this promise.

12:33 Jesus was speaking to poor people when He said this. The poor can easily assume that all Christ's teaching about wealth and generosity are for the attention of rich Christians only. But this is not the case. The poor, too, are asked to be radically generous.

12:35 An allusion to the night of Israel's Passover exodus from Egypt. We are to have that same intensity, aware that Jesus could return at any moment.

12:36 How immediately we respond to the knowledge that Christ has returned will affect our eternal future, as in Mt. 25:10. If we are longing for His return and have a light hold on our material life, we will be ready to go immediately with joy and no regrets. The more we possess, the harder this will be.

12:37 Another unreal element in the parables – the Master would never come and serve His servants. But Jesus will do so – because He will be *so* pleased that they were watching and eager for His return. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, when Jesus again will eat and drink with us (Mt. 26:29), He will come and serve us. His loving servanthood is a characteristic that He has even now; it wasn't just how He was when on earth. He will always be the same as He was then (Heb. 13:8).

are they. ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake, and not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also- be ready. For in the hour you do not expect- the Son of Man comes. ⁴¹ And Peter said: Lord, are you telling this parable aimed at us, or to everyone? ⁴² And the Lord said: Who then is the faithful and wise steward whom his master shall set over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant, whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing. ⁴⁴ Of a truth I say to you, that he will set him over all that he has. ⁴⁵ But if that servant shall say in his heart: My lord delays his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and to be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant shall come in a day when he does not expect, and at an hour he does not know, and shall cut him into pieces and put him with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that servant, who knew his master's will and did not prepare or did not do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he that did not know and did things worthy of stripes, he shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whom much is given, of him shall much be required, and to whom peo-

ple commit much, of him will they ask the more. ⁴⁹ I came to cast fire upon the earth, yet it is already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and great is my distress until it be accomplished! ⁵¹ Do you think that I came to give peace in the earth? I tell you no, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They shall be divided, father against son and son against father. Mother against daughter and daughter against her mother. Mother in law against her daughter in law and daughter in law against her mother in law. ⁵⁴ And he said to the crowds: Also, When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, Here comes a shower- and so it comes to pass. ⁵⁵ And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, There will be a scorching heat- and it comes to pass. ⁵⁶ You hypocrites, you know how to interpret the signs of the earth and the sky, but how is it you do not know how to interpret this time? ⁵⁷ And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ For as you are going with your adversary before the magistrate, on the way give diligence to be rid of him. Lest he drag you to the judge and the judge shall deliver you to the officer, and the officer shall throw you

12:49 The judgment of God is likened to fire; but that fire is kindled, the match is set to it, by human beings. God's judgment is only confirming sinful people in what they themselves have chosen.

12:51 Jesus 'came' to send judgment (v. 49); and He came to send division within families. Such division is therefore His judgment upon them; but they will have kindled that fire themselves by their own rejection of His message of peace.

into prison. ⁵⁹ I say to you, you shall never get out, until you have paid the very last coin.

CHAPTER 13 Mar. 22 Sep. 21

The Problem of Suffering

Now there were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered and said to them: Do you think that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things? ³ I tell you no, but unless you repent, you shall all in like manner perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. Do you think that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you no, but unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. ⁶ And he spoke this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit thereon and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser: Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground? ⁸ And

he answering said to him: Master, leave it alone this year also, I shall dig about it and fertilize it. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you shall cut it down. ¹⁰ And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. ¹¹ And a woman was there who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years; she was bent over and could in no way straighten herself. ¹² And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her: Woman, you are free from your infirmity. ¹³ And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, answered and said to the crowd: There are six days in which men ought to work. In them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. ¹⁵ But the Lord answered them and said: You hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath release his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away for watering? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound for

13:3 Sin and suffering aren't necessarily related in this life. The book of Job is all about this. Indeed, the wicked prosper. But sin will have its recompense – which creates the necessity for the coming of the day of judgment when Jesus returns.

13:7 The “man” who owned the vineyard [Israel] is God; the “vinedresser” is Jesus. The three years are the three years of Christ's ministry. Jesus knew God so well that He asked Him to delay His plan to destroy Israel, to give them yet more opportunity to give spiritual fruit (v. 8). Moses and other Bible characters showed us that we can reason with God, and in some cases He is prepared to change His stated intentions. Prayer is so powerful! Earlier, Israel were the vine and the Lord Jesus the vinedresser. But now *we* are the vine, and God Himself the vinedresser (Jn. 15:1). We are in good hands; and the Father and Son who through Biblical history showed themselves so sensitive to spiritual fruit are the very same ones who will meet us in the last day.

eighteen years, to have been freed from this bond on the Sabbath day?

¹⁷ And as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the crowd rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

The Last Judgment

¹⁸ He replied: To what is the kingdom of God like? And unto what shall I liken it? ¹⁹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the sky lodged in the branches of it. ²⁰ And again he said: Unto what shall I liken the kingdom of God?

²¹ It is like the yeast which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all raised. ²² And he went on his way through cities and villages, teaching and journeying on to Jerusalem. ²³ And one said to him: Lord, are they few that are saved? And he said to them: ²⁴ Strive

to enter in by the narrow door. For I say to you, many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. ²⁵ When the master of the house is risen and has shut the door, and you begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying: Lord, open to us!- he shall answer and say to you: I do not know who you are. ²⁶ Then shall you begin to say: We did eat and drink in your presence, and you did teach in our streets. ²⁷ And he shall say: I tell you, I do not know from where you are. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. ²⁸ There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast out. ²⁹ And they shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

13:21 The Gospel is like leaven [yeast]. It can influence a huge amount of flour. The Gospel we preach has more power and potential to radically change people than we realize.

13:23 We all tend to wonder about such questions of Divine ‘fairness’. Jesus gives no answer but says that we should focus instead upon our own salvation (v. 24) – rather than dabble in questions which are God’s concern and beyond our comprehension.

13:25 The ideas of standing at the door and knocking are all found in Rev. 3:20, where Jesus says that He does this to us. If we’ve not opened to Him, not responded to His promptings in this life, then He will not open the door to eternity to us when He comes again.

13:26 *Eat and drink in your presence* – A reference to the fact they had participated in the communion service? There will be some who break bread who will not be saved ultimately. We must ask “Lord, is it I?”

13:28 *You shall see... yourselves* – The purpose of the judgment process will be for our benefit, to help people see themselves from outside of themselves, to see themselves as they really are. It’s not in order for God to gather information and make a verdict; He knows all things. In this sense, “judgment” is a metaphor not to be pushed too far.

Sorrow for Jerusalem

³¹ In that very hour certain Pharisees came warning him: Get out and leave here. For Herod wants to kill you. ³² And he said to them: Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow; and on the third day I shall reach my goal. ³³ Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following. For it cannot be possible that a prophet can die anywhere except Jerusalem. ³⁴ O Jerusalem! Jerusalem that kills the prophets and stones them that are sent to her! How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her own brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you shall not see me, until you shall say: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER 14 Mar. 22 Sep. 21

And it came to pass, when he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching him. ² And before him was a certain man that had the dropsy. ³ And Jesus answering spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not? ⁴ But

they held their peace. And he took him and healed him, and let him go. ⁵ And he said to them: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately draw him up on a Sabbath day? ⁶ And they could not answer these things.

Teaching About Humility

⁷ And when he noted how they chose out the chief seats, he told a parable to those that were invited, saying to them: ⁸ When you are invited by anyone to a marriage feast, do not sit in the chief seat; lest a more honourable man than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he that invited you shall come and say to you: Give this man your place. Then you shall be shamed into taking the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that has invited you comes, he may say to you: Friend, go up higher. Then shall you have glory in the presence of all that sit to eat with you. ¹¹ For every one that exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. ¹² And he also said to him that had invited him: When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, nor your brothers and sisters, nor your kinsmen, nor rich neighbours, unless they also invite you and repay you. ¹³ But when

14:10 We are to take the lowest place in the ecclesia / church. Jesus is the one who invited us (v. 9), and He will "come" and inspect us at His return. And He will rearrange the order at which we sit at table. Our breaking of bread services are foretastes of our eating with Jesus at His return. We should take the lowest place in those meetings, at least in our hearts; aware of our own failings, and seeing our brothers and sisters positively and with grace.

14:13 The poor, maimed, lame and blind are the very ones whom God invites to His

you make a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you shall be blessed; because they do not have anything to repay you with. For you shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

The Parable of the Great Supper

¹⁵ And when one of his dinner guests heard these things, he said to him: Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! ¹⁶ But he said to him: A certain man made a great supper and he invited many. ¹⁷ And he sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were invited: Come. For everything is now ready. ¹⁸ And they all began to make similar excuses. The first said to him: I have bought a field and I need to go out and see it; I pray you excuse me. ¹⁹ And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to test them. I pray you, have me excused. ²⁰ And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore, I

cannot come. ²¹ And the servant came and told his master these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and maimed and blind and lame. ²² And the servant said: Master, what you did command is done, and still there is room. ²³ And the master said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I say to you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste my supper.

Radical Demands

²⁵ Now there went with him great crowds; and he turned and said to them: ²⁶ If anyone comes to me, and hates not his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and

supper (v. 21). The connection is clear enough – we are to act to others as God does to people; and He has a way of inviting the most desperate people into fellowship with Him. Snobbery should have no part in Christian life. *We* are the spiritually poor and handicapped street people whom God has invited into His Kingdom in these last days. That's what v. 21 teaches. And so we ought to invite such people into our homes – with all the problems that can bring. There should be no sense of social superiority at all in the true church. This is utterly abhorrent to God.

14:18 The man begs Jesus to 'excuse' him. The New Testament is written in Greek, and we read through the mask of translation. The same Greek word translated 'excuse' here is also translated 'reject' elsewhere. Those who are rejected at the last day will have begged Jesus to reject them by their behavior in this life. He will only confirm them in their choices. If more than anything else we want to be in God's Kingdom; then we will.

14:23 The implication could be that as the last days progress and the return of Christ becomes imminent, the standard of those accepted will decrease; only the absolutely desperate [in whatever way – not just materially] will be responding to the Gospel. We who have responded in what appear to be the last days are therefore a desperate lot indeed.

come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have enough to complete it? ²⁹ Unless, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish it, all that watch begin to mock him, saying: ³⁰ This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹ Or what king, as he goes to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel, whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an ambassador and asks conditions of peace. ³³ So therefore whoever of you does not renounce all that he has, cannot be my disciple. ³⁴ Salt therefore is good, but if the salt has lost its taste, with what shall it be seasoned? ³⁵ It is useful neither for the soil nor for the manure heap, it is thrown away. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

CHAPTER 15 Mar. 23 Sep. 22

The Lost Sheep

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to him

to hear him teach. ² And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying: This man receives sinners and eats with them. ³ And he spoke to them this parable, saying: ⁴ What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does not leave the other ninety nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! ⁷ I say to you, that even so there shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, than over ninety nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

The Lost Coin

⁸ Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a lamp and sweeps the house and seeks diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. ¹⁰ Even so, I say to you, there is

14:31 The King who comes against us with far more strength is God; coming in judgment of our sins. Sin is serious, and isn't just ignored by God with a grin. It is a felt offence against Him, that provokes His wrath. We make peace with Him, we are reconciled, through the work and sacrifice of Jesus.

15:4 The answer is: No shepherd does this, nor does he throw a party for the sake of that sheep (v. 6). The point of unreality in these parables would've been immediately noticed by the first century hearers. The point of unreality is what teaches the lesson – in this case, that God is exceptionally concerned about the lost. As we should be too.

15:8 Her dowry was all that a woman possessed; even her body wasn't hers. To lose a dowry coin was therefore to lose part of herself; this is how hard God takes when He loses one of His people. She searched "until she finds it" – God, and we too, should search for the lost with the attitude that we will search until we find them. We certainly

joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

The Lost Sons

¹¹ And he said: A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the inheritance of property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered into money all he had, and took a journey into a far country; and there he squandered his inheritance in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ But when he came to his senses he said: How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will rise and go to my father, and will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. ¹⁹ I am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. ²⁰ And he rose and went to his father. But while he was yet far away, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and embraced and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no more worthy to be called your son. ²² But the father said to his servants: Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf, kill it and let us eat and make merry. ²⁴ For this my son who was dead, is alive again! He was lost and is found! And they began to be merry. ²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants, and inquired what these things might mean. ²⁷ And he said to him: Your brother came, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. ²⁸ But he was angry and would not go in; and his father came out and encouraged him. ²⁹ But he answered and said to his father: Look! For so many years I have served you, and I never transgressed a commandment of yours, and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But when this your son came, who should not exclude any of God's people from His house; we should search passionately for any who leave.

15:12 This request was equivalent to saying 'I wish you were dead'.

15:20 For an old man to run publicly was seen as undignified. This unreal feature of the story shows just how much he was delighted his son was returning; it speaks of the radical joy of God when we return to Him. When a prodigal returned to a village, they would've been badly mocked by everyone who knew them. The father therefore ran to the son to shield him from the name calling and stone throwing of children. We should seek to shield from shame those who 'come back'.

his father. But while he was yet far away, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and embraced and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no more worthy to be called your son. ²² But the father said to his servants: Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf, kill it and let us eat and make merry. ²⁴ For this my son who was dead, is alive again! He was lost and is found! And they began to be merry. ²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants, and inquired what these things might mean. ²⁷ And he said to him: Your brother came, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. ²⁸ But he was angry and would not go in; and his father came out and encouraged him. ²⁹ But he answered and said to his father: Look! For so many years I have served you, and I never transgressed a commandment of yours, and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But when this your son came, who

has devoured your living with prostitutes, you killed for him the fattened calf. ³¹ And he said to him: Son, you are ever with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad. For this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.

CHAPTER 16 Mar. 24 Sep. 23

The Parable of the Clever Steward

And he said also to the disciples: There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused of wasting his goods. ² And he called him and said to him: What is this that I hear of you? Render the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward. ³ And the steward said to himself: What shall I do, seeing that my master takes away the stewardship from me? I do not have strength to dig. To beg I am ashamed. ⁴ I have resolved what to do, so that when I am discharged as steward, others may receive me into their houses. ⁵ And calling to him each one of his master's debtors, he said to the first: How much do you owe my master? ⁶ And he said: A hundred measures of oil. And he said to him: Take your bill and sit down quickly and write fifty. ⁷ Then said

he to another: And how much do you owe? And he said: A hundred measures of wheat. He said to him: Take your bill and write eighty. ⁸ And his master commended the unrighteous steward, because he had done wisely. For the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light. ⁹ And I say to you: Make to yourselves friends by means of worldly riches; that, when they shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. ¹⁰ He that is faithful in a very little, is faithful also in much, and he that is unrighteous in a very little, is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹ If therefore you have not been faithful in the handling of worldly riches, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in what is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else, he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. ¹⁴ And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵ And he said to them: You are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts.

15:32 The vital point of Jesus' parables is often at the end. This story isn't so much about a sinner coming home, but about self-righteous people within the house of God who say "If *he's* coming back, I'm out of here".

16:10 All that we have been given by God, spiritually and materially, is "a very little". Only a small portion of God is known by us (Job 26:14). So because we may correctly understand the Bible on some points, let's not think that we have 100% truth about God or 'know it all'.

16:11 How we handle wealth [whether we have to manage much or little of it] is proportionate to how we will eternally be in God's Kingdom.

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. ¹⁶ The law and the prophets were until John. From that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man enters violently into it. ¹⁷ But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall. ¹⁸ Everyone that puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he that marries one that is put away from a husband commits adultery.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁹ Now there was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, dining sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² And it came to pass, that the beggar died; and he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's breast, and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his breast. ²⁴ And he cried and said: Father Abraham, have mercy

on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. ²⁵ But Abraham said: Son, remember how you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now here he is comforted, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great gulf, so that they that would pass from here to you cannot, and none may cross over from there to us. ²⁷ And he said: Therefore I beg you father that you would send him to my father's house. ²⁸ For I have five brothers. That he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. ²⁹ But Abraham said: They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. ³⁰ And he said: No father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent. ³¹ And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, even if one rises from the dead.

CHAPTER 17 Mar. 25 Sep. 24 *Jesus Teaches About Faith and Forgiveness*

And he said to his disciples: Stumbling blocks are sure to come,

16:19 This is a parable, and isn't to be taken literally.

16:23 This is a parody of Jewish beliefs. But those beliefs are in themselves wrong; the righteous don't go to live in Abraham's bosom; death is unconsciousness; the punishment for sin is death when Jesus returns, not torment in fire. Jesus used the wrong beliefs of the Jews against themselves. He spoke to people in their own terms.

16:31 The parables of Jesus often make their key point at the end; and it's the same here. The point of the story is to show that even when Jesus rose from the dead, most of the Jews still wouldn't believe. And that the witness of the written word in the Old Testament was and is as powerful as 'seeing a miracle' of a dead man coming to life.

but woe to the one through whom they come! ² It would be better for him if a millstone was hung about his neck and he was thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³ Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in the day and seven times turns again to you, saying: I repent: You shall forgive him. ⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith. ⁶ And the Lord said: If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this sycamore tree: Be rooted up and be planted in the sea- and it would obey you. ⁷ But who is there of you, having a servant ploughing or keeping sheep, that will say to him when he comes in from the field: Come immediately and sit down to eat. ⁸ Instead will he not say to him: Make ready my supper and

dress yourself and serve me, and after I have eaten and drunk, then you shall eat and drink? ⁹ Does he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? I think not. ¹⁰ Even so you also, when you shall have done all the things that are commanded of you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.

Jesus Heals Ten Lepers

¹¹ And it came to pass, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers, who stood far away. ¹³ And they lifted up their voices, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us! ¹⁴ And when he saw them, he said to them: Go and show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they

17:2 Causing others to stumble is the very worst kind of sin. We should therefore think carefully how our words and actions are going to impact others; and be careful that we set the right example to others. The punishment of a millstone being hung around the neck and cast into the sea is that of Babylon's punishment at the last day (Rev. 18:21). Those within the church who make others stumble, e.g. by unreasonable demands upon them or excluding them, are no better than Babylon, the great enemy of God. How we treat others is very, very important.

17:4 If someone sins so many times each day and claims to have repented, it's obvious their repentance isn't sincere. So Jesus is teaching that we should forgive people without trying to assess if their repentance is sincere, or even if it is apparent that their repentance is insincere. The radical grace of God to us requires that we should simply forgive others without demanding their repentance.

17:10 *Unprofitable servants* – The same phrase is used in Mt. 25:30 about those who will be condemned at the final judgment when Jesus returns. After we have, as we think, done everything we should – we must still recognize that we deserve only condemnation. When doing good deeds, it's necessary to remember that we are sinners; we have already sinned, we still sin, and probably will sin again before Jesus returns. This will mean that we do our good works with a humble spirit; if they are done with a spiritually arrogant attitude, this is a huge turn off to the world and ruins our witness.

were cleansed. ¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ And he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks- though he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ And Jesus responded: Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? ¹⁹ And he said to him: Arise and go your way. Your faith has made you whole.

The Coming of Messiah

²⁰ And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God comes, he answered them and said: The kingdom of God comes not with observation. ²¹ Neither shall they say, Here it is, or, There it is! For the kingdom of God is among you. ²² And he said to the disciples: The days will come, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you shall not see it. ²³ And they shall say to you, Look there, or, Look here. Do not go, nor follow after them.

²⁴ For as the lightning shines from one part under the heaven to the other part under heaven, so shall the Son of Man be in his day. ²⁵ But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, even so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot- they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. ²⁹ But in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ After the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ In that day, he that shall be on the housetop with his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away, and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. ³² Remember Lot's wife! ³³ Whoever shall seek to gain his life

17:21 "Within" can also be translated "among". Jesus as King of the Kingdom of God can be called "the Kingdom of God". All the principles of God's Kingdom were to be found in Him. The Jews were looking for Messiah to come, and Jesus is saying they don't have to look here and there for Him; because He, the Messiah, was already among them. The Kingdom of God wasn't within the hearts of "you", i.e. the Pharisees.

17:27 *Until the day* – There is strong Biblical emphasis on the fact that the flood began on the day Noah entered the ark. But Gen. 7:1,4 says that God told Noah seven days before the flood came to enter the ark. But actually he didn't do this – he entered the very day the rain came. Why? Surely because he was begging people to come into the ark – he was a preacher (2 Pet. 2:5). Do our hearts desperately bleed for the people around us, as we await the coming of Jesus?

17:32 Lot's wife looked back behind her when she had been told not to. She mourned the loss of her home and possessions. The command Lot received to leave Sodom is therefore typical of the command we will receive to leave this present situation and go

shall lose it, but whoever shall lose it shall preserve it. ³⁴ I say to you: In that night there shall be two men in one bed. One shall be taken, and the other shall be left. ³⁵ There shall be two women grinding together at the mill; one shall be taken and the other shall be left. ³⁶ There shall be two men in the field; one shall be taken and the other shall be left. ³⁷ And they answered and said to him: Where, Lord? And he said to them: Where the body is, there will also the eagles gather together.

CHAPTER 18 Mar. 26 Sep. 25

Jesus Teaches About Prayer

And he spoke a parable to them, that they should always pray and not lose heart, saying: ² There was in a city a judge, who did not fear God and had no regard for man. ³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came often to him, saying: Give me justice against my adversary. ⁴ And for a while he would

not, but afterward he said to himself: Though I neither fear God, nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me, I will give her justice, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. ⁶ And the Lord said: Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And shall not God give justice to His chosen, who cry to Him day and night? Will He be slow to help them? ⁸ I say to you, that He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?

⁹ And he spoke also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt. ¹⁰ Two men went into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus: God, I thank you that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I get.

to be with Christ in Jerusalem when He returns. If we look back on this world with longing, we will share the judgment of this world. Lot's wife was turned to salt, which was also the punishment which came upon the area around Sodom (Gen. 19:23; Dt. 29:23).

17:37 Don't worry where the judgment seat will be, or how we will get there. We will get there as naturally as God makes the eagles go into the air and come down where the carcass is.

18:3 The element of unreality in this parable is that a widow woman, with no male to advocate for her, went *directly* to the judge. This speaks of the spiritual ambition which we should have in daring to continually pray to God; and perhaps also indicates how approachable God is, even if prayer to God Himself initially seems too wonderful an idea for us.

18:7 The apparent silence of God to our prayers is because of His patience with us, not His deafness or indifference.

18:8 *Shall He find faith on the earth?* – It's an open question. The context speaks of how God answers prayer. The fact He does this should inspire faith. But will there be such faith in the earth [maybe "land", of Israel] on the eve of Christ's return?

¹³ But the tax collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: God, be merciful to me, the sinner. ¹⁴ I say to you, this man went home rendered righteous rather than the other. For everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted. ¹⁵ And they were bringing to him even their babies, that he should touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying: Permit the little children to come to me, and do not forbid them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ Truly I say to you, Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no way enter into it.

The Rich Ruler

¹⁸ And a certain ruler asked him, saying: Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ¹⁹ And Jesus said to him: Why do you call me good? None is good, save one- God! ²⁰ You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not kill.

Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honour your father and mother. ²¹ And he said: All these things have I observed from my youth. ²² And when Jesus heard it, he said to him: One thing you lack yet. Sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come follow me. ²³ But when he heard these things, he became exceedingly sorrowful. For he was very rich. ²⁴ And Jesus looking at him, said: How hard it shall be for those that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁶ And they that heard it said: Then who can be saved? ²⁷ But he said: The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. ²⁸ And Peter said: We have left our own and followed you. ²⁹ And he said to them: Truly I say to you: There is no one that has left house, or wife, or brothers, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, ³⁰ who shall not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come, eternal life.

18:13 *Struck his breast* – The same Greek phrase is found only in the account of how those who watched the crucifixion of Jesus struck their breasts (Lk. 23:48). Here in 18:13, striking the breast means contrition and repentance. So it probably means the same in 23:48. Watching the death of Jesus brought people to repentance. This is why when we remember the death of Jesus at the breaking of bread service, we are naturally led to self-examination and repentance (1 Cor. 11:28).

18:14 *Rendered righteous* – We are not righteous in ourselves; but we are counted righteous by God through our being “in Christ” by baptism and continued faith in Him.

18:30 *In this time* – We receive these things in the church of God, through our relationships with others in Christ. Christianity isn't intended to be lived in isolation from other believers.

The Way to Jerusalem

³¹ And he took aside the twelve, and said to them: We will go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets about the Son of Man shall be accomplished. ³² For he shall be delivered up to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and shamefully treated, and spat upon. ³³ And they shall scourge and kill him, and on the third day he shall rise again. ³⁴ And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, and they did not understand the things that were said. ³⁵ And it came to pass, as he drew near to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging. ³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷ And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passes by. ³⁸ And he cried, saying: Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me! ³⁹ And those who led the way rebuked him, saying that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more: You son of David, have mercy on me! ⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him: ⁴¹ What do you want me to do for you? And he said: Lord, that I may receive my sight. ⁴² And Jesus

said to him: Receive your sight; your faith has made you whole. ⁴³ And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

CHAPTER 19 Mar. 27 Sep. 26

And he entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector, and rich, ³ was seeking to see who Jesus was; but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. ⁴ And he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him: Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house. ⁶ And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying: He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord: Behold Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted something from anyone, I restore fourfold. ⁹ And Jesus said to him: Today salvation has come to this house, as he

18:34 Note the repetition of the fact they didn't understand. They had a psychological barrier to the cross, just as we do in some ways – to share in the cross of Jesus is so demanding.

19:7 Fellowshiping with sinners through eating with them was seen as very wrong; the faithful Jew only fellowshiped with those who were “clean” and apparently not associated with sin. Jesus’ open table policy showed the very opposite. There is no ‘guilt by association’; He fellowshiped with people in order to bring them to Him, rather than only eating His bread with those who had reached a certain standard.

19:9 He was a Jew (“son of Abraham”), but worked for the Romans collecting taxes

also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Parable of the Minas

¹¹ And as they heard these things, he added and spoke a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. ¹² He therefore said: A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³ And he called ten servants of his, gave them ten minas and said to them: Trade with this until I return. ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying: We do not want this man to reign over us. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when he had returned, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to

him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. ¹⁶ And the first came before him, saying: Lord, your minas have made ten minas more. ¹⁷ And he said to him: Well done, you good servant. Because you were found faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. ¹⁸ And the second came, saying: Your minas, Lord, have made five minas. ¹⁹ And he said to him: And you are to be over five cities. ²⁰ And another came, saying: Lord, behold, here is your mina, I kept it laid away in a piece of cloth, ²¹ for I feared you, because you are a hard man. You demand what you did not deposit, and reap that which you did not sow. ²² He said to him: Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant. You thought that I am a hard man, demanding back what I did not deposit, and reaping that which I did not sow? ²³ Why then did you not

from the Jews. He would've been a very lonely, despised and rejected person. These are the kinds of people who respond to Jesus.

19:17 *Ten cities* – There is an element of unreality in the parable of the pounds: wise use of a few coins results in power over several cities. We are left to imagine the men marvelling in disbelief at the reward given to them. They expected at most just a few pounds to be given to them. And in their response we see a picture of the almost disbelief of the faithful at their rewards.

19:20 He justifies himself by saying that he has “kept” the money, using the word elsewhere used about the need to *keep* or hold on to the doctrines of the One Faith (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:13; Rev. 6:9). He had done this, he had held on, he hadn't left the faith. And he thought this was enough to bring him to the Kingdom. But we must creatively use the basic gift of the Gospel which we have been given.

19:23 Jesus will explain to the rejected how they might have entered eternity. This will be quite enough mental torment and punishment. The Law of Moses forbade Jews to lend money to other Jews for interest. Jesus was telling His parables to Jews in a Jewish context. He's saying: “Even if you had done what was not the best, not the most obedient; but if you had done *at least something*, I would've accepted you”. But the man thought Jesus was a hard, grace-less man. Alternatively, Jesus may have meant: ‘You could at least have given the Gospel to the Gentiles’.

put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest? ²⁴ And he said to those that stood by: Take away from him the mina and give it to him that has the ten minas. ²⁵ And they said to him: Lord, he has ten minas! ²⁶ I say to you, that to everyone that has, shall be given, but from him that has not, even that which he has shall be taken away from him. ²⁷ But bring here my enemies, and slay them before me, those who did not want me to reign over them.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

²⁸ And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ And it came to pass, when he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying: Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ And if anyone asks you: Why do you untie him? You are to say: The Lord has need of him. ³² And they that were sent went away and found as he had said to them. ³³ And as they

were untying the colt, the owners of it said to them: Why do you untie the colt? ³⁴ And they said: The Lord has need of him. ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments upon the colt and sat Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he went, they spread their garments on the road. ³⁷ And as he was now drawing near, at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen, saying: ³⁸ Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to him: Teacher, rebuke your disciples. ⁴⁰ And he answered and said: I tell you, that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out. ⁴¹ And when he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying: If you had known in this day, even you, the things which belong to your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies shall set up a barricade around you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and

19:25 Even those accepted into God's Kingdom won't understand everything immediately. We will spend eternity eternally growing in the knowledge of God and Jesus.

19:27 *Slay them* – The punishment for the rejected will be death, “the second death” (Rev. 2:11); not eternal punishment of a conscious person.

19:37 *Now drawing near* – The verb tenses and style here encourage us to visualize Jesus ‘drawing near’. The Gospels often encourage us to play ‘Bible television’ – to reconstruct how things happened as if the scene is playing live before our eyes.

19:41 This was the city which would kill Him – He had predicted that “Jerusalem” would kill him (Lk. 13:33). And yet Jesus had a heart that bled for the salvation of even His enemies and murderers. He so wished for their salvation (Lk. 13:34). Do we have a heart that bleeds for this world?

shall dash you to the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another. All this will happen because you did not perceive the time of your visitation. ⁴⁵ And he entered into the temple, and began to throw out those that were selling there, ⁴⁶ saying to them: It is written: My house shall be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves! ⁴⁷ And he was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men of the people sought to destroy him. ⁴⁸ But they could not figure out what they might do, because all the people so hung upon his words.

CHAPTER 20 Mar. 28 Sep. 27

The Question of Authority

And it came to pass, on one of the days he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes with the elders. ² And they spoke, saying to him: Tell us. By what authority do you do these things? Or, who is he that gave you this authority? ³ And he answered and said to them: I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, ⁴ the baptism of John, was

it from heaven, or from men? ⁵ And they discussed it among themselves, saying: If we shall say from heaven, he will say, why did you not believe him? ⁶ But if we shall say, from men, all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. ⁷ And they answered that they did not know. ⁸ And Jesus said to them: Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The Parable of the Vineyard

⁹ And he began to speak to the people this parable: A man planted a vineyard and rented it to husbandmen, and went into another country for a long time. ¹⁰ And when the time came, he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty handed. ¹¹ And he sent yet another servant, and him also they beat, and handled him shamefully, and sent him away empty handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third, and him also they wounded and threw him out. ¹³ And the lord of the vineyard said: What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. It may be they will respect him. ¹⁴ But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned

20:9 The absentee landlords of Galilee were despised by all; and yet the Lord uses one of them as a figure for Himself. Whenever we feel despised, we are sharing in the sufferings of Jesus.

20:13 God sent His Son to Israel, hoping they would reverence Him. But Isaiah 53 had prophesied that when Israel saw Him, they would see no beauty in Him and crucify Him. Yet God restrained that knowledge, in His love and positive hope for His people. God in a sense comes down to our level, rather like you crouch down to speak with a child at their level, and seek to enter into their limitations of perception, their language and outlook. Truly man is not alone. God is with us.

one with another, saying: This is the heir! Let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.¹⁵ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do to them?¹⁶ He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said: God forbid.¹⁷ But he looked upon them, and said: What then is this that is written: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the headstone of the corner?¹⁸ Everyone that falls on that stone shall be broken to pieces, but on whoever it shall fall, it will grind him to dust.

The Jews Try to Catch Out Jesus

¹⁹ And the scribes and the chief priests sought to arrest him in that very hour, but they feared the peo-

ple. For they perceived that he spoke this parable against them.²⁰ And they watched him and sent out spies, who pretended to be sincere, so that they might catch him in something he said; so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the Roman governor.²¹ And they asked him, saying: Teacher, we know you say and teach rightly, and show no favouritism to any person, but in truth teach the way of God.²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them:²⁴ Show me a denarius. Whose image and superscription has it? And they said: Caesar's.²⁵ And he said to them: Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.²⁶ And they were not able to catch him in what

20:15 The parable has a telling twist to it. Absentee landlords who had never visited their land for ages, and found the people they sent to the property beaten up, would usually just forget it. They wouldn't bother. In the parable which draws on this, the Lord asks what the landlord will do. The expected answer was: 'Not much. He got what he could, he was never bothered to go there for years anyway'. But *this* landlord is odd. He keeps on sending messengers when any other landlord would have given up or got mad earlier on. But God's patience through the prophets was likewise unusual. And then, when the tenants thought they must surely be able to get away with it because the Lord seemed so distant and out of touch... He suddenly comes Himself in person and destroys them. He doesn't hire a bunch of people to do it. He comes in person, as the Lord will in judgment. And instead of deciding he'd had his fingers burnt and giving up vineyards as a bad job, this Lord gives the vineyard to others – He tries again. And so the Lord is doing with the Gentiles.

20:18 We have a choice – to be broken in this life by falling upon the rock of Christ, or to be broken by Him when He falls upon this earth in judgment. We must be broken men and women one way or another, either now or then. It's so logical to choose to be broken now. But in spiritual matters, we're not logical in how we reason.

There is evidence within the text of the NT, in addition to church tradition, which would suggest that memorizing Scripture was a common feature of the early believers. A passage in Psalm 118 is referred to here in Lk. 20:18; and also in Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-8. One wonders if this was a proof text which the early believers would have known by heart.

he said in the presence of the people, so they marvelled at his answer and held their peace. ²⁷ And there came to him certain of the Sadducees, they that say that there is no resurrection. ²⁸ And they asked him, saying: Teacher, Moses wrote to us, that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but he is childless, his brother should take the wife and raise up seed to his brother. ²⁹ There were therefore seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless. ³⁰ And the second, ³¹ and the third took her, and likewise the seventh also left no children, and died. ³² Afterward the woman also died. ³³ In the resurrection, whose wife of these shall she be? For the seven had her as wife. ³⁴ And Jesus said to them: The children of this world marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵ But they that

are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. ³⁶ Neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷ But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, when he called the Lord: The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For all live to Him. ³⁹ And certain of the scribes answering said: Teacher, you have said well. ⁴⁰ And after that they dared not question him anymore. ⁴¹ And he said to them: Why do they say that the Christ is David's son? ⁴² For David himself said in the book of Psalms: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit on My right hand, ⁴³ until

20:36 Angels cannot die: "Death...does not lay hold of angels" (Heb. 2:16 Diaglott margin). If angels could sin, then those who are found worthy of reward at Christ's return will also still be able to sin. And seeing that sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), they will therefore not have eternal life; if we have a possibility of sinning, we have the capability of dying. Thus to say angels can sin makes God's promise of eternal life meaningless, seeing that our reward is to share the nature of the angels. The reference to "*the* angels" shows that there is no categorization of angels as good or sinful; there is only one category of angels. Dan. 12:3 says that the faithful will shine as the stars; and stars are associated with the Angels (Job 38:7). We will be made like Angels; and yet we will be given immortal, sinless nature. Therefore, Angels can't sin. Our hope is to enter into the wonderful freedom of nature which the "Sons of God", i.e. the Angels, now share (Rom. 8:19).

20:37, 38 God is the God of Abraham here and now, even though Abraham is dead and unconscious. Because the dead are unconscious, because our memories of them fade and distort, we tend to think subconsciously that this is how God too sees the dead believers. But "all live to him", the souls under the altar cry out to Him for vengeance; in other words, His constant, detailed awareness of their characters provokes Him to act in world affairs even now (Rev. 6:9; 20:4). The Heavenly Jerusalem with which we are associated in Christ is composed of "the spirits (characters) of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). As we strive to develop a spiritual character now, our spirit becomes associated with those pleasing characters ("spirits") who reached a level of spiritual completion ("perfection").

I make your enemies the footstool of your feet. ⁴⁴ David therefore calls him Lord, so, how is he his son? ⁴⁵ And in the hearing of all the people, he said to his disciples: ⁴⁶ Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes and love greetings in the marketplaces, and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. These shall receive greater condemnation.

CHAPTER 21 Mar. 29 Sep. 28

And he looked up and saw the rich men that were casting their gifts into the treasury. ² And he saw a certain poor widow throwing in there two small coins. ³ And he said: Of a truth I say to you: This poor widow threw in more than all of them. ⁴ For all these out of their abundance have put in offerings, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple

⁵ And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings, he said: ⁶ As for these things which you behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another; all shall be thrown down. ⁷ And they asked him, saying: Teach-

er, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when these things are about to happen? ⁸ And he said: Take heed you are not led astray. For many shall come in my name, saying: I am he, and, The time is at hand. Do not be led astray by them. ⁹ And when you shall hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified. For these things are necessary and must happen first, but the end will not be immediately. ¹⁰ Then said he to them: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹ and there shall be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences, and there shall be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹² But more significantly than all these things, they shall lay their hands on you and shall persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³ It shall turn out to be your opportunity to give a witness. ¹⁴ Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer. ¹⁵ For I will give you the words and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to contradict. ¹⁶ But you shall be delivered up even by your parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they shall kill some of you. ¹⁷ And you shall be hated of

21:8 *Not be led astray* – This Greek phrase is extensively quoted later in the New Testament concerning the need not be deceived by false teachers *within the church* (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:13).

21:13 God uses bad situations in order to give us an opportunity to witness to others. When we ask “Why *this*?” – perhaps one of the reasons is so that we might preach through it.

all men for my name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head shall perish.

¹⁹ In your patience, you shall win your souls. ²⁰ But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is at hand.

²¹ Then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them that are in the midst of her depart, and do not let them that are in the countryside enter therein. ²² For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

²³ Woe to them that are with child in those days, and to those nursing babies! For there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. ²⁵ And there shall be signs in sun, moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ Men will be fainting for fear in expectation of

the things which are coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. ²⁷ And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. ²⁸ But when these things begin to happen, look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.

²⁹ And he told them a parable: Behold the fig tree and all the trees.

³⁰ When they shoot forth, you see it, and know of yourselves that the summer is now near. ³¹ Even so, you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I say to you: This generation shall not pass away until all things are accomplished.

³³ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

³⁴ But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with partying, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For so shall it come upon all those that dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶ But watch continually, praying that you may have

21:17 This hating by all men may imply a world-wide persecution.

21:24 The "times of the Gentiles" appears to refer to the time of Gentile opportunity to learn the Gospel, according to how Paul alludes to it in Rom. 11:25. So today is a great day of opportunity, to respond to and preach the Gospel. The chance won't always be there.

21:34 Why is there this warning, if the believers of the last days are to be actively persecuted? This verse implies that the world will be in a materially prosperous state in the last days; it will be possible for us to become so preoccupied with it that we do not prepare for the time of tribulation, so that it comes as a sudden surprise. If "that day" is the day of Christ's coming, then it may be that by opting out of the persecution, we will be able to continue to enjoy the materialism of the world, in which case we will be caught unawares by the second coming. Thus while the saints are persecuted, the world enjoys a time of prosperity as it did in the times of Lot and Noah.

21:36 In Greek, the verb 'to watch' is related to the noun 'watch', referring to soldiers guarding something, or the period of guard duty. The idea behind 'watching'

strength to prevail against all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. ³⁷ And every day he was teaching in the temple, and every night he went and stayed on the mount that is called Olivet. ³⁸ And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, to hear him.

CHAPTER 22 Mar. 30 Sep. 29

The Last Passover

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ² And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might put him to death, for they feared the people. ³ And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve. ⁴ And he went away, and discussed with the chief priests and captains how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ And he consented, and looked for an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the crowd. ⁷ And the day of unleavened bread came, on which the Passover must be sacrificed. ⁸ And he sent Peter and John on an errand, saying: Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

⁹ And they asked him: Where do you want us to prepare for it? ¹⁰ And he said to them: When you enter into the city, there you shall meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house to which he goes. ¹¹ And you shall say to the master of the house: The Teacher says to you: Where is the guest room, in which I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? ¹² And he will show you a large furnished upper room. There make ready. ¹³ And they went and found as he had said to them, and they made ready the Passover. ¹⁴ And when the hour had arrived, he sat down with the apostles. ¹⁵ And he said to them: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I say to you, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said: Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I say to you, I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine from this time forward, until the kingdom of God shall come. ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remem-

is definitely defensive rather than aggressive. Lk. 21:36 defines watching as praying always, concentrating our faith upon the fact that ultimately we will stand acceptably before the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment, and by His grace be saved from the great judgments which will surely come upon this world. The ideas of watching and praying often occur together (Mk. 14:38; Mt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7). Prayer for our forgiveness, for acceptance by our Lord, must therefore characterize our watching in these last days.

22:10 Carrying water was women's work. Jesus seemed to take special pleasure in challenging the 1st century gender roles.

22:16 When we break bread, we remember that we shall by grace do this again with Jesus when He returns.

brance of me. ²⁰ And the cup in like manner after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But behold, the hand of him that betrays me is with me at this table. ²² For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it has been determined, but woe to that man through whom he is betrayed! ²³ And they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. ²⁴ And there arose also a dispute among them, as to which of them would be counted as greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them: The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them, and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. ²⁶ But you shall not be so, but he that is the elder among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that does serve. ²⁷ For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at the table? But among

you, I am he that serves. ²⁸ But you are those who have stayed with me in my time of trial. ²⁹ And I appoint to you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ³¹ And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for you that he might sift you as wheat. ³² But I prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have been converted, strengthen your brothers. ³³ And he said to him: Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death. ³⁴ And he said: I tell you Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until you shall deny three times that you know me. ³⁵ And he said to them: When I sent you out without purse and wallet and shoes, did you lack anything? And they said: Nothing. ³⁶ And he said to them: But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet,

22:19 *This is* – The bread isn't the actual body of Jesus; it "is" His body in the sense that the bread represents His body.

22:20 The new covenant is God's solemn set of promises to save us and give us eternal life in His Kingdom on earth as He promised Abraham. That set of promises were confirmed in the death of Jesus; whenever we take the cup we remind ourselves of our participation in this great hope.

22:23 There was some self-examination at the first memorial meeting. There should be every time we conduct the service (1 Cor. 11:28).

22:28 Yet Jesus knew the disciples would run away and Peter would deny Him. But He counted them as righteous; and He sees us so positively today, for all our failings. Quite simply, because He loves us.

22:36 *Buy a sword* – But the Lord's comment in v. 38 suggests He was being sarcastic or ironic in commenting upon their collapse of faith and dependence upon human strength. He wasn't literally suggesting they buy swords – in any case, He surely knew that they already had two swords with them (V. 38). And when the disciples used those swords, Jesus sharply rebuked them (:50,51 "No more of this!"). True Christians follow their Master in non-violent resistance of evil and do not believe in the use of force even in a just cause.

and he that has none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword. ³⁷ For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: And he was numbered with the transgressors. For what is written about me must have its fulfillment. ³⁸ And they said: Lord, look, here are two swords. And he said to them: That is quite enough.

The Prayer and Arrest of Jesus

³⁹ And he came out and went, as his custom was, to the mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them: So that you do not enter into temptation, pray. ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying: Father, if You be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless let not my will, but Yours be done. ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose up from his prayer, he went to

the disciples, and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶ and said to them: Why do you sleep? Get up and pray, so that you will not enter into temptation. ⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him: Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? ⁴⁹ And when they that were about him saw what would follow, they said: Lord, shall we strike with the sword? ⁵⁰ And a certain one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said: No more of this! And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² And Jesus said to the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders that had come against him: Have you come as against a robber, with swords and staves? ⁵³ When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Peter Denies Jesus

⁵⁴ And they seized him and led him away, and brought him into the high

22:40 Prayer is our strength against temptation.

22:42 The wills of the Father and Son were different; therefore Jesus was not God Himself in a Trinitarian sense.

22:44 This condition indicates Jesus was at the limits of nervous endurance. He prayed to God at this time "with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). But even now, Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven, praying to God with intense groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26). If He is so intensely praying for and with us, and offers our prayers to God with this intensity; then our prayers should also be intense and focused. Be careful not to rattle off the same old phrases in your prayers; put meaning into words; don't let your mind wander in prayer; pray out loud if necessary; and beware of only praying at night, warm in bed and drifting into sleep.

22:54 *High Priest's house* – About seven weeks later, Peter was standing maybe 100 meters from this spot and powerfully persuading people to believe in Christ. He con-

priest's house. And Peter followed from a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ And a certain maid seeing him as he sat in the light of the fire and looking earnestly upon him, said: This man also was with him. ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying: Woman, I do not know him. ⁵⁸ And after a little while another person saw him and said: You also are one of them. But Peter said: Man, I am not. ⁵⁹ And after the space of about one hour another confidently affirmed, saying: Of a truth, this man also was with him. For he is a Galilean. ⁶⁰ But Peter said: Man, I do not know what you say. And immediately, as he spoke, the cock crew. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord that he had said to him: Before the cock crow this day, you shall deny me three times. ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly. ⁶³ And the men that held Jesus mocked him and beat him. ⁶⁴ And they blindfolded him and questioned him, saying: Prophecy— who is he that struck you? ⁶⁵ And many other

things they spoke against him, reviling him. ⁶⁶ And as soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away into their council, saying: ⁶⁷ If you are the Christ, tell us. But he said to them: If I tell you, you will not believe. ⁶⁸ And if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from this time forward shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God. ⁷⁰ And they all said: Are you then the Son of God? And he said to them: You say that I am. ⁷¹ And they said: What further testimony do we need? For we ourselves have heard it from his own mouth.

CHAPTER 23 Mar. 31 Sep. 30

Jesus Before Pilate and Herod

And the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying: We found this man perverting our nation and forbidding giving tribute to Caesar, and saying that he is Christ a king. ³ And Pilate asked him, saying: Are you the King of the Jews? And he answered them and said: You say it. ⁴ And Pilate said to the chief

verted more people in one day than anybody else ever is recorded as doing. God used the repentant, public sinner – and very quickly after his repentance. God loves to use humbled people.

22:57 Denied – Years later, Peter wrote that the worst possible category of sin was to “even deny” the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter preached to others and pastored his converts on the very basis that he had denied the Lord – and repented of it. He often alludes to his failings in his preaching addresses. This kind of thing is the very qualification which is required, rather than an apparently sinless life which is in fact only hypocrisy.

23:4 Do we feel that our conscience is so dysfunctional and our heart so hardened in some places that nothing much can touch us and motivate us like it used to? The cross can touch and transform the hardest and most damaged heart. Apart from many

priests and the crowds: I find no fault in this man. ⁵ But they were the more urgent, saying: He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee even to this place. ⁶ But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. ⁷ And when he knew that he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem in those days. ⁸ Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad. For he had for a long time been desirous to see him, because he had heard about him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ And the chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him, and dressing him in gorgeous apparel, sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day. For before they had been enemies. ¹³ And Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them: You brought to me this man, as one that perverts the people; and

I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man concerning those things of which you accuse him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore chastise him and release him ¹⁷ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). ¹⁸ But they cried out all together, saying, Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas ¹⁹ (one who had been cast into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder). ²⁰ And Pilate spoke to them again, desiring to release Jesus. ²¹ But they shouted, saying: Crucify, crucify him! ²² And he said to them the third time: Why! What evil has this man done? I have found no cause of death in him. I will therefore punish him and release him. ²³ But they were insistent with loud voices, asking that he might be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ And Pilate gave sentence that what they asked for should be done. ²⁵ And he released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

real life examples around of this, consider the Biblical case of Pilate. Jewish and Roman historians paint a very different picture of Pilate than what we see in the Biblical record. Philo describes him as "ruthless, stubborn and of cruel disposition", famed for "frequent executions without trial". Why then does he come over in the Gospels as a man desperately struggling with his conscience, to the extent that the Jewish crowds manipulate him to order the crucifixion of a man whom he genuinely believed to be innocent? Surely because the person of the Lord Jesus and the awfulness of putting the Son of God to death touched a conscience which appeared not to even exist. If the whole drama of the death of Jesus could touch the conscience and personality of even Pilate, it can touch each of us.

23:12 The forces of evil often unite against the righteous.

The Crucifixion

²⁶ And when they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it after Jesus.

²⁷ And a great crowd of the people followed him, and women mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

²⁹ For the days are coming in which they shall say: Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed! ³⁰ Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall on us, and to the hills: Cover us.

³¹ For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? ³² And two others, both criminals, were led out with him to be executed. ³³ And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other

on the left. ³⁴ And Jesus said: Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they do. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵ And the people stood watching. And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying: He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, His chosen! ³⁶ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him offering vinegar, and saying: ³⁷ If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself. ³⁸ And there was also a written notice above him: This is the King of the Jews. ³⁹ And one of the criminals that hung there hurled insults at him, saying: Are not you the Christ? Save yourself and us. ⁴⁰ But the other answered, and rebuking him said: Do you not even fear God, seeing you have the same judgment? ⁴¹ But we indeed justly. For we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong. ⁴² And he said: Jesus, remember me when you come in your

23:26 Simon is a Greek name, and the names of his sons are Greco-Roman. The way he is described as “coming out of the field” (Gk.) could imply that he was working, doing what was improper on a feast day, because he was a Gentile. It could be that he simply lived and worked near Jerusalem, he wasn’t a religious guy, and like Saul out looking for lost cattle, he was going some place else, just as we were... until the Lord as it were arrested him with the message of the cross.

23:34 In His final sufferings, Jesus often mentions the Fatherhood of God (Lk. 22:42; 23:34,46; Mt. 26:39,42,44). That God is “our Father” is a comfort in our times of trial. The pain and difficulty of speech in the position of crucifixion was such that it is apparent that the Lord meant us to hear and meditate upon the words He uttered from the cross. It would have been far easier for Him to have prayed those words to Himself, within His own thoughts; but instead He made the effort to speak them out loud. It should inspire a similar effort in us to communicate with others when we feel like retreating into ourselves; to comfort them with our forgiveness; to pray for our enemies.

Divided up his clothes – Such petty materialism in the presence of the cross of Jesus was and is pathetic.

23:42 The command to be baptised into Christ’s death and resurrection was given

kingdom. ⁴³ And he said to him: Truly, I can say to you today right now, that you will indeed be with me in Paradise. ⁴⁴ And it was now about the sixth hour; and a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ the sun's light failing; and the veil of the temple was torn in the middle. ⁴⁶ And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. And having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ And when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying: Certainly this was a righteous man. ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that came together to this sight, when they saw the things that were done, returned, striking their breasts.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances, and the women that had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things. ⁵⁰ And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the

Council, a good and righteous man ⁵¹ (he had not consented to their decision and deed), a man of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews, who was looking for the kingdom of God, ⁵² this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet been laid. ⁵⁴ And it was the day of the preparation; and the Sabbath drew on. ⁵⁵ And the women, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ And they returned and prepared spices and ointments. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

CHAPTER 24 Apr. 1 Oct. 1

The Resurrection

And on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the

after Christ's resurrection (Mk. 16:15,16). The thief couldn't have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection before those things had occurred. The thief asked Jesus to remember him for good, when Jesus returned "in" his Kingdom (RSV). The thief was therefore not ignorant of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which Jesus had been preaching (Mt. 4:23). He knew that there would be a judgment day at the establishment of that Kingdom, and therefore he asked Jesus, whom he knew would rise from the dead to eventually be the judge on that day, to remember him for good. The thief was certainly not ignorant; he recognised that salvation in the day of resurrection and judgment would be pronounced from the lips of Christ. Jesus replied that the thief *would* be with him in "Paradise". This Greek word always refers to an ideal situation upon *earth*. It is used concerning the restored Garden of Eden which will be seen in the future Kingdom of God on the earth (Rev. 2:7). Christ and the thief did not go to the Kingdom that day. Jesus went to the grave (Acts 2:32; Mt. 12:40). . The thief was asking for Jesus to remember him for good at the day of judgment; he was aware that he was responsible, and would appear there. But Jesus gave him the marvellous reassurance – 'I can tell you right *now*! You don't have to wait until then to find out my verdict upon you – you *will* be with me in the Kingdom!'.

stone rolled away from the tomb.

³ And they entered in, and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴ And it came to pass, while they were wondering about this, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground,

the men said to them: Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember in what way he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the others. ¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹ And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk, and they disbelieved them.

¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he departed to his home, wondering about what had happened.

Jesus Appears to His Followers

¹³ And two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty furlongs from

Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they discussed with each other about all the things which had happened. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, while they talked and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them: What communications are these you have one with another as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said to him: Do you live alone in Jerusalem, and therefore do not know the things which have happened there recently? ¹⁹ And he said to them: What things? And they told him the things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, that he was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Moreover besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. ²² Further, certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb. ²³ And when they did not find his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ And some of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even as the women had

24:11, 12 The Gospels emphasize the disciples' disbelief and slowness to understand the clear predictions of Jesus about His death and resurrection. Yet the Gospel records are transcripts of the apostles' preaching, and they climax in an appeal to believe the Gospel. This urgent appeal was made by the lips of men who had just confessed how slow they had themselves been to respond. But that integrity and humility was what gave their appeal such power and persuasion.

said. But him they saw not. ²⁵ And he said to them: O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and so enter into his glory? ²⁷ And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them from all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. ²⁸ And they drew near to the village where they were going, and he made as though he would go further. ²⁹ And they urged him, saying: Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent. And he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to eat, he took the bread, and blessing and breaking it, he gave to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. ³² And they said to each other: Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us on the road, while he opened up the scriptures to us? ³³ And they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them, ³⁴ saying: The Lord has indeed

risen, and has appeared to Simon! ³⁵ And they told the things that had happened on the road, and how he was known to them by the breaking of the bread. ³⁶ And as they spoke these things, he stood in the midst of them, and said to them: Peace to you! ³⁷ But they were terrified and afraid, and supposed that they saw a ghost. ³⁸ And he said to them: Why are you disturbed? And why do questions arise in your heart? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see! For a ghost has not flesh and bones, as you see me having. ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and wondered, he said to them: Have you here anything to eat? ⁴² And they gave him a piece of a boiled fish. ⁴³ And he took it and ate before them. ⁴⁴ And he said to them: These are my words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things necessary be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me. ⁴⁵ Then opened he their mind so that they might understand the scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said

24:31 God does open and close our understanding. Let's be patient with those whose eyes are still closed. There was a time when we too 'didn't get it'.

24:35 *By the breaking of the bread* – Perhaps this means that the body language of Jesus as He broke bread *after* His resurrection was identical with that which He had in His human life before that. Resurrection and receiving Divine nature won't change us unrecognizably; we will recognize each other. We personally shall be saved through resurrection; what died shall revive and be immortalized.

24:39 Ghosts and immortal souls don't exist in reality. But Jesus reasoned with them on the basis of their wrong understanding, to lead them to the crucial conviction that He personally was alive.

to them: Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And I will send to you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed

with power from on high. ⁵⁰ And he led them out until they were as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they did homage to him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple, praising God.

JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 10 Oct. 10 *Prologue: The Word Becomes Flesh*

In the beginning was the word {logos}, and the word was towards God, and the word was Di-

vine. ² This existed, in the beginning, with God. ³ All things created came into existence on account of it; and without it nothing created came into existence. ⁴ In it was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ This light

“The Word” cannot refer directly to a person, because a person cannot be “with God” and yet *be* God at the same time. The Greek word ‘logos’ which is translated “word” here, does not in itself mean ‘Jesus’. It is usually translated as “word”, but also as: –

- Account
- Cause
- Communication
- Doctrine
- Intent
- Preaching
- Reason
- Saying
- Tidings

‘Logos’ can strictly refer to the inner thought which is expressed outwardly in words. In the beginning God had this ‘logos’. This singular purpose was centred in Christ. Christ in person was not “the word”; it was God’s plan of salvation through Christ which was “the word”. ‘Logos’ (“the Word”) is very often used concerning the Gospel about Christ – e.g. “the *word* of Christ” (Col. 3:16; cp. Matt. 13:19; John 5:24; Acts 19:10; 1 Thess. 1:8). Notice that the ‘logos’ is *about* Christ, rather than him personally. When Christ was born, this “word” was turned into a flesh and blood form – “the word was made flesh” (John 1:14). Jesus personally was ‘the word made flesh’ rather than “the word”; he personally became “the word” through his birth of Mary, rather than at any time previously.

The plan, or message, about Christ was with God in the beginning, but was openly revealed in the person of Christ, and the preaching of the Gospel about him in the first century. Thus God spoke His word to us through Christ (Heb. 1:1,2); he thereby fulfilled the prophecy concerning himself, “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 13:35). It was in this sense that “the word was with God...in the beginning”, to be “made flesh” at Christ’s birth.

“The Word Was God”

Our plans and thoughts are fundamentally us. “As (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7), and as God thinks, so is He. Thus God’s word or thinking *is* God: “the word was God”. Because of this parallelisms like Ps.29:8 are common: “The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness”. Because of this, God’s Word is spoken of as if it is God Himself. Thus we are told concerning the Word, “All things were made by Him” (John 1:3). However “*God* created” all

Footnote: “In the beginning was the Word” probably comments on the Jewish concept that the Torah (the five books of Moses) existed before creation. Jn. 1:1-3 is saying that the important thing to appreciate is that those words of God prophesied about Jesus; God’s plan about him existed before creation (cp. Lk. 1:70).

shines in the darkness, but the darkness cannot understand it. ⁶ It happened that a man of God was sent. His name was John. ⁷ This one came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe in the light. ⁸ John was not the light, but was sent that he might testify concerning the light- ⁹ the true light, who by coming into the world enlightens every man. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world had originated on account of him, the world recognised him not. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and they of his own people rejected him. ¹² But whoever accepts him, those who believe in his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ These were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ For this, the word became flesh, and indwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testifies of him and cries out, saying: This was he of whom I said: He that comes after me is ranked above me! For he was senior to me. ¹⁶ Of his fullness we all received, with grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given

through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made Him known.

The Ministry of John

¹⁹ And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him: Who are you? ²⁰ He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed: I am not the Christ! ²¹ And they asked him: What then? Are you Elijah? And he said: I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered: No. ²² They replied to him: Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. How do you describe yourself? ²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord. ²⁴ These priests and Levites had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ Again they asked him: Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet? ²⁶ John answered: I baptize in water; but in the midst of you stands one whom you do not know. ²⁷ He that comes after me, his shoe-lace I am not worthy to untie. ²⁸ This

things by His word of command (Gen. 1:1). It is evident from Gen. 1 that God was the Creator, through His word, rather than Christ personally. It was the *word* which is described as making all things, rather than Christ personally (John 1:1-3). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them (i.e. the stars) by the breath of his mouth... he spake, and it was done" (Ps. 33:6,9).

God's word being His creative power, He used it in the begetting of Jesus in Mary's womb. The Word, God's plan put into operation by His Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), brought about Christ's conception. Mary recognized this in her response to the news about her forthcoming conception of Christ: "Be it unto me according to Your word" (Luke 1:38). When Christ was born, all of God's Word/Spirit was expressed in the person of Jesus Christ.

incident took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him, and he said: Behold! The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said: After me comes a man who is ranked above me. For he was senior to me. ³¹ I did not perceive him, but so he should be made manifest to Israel, for this reason I come baptizing in water. ³² And John testified, saying: I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it remained upon him. ³³ I would not have perceived him except He that sent me to baptize in water, He had said to me: Upon whomsoever you shall see the Spirit descend and remain upon him, the same is he that baptizes in the Holy Spirit. ³⁴ I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God. ³⁵ The next day John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ And he watched Jesus as he walked and said: Behold! The Lamb of God! ³⁷ And the two disciples, hearing him speak, followed after Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned around, and observing they were following him, said to them: What do you seek? And they replied: Rabbi (we would say Teacher). Where are you staying? ³⁹ He said to them: Come, and you shall see. They went therefore, and saw where he stayed; and they stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

The Calling of the Disciples

⁴⁰ One of the two that had heard John and had followed Jesus was Andrew,

Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ The first thing he did was to find his brother Simon; and he said to him: We have found the Messiah (we would say Christ). ⁴² He took him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said: You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (we call him Peter). ⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go into Galilee; and he found Philip. Jesus said to him: Follow me. ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him: We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote! Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him: Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him: Come and see. ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, and said of him: Behold, a true Israelite in whom is no deceit! ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him: How is it you know me? Jesus answered: Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him: Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are King of Israel. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied: Because I said to you: I saw you underneath the fig tree- do you believe? You shall see greater things than these! ⁵¹ And he said to him: Truly, truly, I say to you. You shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 11 Oct. 11

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

On the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The

mother of Jesus was there; ² Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the marriage. ³ When they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to him: They have no wine! ⁴ Jesus said to her: Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come. ⁵ His mother said to the servants: Whatever he commands you, do it! ⁶ Nearby there were six stone waterpots, placed there for the Jewish custom of purifications, each holding 75 to 115 litres. ⁷ Jesus said to them: Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them: Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water which had now become wine, and not knowing where it came from (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), he called to the bridegroom, ¹⁰ and said to him: Everyone serves good wine first, and when all have drunk freely, serves something inferior. But you have kept the good wine until now! ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, thereby revealing his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Jesus Purges the Temple

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and brothers and disciples; and there they stayed for a few days. ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at that time; and Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he found in the temple those that sold oxen

and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting at their tables. ¹⁵ He made a whip out of cords and drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To them that sold the doves he said: Take these things away! Do not make my Father's house a market. ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written: Zeal for Your house shall consume me. ¹⁸ The Jews therefore answered and said to him: What sign will you show us, seeing you do these things? ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them: Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. ²⁰ The Jews replied: Forty six years was this temple in building, and will you raise it up in three days? ²¹ But he spoke of the temple of his body. ²² When he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spoke this, and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken. ²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he understood mankind, ²⁵ and because he did not need any testimony concerning himself from any human being. For he understood what was in man.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 11 Oct. 11

Jesus and Nicodemus

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a

2:25 Understood – Jesus knew how fickle people are, how quickly they change. His understanding of humanity is because He Himself was human.

ruler of the Jews. ² The same came to him by night, and said to him: Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God. For no one can do the signs you do, except God be with him. ³ Jesus answered and said to him: Truly, truly, I say to you: Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴ Nicodemus said to him: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? ⁵ Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Except one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God! ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel at what I said to you: You must be born anew. ⁸ The wind blows where it wills, and you hear its sound, but do not know from where it comes and where it goes. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to him: How can these things be? ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him: Are you the teacher of Israel and

yet do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you: We speak that which we know and testify of that which we have seen; and you do not welcome our witness. ¹² If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. ¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ that whoever believes may in him have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. ¹⁸ He that believes in him is not condemned. He that does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the ground of condemna-

3:5 Here we see the importance of water baptism. But of itself, it's not enough – we must be spiritually reborn by the action of God's word within us (1 Pet. 1:23) if we are to enter the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns. *Baptism is therefore very important. Contact the publishers if you would like to be baptized.*

3:13 'Ascent' and 'descent' here aren't being used literally. John's Gospel uses very symbolic terms. Jesus was conceived within Mary, He was "begotten" – He 'began' – as a foetus within His mother. Either He literally floated down through the clouds from Heaven to earth – or we must understand 'descending' from Heaven as meaning that He was born on earth but sent by God.

3:14 The serpent was a symbol of sin. Yet it also represents Jesus. On the cross, Jesus was identified very strongly with sinful people, even though He never sinned. He is 'one' with us who are sinners, the sinner's friend who doesn't just turn away from sin but touches and identifies with it in order to cleanse it.

3:14 *In Him* – Gk. 'into Him'. We believe 'into' Jesus by believing and being baptized into Jesus.

tion, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light- for their works were evil. ²⁰ For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, in case his works should be reproved. ²¹ But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God.

Jesus and John the Baptist

²² After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he stayed with them and baptized. ²³ And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and people came to be baptized. ²⁴ For John had not then been thrown into prison. ²⁵ Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶ And they came to John, and said to him: Rabbi, he that was with you on the other side of the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to him. ²⁷ John answered and said: A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said: I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. ²⁹ He that has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, that stands by and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. In this my joy is

made full. ³⁰ He must increase but I must decrease. ³¹ He that comes from above is above all. He that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaks. He that comes from heaven is above all. ³² What he has seen and heard, of that he testifies; and no one receives his witness. ³³ He that has received his witness has certified that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give him the Spirit by measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶ He that believes on the Son has eternal life; but he that does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 12 Oct. 12

Jesus Converts a Samaritan Woman

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again into Galilee. ⁴ It was necessary for him to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to the city of Samaria called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground which Jacob gave his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was also there. Jesus, being tired from his journey, sat tired by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water, and

3:21 If we feel sinners, we needn't be depressed. This is a result of being in the light.

3:23 Baptism is immersion in water, not sprinkling – hence it required “much water”.

4:6 Jesus' needing to drink and becoming tired, needing to rest, all indicate His humanity. He wasn't God Himself.

Jesus said to her: Give me a drink.

⁸ His disciples had gone into the city to buy food. ⁹ The Samaritan woman replied to him: How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans). ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that said to you: Give me a drink, you would have asked of him and he would have given you living water.

¹¹ The woman said to him: Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. From where then have you that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his cattle? ¹³ Jesus answered and said to her: Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst. The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up to eternal life. ¹⁵ The woman said to him: Sir, give me this water, that I do not thirst ever again, nor come all the way here to get water. ¹⁶ Jesus said to her: Go, call your husband

and come back here. ¹⁷ The woman answered and said to him: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: You said well that you have no husband, ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband. This you have said truthfully.

¹⁹ The woman said to him: Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

²¹ Jesus said to her: Woman, believe me, the hour is coming, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. ²² You worship that which you do not know. We worship what we know. For salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour comes and now is, when true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such worshipers are who the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

²⁵ The woman said to him: I know that the Messiah is coming (he that is called Christ). When he comes, he will declare to us all things. ²⁶ Jesus said to her: I that speak to you am he. ²⁷ And upon this scene came his

4:14 If we truly believe, we will become a well of water of life to other people. We can become the source of eternal life to people – in that we are the source of their contact with Christ. This means we should witness to people urgently and directly, knowing that we can give people the eternal life which otherwise they wouldn't have.

4:22 People can go through the psychology and feeling of worship – but it's not real worship.

4:24 God is Spirit in the sense that He is identified with His Spirit. God Himself is a personal being, not an abstract puff of 'spirit' blowing around. God "is" a consuming fire; He is revealed through the fire of His judgment, but this doesn't mean that God equals fire and fire equals God. And the same with Him as Spirit.

4:27 Jewish religious leaders didn't speak to women, nor Samaritans; nor did they

disciples, and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman. Yet no one said: What are you seeking? Or, Why do you speak with her? ²⁸ So the woman left her waterpot and went away into the city, and said to the people: ²⁹ Come, see a man who told me all things that I have ever done. Can this be the Christ? ³⁰ They went out of the city and came to him. ³¹ In the meantime the disciples pleaded with him, saying: Rabbi, eat. ³² But he said to them: I have food to eat that you do not know. ³³ The disciples queried each other: Has anyone brought him something to eat? ³⁴ Jesus said to them: My food is to do the will of Him that sent me and to accomplish His work. ³⁵ Do you not say: There are yet four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white, ready to harvest. ³⁶ He that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit to everlasting life; that he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For herein is the saying true: One sows and another reaps. ³⁸ I sent you

to harvest that upon which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you are taking over their labour. ³⁹ And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the word of the woman, who testified: He told me all things that I have ever done. ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they pleaded with him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² And they said to the woman: Now we believe, not because of your speaking; for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.

Jesus Returns to Galilee

⁴³ And after two days he left for Galilee. ⁴⁴ Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country. ⁴⁵ So when he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all the things that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they also had gone up to the feast. ⁴⁶ He came again to Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And

teach the Bible to women; nor would they be alone in a woman's company. Jesus was clearly not worried about gossip or His "image" – He intended to reach out to the marginal and despised.

4:29 It's quite natural to tell others of our experience of Christ. The Gospels are full of people doing this.

4:32 Having a stimulating, unexpected conversation about the Lord with someone takes away our awareness of our tiredness and material problems. Preaching is for our benefit and blessing too.

4:39 *All things* – All her sins. On the basis of accepting her sinfulness she could witness to the people in a non-threatening way. Some people believe in Christ because of the word of a preacher; others believe in Him directly (v. 42). In some cases, therefore, we have the ability to bring a person to Christ; if we don't do our part, they will not be saved. In this sense Paul can write to people and claim that they owed him their salvation.

there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded that he would come to Capernaum and heal his son. For his son was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ Jesus replied to him: Except you see signs and wonders, you will in no way believe. ⁴⁹ The nobleman said to him: Sir, come before my child dies. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him: Go your way. Your son lives. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. ⁵¹ And as he was going home, his servants met him, saying that his son lived. ⁵² So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They replied to him: Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. ⁵³ The father knew that that was the hour when Jesus had said to him: Your son lives. And so he and his household believed. ⁵⁴ This was the second sign that Jesus did, when he had gone from Judea to Galilee.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 13 Oct. 13

Jesus Heals a Lame Man

After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now there

is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. ³ In these lay a crowd of those who were sick, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁴ For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and disturbed the water. Whoever was first to step into the pool, after the waters were disturbed, was healed of whatever disease he had. ⁵ One man there had been ill for thirty eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing he had been there a long time, he said to him: Would you be made whole? ⁷ The sick man answered him: Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed. As I approach someone else steps in front of me. ⁸ Jesus said to him: Arise, take up your bed and walk. ⁹ And straightway the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. ¹⁰ So the Jews said to him who had been cured: It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed. ¹¹ But he answered them: He that made me whole, the same said to me: Take up your bed and walk. ¹² They asked him: Who

4:53 Believed – But he is described as having “believed” the word of Jesus already, in v. 50. There are different levels of faith and conversion.

5:2 There is – Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70. The present tense indicates that John’s Gospel was written before AD70 – not generations after the events, as wrongly claimed by Bible critics.

5:8 Jesus didn’t criticize the man for believing in a myth about an Angel touching water. Instead, Jesus focused the man upon the simple reality – that God alone through His Son can heal. We need to be patient with those who have wrong understandings and believe groundless myths; and gently re-focus them upon the simple truths of the Gospel.

is the man that said to you: Take up your bed and walk? ¹³ But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place ¹⁴ Afterwards, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him: Look, you are made whole. Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you. ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole.

Jesus Comments Upon His Relationship with God

¹⁶ And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them: My Father works even until now and therefore I also work. ¹⁸ For this cause the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath law, but he called God his own Father, making himself seem like God. ¹⁹ Jesus therefore answered and said to them: Truly, truly, I say to you: The Son can do nothing of himself but only what he sees the Father doing.

For whatever works He does, these the Son does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that Himself does; and greater works than these will He show him, that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom he will. ²² For neither does the Father judge anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that does not honour the Son does not honour the Father that sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you: He that hears my word and believes Him that sent me has eternal life, and comes not into condemnation, but has passed out of death into life. ²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you: The hour comes and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given the Son life in himself. ²⁷ And He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is a Son

5:13 Some of those Jesus cured didn't have any faith in Jesus – this man didn't even know Jesus' Name. This shows what it means to really be able to do miracles by the Holy Spirit – even ignorant unbelievers could be healed. This contrasts with the false claims of many 'faith healers' in Christian churches today, who claim they have Holy Spirit gifts, but can only claim to heal those who have faith.

5:18, 19 Jesus answers their misunderstanding that He was claiming equality with God by making some statements that for all time end any question about whether Jesus is equal with God. He states clearly that He can do nothing of Himself, His power is only from God and not of Himself; and His will is not that of His Father (v. 30).

5:24 We have eternal life in the sense that we can live now the kind of life which we will eternally live in God's Kingdom. We will die, be unconscious, but be raised to stand before Jesus at His return, and by His grace live eternally in God's Kingdom on earth.

5:27 Because the Lord Jesus had our human nature He is therefore qualified to be our judge at the last day.

of Man. ²⁸ Marvel not at this! For the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, ²⁹ and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. ³⁰ I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous, because I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. ³¹ If I testify of myself, my witness is not true. ³² It is another that testifies of me; and I know that the witness which He testifies of me is true. ³³ You asked John the Baptist, and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man; but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was the lamp that burns and shines, and you were willing to rejoice for a period in his light. ³⁶ But the witness which I have is greater than that of John. For the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, testify that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father that sent

me, He has testified of me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. ³⁸ And you do not have His word dwelling in you, for you do not believe the one whom He has sent. ³⁹ You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me; ⁴⁰ but you will not come to me, so that you may have life. ⁴¹ I receive not glory from men. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I come in my Father's Name, and you do not accept me. If another shall come in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, you who accept praise from each other, but do not seek the praise that comes from the only God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe me. For he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe my words?

5:29 We receive eternal life at the resurrection, when Jesus returns. We don't have immortality naturally within ourselves, in the form of some 'immortal soul'. This isn't a Biblical idea. The resurrection is very important in the process of salvation. Therefore it's also important to identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus through baptism, so that we too will literally be resurrected and share in His eternal life at His return.

5:37 God sent Jesus. He that sends is superior to and different from Him that is sent (Jn. 13:16). Jesus isn't God.

5:39, 40 It's possible to read the Bible a lot but never truly come to Jesus. To study the Bible but not have the living word / voice of God abiding in us (v. 38). We should be Christ-centric more than Bible-centric.

5:43 Jesus as God's Son carried His Father's Name. The Name of God is essentially His attributes and character; and Jesus showed these to perfection. But we shouldn't misunderstand this to mean that Jesus is God Himself in person, just because He carries His Father's Name.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 14 Oct. 14***Jesus Feeds 5000 Men***

After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. ² And a great crowd followed him, because they saw the signs which he performed on those that were sick. ³ And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great crowd came to him, said to Philip: Where are we to buy bread that these may eat? ⁶ And this he said to test him. For he knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him: Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him: ⁹ There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many? ¹⁰ Jesus said: Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus therefore took the loaves and having given thanks, he distributed them to those that were sitting down. Likewise also the fishes, as much as they could eat. ¹² And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, so nothing goes to waste. ¹³ So they gathered

them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign which he did, they said: This is of a truth the prophet that comes into the world! ¹⁵ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself. ¹⁶ And when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea. ¹⁷ And they entered into a boat and were going over by sea to Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ And the sea was rising because of a great wind that blew. ¹⁹ When therefore they had rowed about five or six kilometres, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were afraid. ²⁰ But he said to them: It is I! Be not afraid! ²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. ²² On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea noticed that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³ (Some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks). ²⁴ When the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor

6:14 The sign or miracle which Jesus did left people with no option but to believe. The miracles claimed by the Pentecostal movement today are highly disputable and therefore don't have the same effect. Whatever phenomena their 'healings' reflect, it's not proof they possess the Holy Spirit gifts.

his disciples, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵ And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him: Rabbi, when did you come here? ²⁶ Jesus answered them and said: Truly, truly, I say to you: You seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Bread from Heaven

²⁷ Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set His seal of approval. ²⁸ They replied to him: What must we do, that we may work the works of God? ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them: This is the work of God- that you believe in him whom He has sent. ³⁰ They replied to him: What then will you do for a sign, so that we may see and believe you? What work will you do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. ³² Jesus replied to them: Truly, truly, I say to you: It was not Moses that gave

you the bread out of heaven, but my Father; who now gives you the true bread out of heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world.

³⁴ They replied to him: Lord, always give us this bread. ³⁵ Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life. He that comes to me shall not hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I say to you: That you have seen me, and still you do not believe.

³⁷ All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will in no way reject. ³⁸ For I came down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of Him that sent me, that of all which He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father: That every one that sees the Son and believes in him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴¹ The Jews therefore murmured concerning him, because he said: I am the bread which came down out of Heaven. ⁴² And they said: Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How

6:26 Some people show an interest in our message just because of a hope that they will get some material benefit. Jesus didn't refuse to assist these people; but He made it clear that He realized what was going on.

6:30 Jesus had just miraculously fed these people and they still wouldn't believe and sought for yet more signs from Him. The faith produced by the miracle in v. 14 was therefore not very long lived. It is by hearing and responding to the word of Jesus that we can have a deep and lasting faith, rather than from seeing 'miracles'.

6:33 Jesus compares Himself to the manna. The manna 'came down' from God in the sense that it was from God. It didn't literally float down from Heaven to earth through the atmosphere, it was created on earth. And so with Jesus. He didn't exist as a person before He was born.

6:42 Although Jesus was perfect, He never omitted any act of righteousness nor com-

does he now say, I came down out of Heaven? ⁴³ Jesus answered and said to them: Murmur not among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me, except the Father that sent me draws him; and I will raise him up in the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets: And they shall all be taught by God. Everyone therefore who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father, save he that is from God, he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you: He that believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down out of Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever. Yes! The bread which I will give is my flesh – given for the life of the world. ⁵² The Jews therefore argued with each other, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to

eat? ⁵³ Jesus replied to them: Truly, truly, I say to you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. ⁵⁶ He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he that eats me, he also shall live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread which came down out of Heaven. Not as the fathers ate and died; he that eats this bread shall live forever. ⁵⁹ These things said he in the synagogue, while teaching in Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said: This is a hard saying; who can hear it? ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said to them: Does this cause you to stumble? ⁶² What then if you should see the Son of Man ascending where

mitted any sin, the people amongst whom He lived for 30 years didn't think He was anything special. This shows the humility of Jesus, and how He successfully hid His righteousness rather than did anything to display it to others. In this we have another window onto His perfection.

6:51 After their 'baptism' in the Red Sea, God's people walked through the wilderness fed only by manna (1 Cor. 10:1,2). After our baptisms, we too walk through the wilderness, eating the manna daily – taking strength from Jesus, His word and His sacrifice for us.

6:53 This may be a reference to the huge importance of breaking bread in memory of Jesus – the bread represents His flesh, the wine represents His blood.

6:60 To drink blood was abhorrent to Jewish people. Jesus chose this controversial way of speaking in order to make people chose between Him, and their surrounding religious culture. We can't follow His words, and also the surrounding culture and networks of thinking.

6:62 "Before" refers to where He was "before" He began to 'come down' to them in revealing Himself as God's Son (:41,42). He's saying: 'So would you prefer me to

he was before? ⁶³ It is the spirit that gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you that do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. ⁶⁵ And he said: For this cause have I said to you, that no one can come to me, except it be given to him of the Father. ⁶⁶ Upon this many of his disciples withdrew, and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ Jesus asked the twelve: Would you also go away? ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ And we have believed and know that you are the Holy One of God. ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them: Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil? ⁷¹ Now he spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot; for he was the one of those twelve who would betray him.

CHAPTER 7 Apr. 15 Oct. 15

The Feast of Tabernacles

And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. ² Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles, was at hand. ³ His brothers said to him: Depart from here and go into Judea, so your disciples may also see the works you do. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, manifest yourself to the world. ⁵ For even his brothers did not believe in him. ⁶ Jesus replied to them: My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify of it, that its works are evil. ⁸ You go up to the feast. I will not be going up to this feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled. ⁹ And having said these things to them, he stayed in Galilee. ¹⁰ But when his brothers

just go back to how I was when I lived amongst you in Nazareth, the incognito Son of God, no teaching, no miracles?'.

6:63 The words of God and Jesus are "Spirit" in the sense that they are inspired, or in-spirit-ed, with and by the Spirit of God. All Scripture is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). We are born again of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5), and yet also by the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). God's Spirit works in us in many ways, one of them is through His word.

6:64 Jesus knew about Judas but still was hurt when the betrayal happened, and even "trusted" him (Ps. 41:9; Jn. 13:18). The Lord Jesus had human nature; and it is part of our nature to know something on one level, and yet for love's sake we choose not to know it.

6:69 *We have believed* – Jesus responded by saying that one of them would betray Him (v. 70). He knew that these believers in Him had too positive a view of themselves as a community. The church today must bear this in mind.

7:3 Jesus was rejected by His family; He knows how we feel when this happens to us for His sake.

7:7 The testimony of Jesus against this world wasn't very overt; it wasn't in the words He spoke, at least not those recorded in the Gospels. His testimony was perhaps in His perfect life, in His caring for and saving those whom this world ignored, despised and

had gone to the feast, then he also went to it, not publicly but as it were in secret. ¹¹ The Jews searched for him at the feast, and asked: Where is he? ¹² And there was much murmuring among the crowds concerning him. Some said: He is a good man. Others said: Not so. He deceives the people. ¹³ Yet no one spoke openly about him for fear of the Jews.

Jesus Teaches at the Feast

¹⁴ When the feast was half way through, Jesus went into the temple and taught. ¹⁵ The Jews marvelled, saying: How is it that this man has learning, when he has never had an education? ¹⁶ Jesus answered them and said: My teaching is not mine, but His that sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know of this teaching, whether it is of God, or I speak from myself. ¹⁸ He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but he that seeks the glory of Him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. ¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law and yet none of you does the law? Why do you seek to kill me? ²⁰ The crowd answered: You are crazy! Who seeks to kill you? ²¹ Jesus answered and said to them: I did one work and you all marvel because of it! ²² Moses has given you circumcision (not

that it is of Moses but of the fathers) and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me, because I made a man completely whole on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment. ²⁵ Therefore, some of those from Jerusalem asked: Is this not he whom they seek to kill? ²⁶ And lo, he speaks openly and they say nothing to him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ? ²⁷ However we know from where this man is; but when the Christ comes, no one knows from where he is. ²⁸ Therefore Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: You both know me, and know from where I am, and that I have not come of myself. But He that sent me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹ I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent me. ³⁰ Therefore they sought to take him, but no one laid his hand on him- because his hour had not yet come. ³¹ But of the crowd many believed in him; and they said: When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than those which this man has done? ³² The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning him, and the chief priests

destroyed. Our testimony also is more in our actions and personalities than in specific words of testimony.

7:20 Literally: “You have a demon!”— This was the language of the day for saying ‘You are mad!’, and should not be taken literally.

7:23 Sometimes we have to break one command or principle in order to keep another. God has arranged things in this way so that we think carefully about the meaning of our actions and the reason for our obedience to Him.

and the Pharisees sent officers to take him. ³³ Jesus replied: Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to Him that sent me. ³⁴ You shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, you cannot come. ³⁵ The Jews queried among themselves: Where will this man go that we shall not find him? Will he go to the diaspora among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? ³⁶ What is his meaning when he said: You shall seek me and shall not find me; and, Where I am, you cannot come? ³⁷ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ He that believes on me, as the scripture has said: From within him shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believed in him were to receive. For the Spirit had not yet been received, as Jesus had not yet been glorified. ⁴⁰ Therefore some of the crowd, when they heard these

words, said: This is truly the prophet! ⁴¹ Others said: This is the Christ. But some said: What! Does the Christ come out of Galilee? ⁴² Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes of the seed of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David was born? ⁴³ So there arose a division in the crowd because of him. ⁴⁴ And some of them would have taken him; but no one laid hands on him. ⁴⁵ The officers went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them: Why did you not bring him? ⁴⁶ The officers answered: Never has a man spoken like this man! ⁴⁷ The Pharisees therefore answered them: Are you also led astray? ⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers believed in him, or any of the Pharisees? ⁴⁹ But this rabble, which does not know the law, are accursed! ⁵⁰ Nicodemus (he that had earlier come to him by night, being one of them) ⁵¹ said to them: Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and knowing what he is

7:34 There's a hard logic here – we either seek Him now when we can find Him, or we will seek Him like the foolish girls of Mt. 25:11 will do – when it's all too late.

7:35, 36 It must've been so frustrating for Jesus to be so constantly misunderstood; His words and ideas were continually understood within different frames of reference and worldviews. When we experience the same, we know that He can empathize with us.

7:38 *Living water* – The Jewish hearers would've associated this with the Old Testament teaching that "living water" was to be used to cleanse lepers; and that "living water" would flow out of the temple to heal the world (Lev. 14:6; Ez. 47:1-9). We are to be the source of cleansing for others – which means we are intended to communicate our faith to them. And we, rather than any physical religious building, are to be the source of new life and cleansing for the world.

7:48 The fact the great and learned of this world haven't believed in Christ is no reason not to. Fact is, the minority are in the right. "How can so many be wrong?" really begs the answer: "Quite easily, according to the Bible and also human experience".

7:50 Nicodemus sets us a good example of speaking up for Jesus in the midst of secular society which has no time for Him, even if it means being mocked and despised.

doing? ⁵² They answered and said to him: Are you also of Galilee? Search the scrolls and you will see, that no prophet is to rise from Galilee. ⁵³ At that, each of them went home.

CHAPTER 8 Apr. 16 Oct. 16
A Woman Taken in Adultery

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² And early in the morning he again went into the temple, and all the people came to him; and he sat down and taught them. ³ And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery; and having placed her before him, ⁴ they said to him: Teacher. This woman has been caught in the very act of adultery! ⁵ Now, in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say? ⁶ And this they said to test him, so they might have some reason to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. ⁷ But when they continued asking him, he stood up and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸ And again he stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground. ⁹ And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the

eldest, to the last; and Jesus was left alone with the woman, with her still standing in the middle. ¹⁰ And Jesus stood up and said to her: Woman! Where are your accusers? Did no one condemn you? ¹¹ And she said: No one, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither do I condemn you. Go your way. From this time forward, sin no more.

Controversy with the Jews

¹² Again Jesus spoke to the crowd, saying: I am the light of the world. He that follows me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life. ¹³ The Pharisees replied to him: You testify of yourself. Your witness is not true. ¹⁴ Jesus answered and said to them: Even if I testify of myself, my witness is true. For I know from where I came and where I go; but you do not know where I come from, nor where I go to. ¹⁵ You judge after the flesh. I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and He who sent me. ¹⁷ Even in your law it is written, that the witness of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am he that testifies of myself; and the Father that sent me testifies of me. ¹⁹ They replied to him: Where is your Father? Jesus answered: You know

8:3 If they caught her in the act, then where was the man?

8:6 What did He write? Their sins? Or did He just doodle in the dust from sheer male embarrassment at being in the presence of a naked woman who clearly respected and loved Him?

8:12 *Light* – The Greek word can mean a torch, a burning flame held on a pole. There's a similarity of ideas with crucifixion; Jesus was lifted up on the pole, and thus becomes the light of our world, we understand everything in the context of His death there and all it means for us and demands of us.

8:19 The Pharisees studied the Bible all the time and could recite much of the Old

neither me, nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also. ²⁰ These words spoke he in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; and no one took him- because his hour had not yet come. ²¹ He replied again to them: I go away, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Where I go, you cannot come. ²² The Jews replied: Will he kill himself? Because he said: Where I go, you cannot come. ²³ And he said to them: You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. ²⁴ I replied to you, that you shall die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am he, you shall die in your sins. ²⁵ They replied to him: Who are you? Jesus said to them: Even that which I have spoken to you from the beginning. ²⁶ I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you. However, He that sent me is true, and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world. ²⁷ They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. ²⁸ Jesus continued: When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And He that sent me is with

me. He has not left me alone. For I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. ³⁰ As he spoke these things, many believed in him.

Controversy About Abraham

³¹ Jesus replied to those Jews that had believed him: If you abide in my word, then are you truly my disciples. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. ³³ They answered him: We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to anyone. What do you mean, you shall be made free? ³⁴ Jesus answered them: Truly, truly, I say to you: Everyone who commits sin is the servant of sin. ³⁵ And the servant does not stay in the house for ever. The son stays forever. ³⁶ If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham's seed. Yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak the things which I have seen with my Father, and you also do the things which you heard from your father. ³⁹ They answered and said to him: Our father is Abraham. Jesus said to them: If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But now you seek

Testament. But Jesus said they didn't know God. Knowing God is an experience, not head knowledge.

8:23 *From above... not of this world* – Doesn't mean that Jesus existed in Heaven before His birth. He was not 'of the world' in the sense that we are not 'of the world' (Jn. 17:16). But He like us was born in this world; we are in the world but not "of" it (Jn. 17:15).

8:37 In one sense they were physically Abraham's children; in another sense they weren't (v. 39). All those who believe in Christ and have been baptized into Him are the true children of Abraham and thereby God's people (Gal. 3:27-29).

to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I heard from God. This Abraham did not do. ⁴¹ You do the works of your father. They said to him: We were not born of fornication. We have one Father, even God. ⁴² Jesus said to them: If God were your Father, you would love me. For I came forth and am come from God. For neither have I come of myself, but He sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand my speech? Because you cannot hear my word! ⁴⁴ You are of your father the Devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ He that is of God hears the words of God. For this cause you do not hear them, because you are not of God. ⁴⁸ The Jews answered and said to him: Say we not

well that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? ⁴⁹ Jesus answered: I do not have a demon. I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. ⁵⁰ I do not seek my own glory. There is One that seeks and judges. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you: If a man keeps my word, he shall never see death. ⁵² The Jews said to him: Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, but you say: If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died, and the prophets who died? Whom do you make yourself? ⁵⁴ Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifies me, whom you say is your God. ⁵⁵ You have not known Him, but I know Him; and if I should say I know Him not, I shall be like you, a liar; but I know Him and keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and rejoiced. ⁵⁷ The Jews replied to him: You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them: Truly, I

8:44 "The devil" is a murderer. But "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 Jn. 3:15). The Devil must, therefore, die – but angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35-36) they are therefore immortal, and have eternal life abiding in them. "The devil" is therefore not an Angel. 1 Jn. 3:10 identifies the children of the Devil as those who obey their evil desires – the real Devil. Cain was the first murderer (Gen. 4:8,9). Cain was not a super-human person called the Devil, but an ordinary man, having the characteristics of the serpent and manifesting the flesh. "Deceit" – i.e. lies – proceed "from within, out of the heart of men" (Mk. 7:21,22).

8:56 The only time we read of Abraham rejoicing was when he laughed for joy at the promise that he would have a descendant (Gen. 17:17). He understood that the son he was having would be in the line from which God's Son, Messiah, would be born.

8:58 As God's Son, Jesus carried His Father's Name. "I am" may be a reference to this – although the same Greek phrase is used by the healed blind man in Jn. 9:9. To the Jews, Abraham was the greatest man who would ever live. Jesus is saying "I am

say to you: I am of higher status than Abraham ever was.⁵⁹ Therefore they took up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

CHAPTER 9 Apr. 17 Oct. 17

Jesus Cures a Blind Man

And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.² And his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?³ Jesus answered: Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be revealed in him.⁴ We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day. The night comes, when no one can work.⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.⁶ When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay,⁷ and said to him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). He went away therefore and washed, and went home seeing.⁸ His neighbours and those that had seen him previously, as a beggar, said: Is this

not he that sat and begged?⁹ Others said: It is he. Others said: No, but he is like him. He said: I am he.¹⁰ They replied to him: How then were your eyes opened?¹¹ He answered: The man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me: Go to Siloam and wash. So I went away and washed, and I received sight.¹² And they said to him: Where is he? He said: I do not know.¹³ They took him that was previously blind to the Pharisees.¹⁴ Now it was the Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.¹⁵ So the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight. And he said to them: He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed and I could see.¹⁶ Therefore, some of the Pharisees said: This man is not from God, because he keeps not the Sabbath. But others said: How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was division among them.¹⁷ Therefore they said to the man born blind: What do you say concerning him, in that he opened your eyes? And he said: He is a prophet!¹⁸ The Jews did not believe him, that he had been

now, as I stand here, more important than Abraham". As they stood there, Jesus was the one to be honoured rather than Abraham. He is saying 'I am now, more important than Abraham ever was'. Jesus does not say 'Before Abraham was, I was'.

9:3 Disease and suffering don't come necessarily as a punishment for sin. In our case, they come so that God's purpose may be manifested through them.'

9:6 The word of Christ [His spittle] mixed with clay [human flesh] brings sight.

9:7 This may have looked forward to baptism, the washing we must do once we 'see'.

9:11 *The man* – There was nothing in Jesus to give anyone the idea that He was God. This is a perversion of later human theology rather than the testimony of the Gospel records.

9:16 *This man is not from God, because he keeps not the Sabbath* – Sabbath keepers say the same today; but Jesus' answer remains the same for them too.

blind and had received his sight, until they called his parents, ¹⁹ and asked them: Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see? ²⁰ His parents answered and said: We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ But how he now sees, we do not know. Or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him! He is of age. He shall speak for himself. ²² These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews. For the Jews had agreed already, that if anyone should confess him to be Christ, he should be thrown out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents replied: He is of age, ask him! ²⁴ So they questioned the man that was born blind a second time, and said to him: Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner. ²⁵ He answered: Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see. ²⁶ They replied to him: What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? ²⁷ He answered them: I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Would you also become his disciples? ²⁸ And they reviled him

and said: You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know from where he came. ³⁰ The man answered and said to them: This is the marvel! You do not know from where he came, even though he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone be a worshiper of God and does His will, him He hears! ³² Since the world began it has never been heard of a man born blind having his eyes opened. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. ³⁴ They answered and said to him: You were altogether born in sins, and you teach us! And they excommunicated him. ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had excommunicated him; and on finding him, he said: Do you believe on the Son of God? ³⁶ He answered and said: Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? ³⁷ Jesus said to him: You have both seen him, and he it is that speaks with you. ³⁸ And he said: Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him. ³⁹ And Jesus said: For judgment I came into this world, that they that cannot see may see, and that they that see may

9:21 Their fear of religious disfellowship is contrasted with the fearless attitude of their son. Excommunication is a practice much abused by many religious groups.

9:31 The man reasoned that Jesus must have prayed to God in order for God to do this miracle; and been pleasing to God, for God heard Him to an amazing extent. He came to a very accurate understanding of the nature of Jesus and His relationship with His Father.

9:34 They threw Him out of the synagogue for believing in Jesus and for having been cured by Him. Typical religious abuse.

9:38 The man believed *after* His healing; the real possession of the Holy Spirit gifts enabled miracles to be done upon unbelievers and people like this man who were ignorant of Jesus (v. 25).

become blind. ⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said to him: Are we also blind? ⁴¹ Jesus said to them: If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say: We see, therefore your sin remains.

CHAPTER 10 Apr. 17 Oct. 17

Jesus as the Good Shepherd

Truly, truly, I say to you: He that enters not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ² But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens the gate, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he brings out all his sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him. For they do not know the voice of strangers. ⁶ This parable spoke Jesus to them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷ Je-

sus then said to them: Again, truly, truly, I say to you: I am the door of the sheepfold. ⁸ All that came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. By me if anyone enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief only comes so that he may steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and I know my own and my own know me. ¹⁵ Even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my

9:41 Knowledge / ‘seeing’ brings responsibility to Divine judgment.

10:5 There is something instinctively attractive to us about the words of Jesus. When we read the uninspired ‘gospels’, it’s clear almost instinctively to Christians that they aren’t the true words of Jesus.

10:9 The ‘entering in’ to the sheepfold [the church] is through baptism into Christ. There is no other way “in”.

10:12 This is an unusual shepherd – fighting with a wolf to the death for the sheep. Wolves don’t fight that desperately. But this one does. Sin appears a menace but something which can easily be overcome by a man – when in fact it can’t be overcome so easily, it is a bitter fight to the death.

10:15 *Knows me, and I know the Father* – The Greek verbs here are in the continuous tense. God grows in knowledge of Jesus, and Jesus grows in knowledge of God. It’s a dynamic relationship between them; eternity won’t be ‘the same old scene’ for us, we too will grow in knowing God – and even vice versa.

10:16 *Other sheep* – The Gentiles?

voice, and they shall become one flock with one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again. This command I received from my Father. ¹⁹ Because of these words, again a division arose among the Jews. ²⁰ And many of them said: He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to him? ²¹ Others said: These are not the sayings of one possessed with a demon. Can a demon possessed person open the eyes of the blind?

The Unity of the Father and Son

²² It was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem. ²³ It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple along Solomon's porch. ²⁴ The Jews surrounded him and said to him: How long do you hold us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. ²⁵ Jesus answered them: I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify of me. ²⁶ But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. ²⁸ And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and

no one shall snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one. ³¹ Once again the Jews took up stones to stone him. ³² Jesus said to them: Many good works have I shown you from the Father. For which of those works do you stone me? ³³ The Jews answered him: For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, and because you, being a man, make yourself as God! ³⁴ Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your law: I said, you are gods? ³⁵ If he called those men gods, to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), ³⁶ do you say of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world: You blaspheme, because I said: I am the Son of God? ³⁷ If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. ³⁸ But if I do them, though you do not believe me, believe the works; that you may know and understand, that the Father is in me and I in the Father. ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. ⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹ Many came to him. And they said: John did no miracle,

10:30 The unity between Father and Son spoken of here is the same kind of unity possible between the Father and all His children (Jn. 17:21). The use of the neuter form for "one" (*hen esmen*) in Jn. 10:30 shows that the Father and Son aren't interchangeable – they are at one with each other, not one and the same.

10:33-36 Jesus denied being God. He quotes an example of how men can be called "gods", *elohim*; and He shows people are illogical to claim He thought He was God, when He had only said He was the *Son* of God.

but everything that John said about this man was true. ⁴² And many believed in him there.

CHAPTER 11 Apr. 18 Oct. 18

The Resurrection of Lazarus

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² And it was that Mary who had anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ The sisters therefore sent to him, saying: Lord, he whom you love is sick. ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said: This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, that thereby the Son of God may be glorified. ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ When he heard that Lazarus was sick, he therefore stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this, he said to the disciples: Let us go into Judea again. ⁸ The disciples said to him: Rabbi, only a few days ago the Jews wanted to stone you; and you want to go there again? ⁹ Jesus answered: Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles, because the

light is not in him. ¹¹ These things he spoke, and after this he said to them: Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. ¹² The disciples replied to him: Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of Lazarus' death; but they thought that he spoke of Lazarus taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus said to them plainly: Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him. ¹⁶ Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with him. ¹⁷ So when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in his tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near to Jerusalem, about three kilometres away. ¹⁹ And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary stayed in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² And even now, I know that whatever you shall ask of God, God will give you. ²³ Jesus said to her: Your brother shall rise again. ²⁴ Martha said to him: I know that

10:41 John did no miracles and preached a hard hitting message of repentance and preparation for the coming of Jesus. People flocked to hear him, accepting what he said, repented and were baptized. His own sincerity must therefore have been so obvious; it was this which gave him authority in the eyes and ears of his audiences. The same can be true in our preaching.

11:6 Lack of immediate answer to our requests doesn't mean God or Jesus haven't heard them. They have 'answered', but for various reasons, to glorify His Name the more, they may delay in 'coming' in response.

he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵ Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes on me, though he die, yet shall he live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes on me shall never die. Do you believe this? ²⁷ She said to him: Yes, Lord. I have believed you are the Christ, the Son of God, he that is to come into the world. ²⁸ And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here and calls you. ²⁹ And she, when she heard it, arose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ (Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still in the place where Martha met him). ³¹ The Jews then who were with her in the house and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Therefore, when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying to him: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who had come with her, he groaned in the

spirit and was disturbed, ³⁴ and said: Where have you laid him? They said to him: Lord, come and see. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ The Jews said: Look how he loved him! ³⁷ But some of them said: Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have also caused that this man should not have died? ³⁸ Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay across it. ³⁹ Jesus said: Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said to him: Lord, by this time the body stinks. For he has been dead four days. ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her: Did I not say to you, that if you believed, you should see the glory of God? ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said: Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² And I know you hear me always, but because of the crowd that stands around I said it, that they may believe you did send me. ⁴³ And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come out! ⁴⁴ He that was dead came out, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to

11:24 Nothing is said here about an immortal soul which goes to reward in Heaven after death. Instead the emphasis is upon the literal bodily resurrection of believers from the dead, when Christ returns. By baptism we identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and can share in this great hope (Rom. 6:3-5).

11:38 *Groaning* – In prayer to God. Likewise the ‘weeping’ of v. 35 was in prayer – Rom. 8:26 says that Jesus prays for us now with groaning. We should therefore take our prayer life seriously, knowing that there is such intense mediation going on for us in Heaven itself, before the throne of God.

11:41 Jesus thanked God for the answer to His prayers even before the answer had happened, i.e., before Lazarus had come forth. Jesus was no hypocrite – He was practicing what He had taught in Mk. 11:24: “When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for”.

them: Loose him, and let him go away. ⁴⁵ Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to Mary and saw what he did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

The Response of the Pharisees

⁴⁷ The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: What will we do? For this man does many miracles. ⁴⁸ If we leave him alone, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. ⁴⁹ But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them: You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, so that the whole nation does not perish. ⁵¹ Now this he said not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation. ⁵² And not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day forward, they took advice how they might put him to death. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but departed from there into

the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he stayed with the disciples. ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand; and many from the countryside went to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They looked for Jesus, and spoke one with another, as they stood in the temple: What do you think? That he will not come to the feast? ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, they were to inform them, so that they might arrest him.

CHAPTER 12 Apr. 19 Oct. 19

Mary Anoints Jesus

Therefore, six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made him supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat and ate with him. ³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, the one that would betray him, said: ⁵ Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? ⁶ Now

11:44 The miracle was not only of resurrection; but that a man with tied feet and hands could get out of graveclothes and walk across a cave to its entrance and out into the open air. The wonders which God does in our lives contain so many ‘smaller’ wonders, the more we analyze them.

11:52 The cross should elicit unity between God’s children. This should be especially seen at the breaking of bread meeting, when we gather together to remember Christ’s death. This is not the place for division and exclusion of God’s children, but for celebrating our unity.

this he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus replied: Leave her alone, she intended to keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ The poor you have always with you, but me you do not have always. ⁹ The common people of the Jews learned that he was there, and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

¹² The next day, a great crowd that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took the branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, and cried out: Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel! ¹⁴ And Jesus, having found a young donkey, sat upon it- as it is written: ¹⁵ Fear not, daughter of Zion! Look, your King

comes, sitting on an donkey's colt. ¹⁶ These things his disciples did not understand at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him, and that they had done these things to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that was with him, when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, made testimony. ¹⁸ For this cause also the crowd went and met him, for they heard that he had done this miracle. ¹⁹ The Pharisees complained to one another: You see that you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.

Jesus Speaks of His death

²⁰ Now there were certain Greeks among those that went to worship at the feast. ²¹ These went to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him: Sir, can we see Jesus? ²² Philip went and told Andrew, and then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus told them: The hour comes that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you: Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He

12:6 Someone with the perception of Jesus surely knew what was going on. But He didn't challenge Judas about it, in the hope he would repent. When we see the failures of others, it may not be wise to immediately challenge them.

12:7 Despite so clearly predicting His death, it seems only Mary really understood. In his preaching of the Gospel, John was saying that the male disciples – the public preachers of the Gospel – hadn't understood the most basic part of it, i.e. the death of Christ, but one *woman* did. Thus John is holding up a *woman* as the role model for all his hearers and readers.

12:24 Jesus perceived the great potential, the fruit, in the awful experience He was about to go through. We can face our sufferings likewise.

12:25 We must die first in order to live eternally. This is the symbolism of baptism – going under the water is like death with Jesus, coming up out of the water is like

that loves his life loses it, and he that hates his life in this world, shall keep it to everlasting life. ²⁶ If anyone desires to serve me, he must follow me. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him. ²⁷ Now is my soul disturbed; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name. Therefore, there came a voice out of Heaven: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. ²⁹ The crowd that stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus responded: This voice has not come for my sake, but for your sakes. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. ³³ But this he said to signify by what manner of death he should die. ³⁴ The crowd asked him: We have heard out of the law that the Christ abides forever; and how do you say: The Son of Man must be lifted up?

Who is this Son of Man? ³⁵ Jesus replied to them: Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness does not overtake you. He that walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light. Jesus spoke these things, then he departed and hid himself from them.

Belief in Jesus

³⁷ But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him. ³⁸ So that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, when he spoke: Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ³⁹ Because of this they could not believe, because Isaiah also said: ⁴⁰ He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts, and turn, so that I should heal them. ⁴¹ These things said Isaiah, because he foresaw his glory, and he spoke about

resurrection with Him (Rom. 6:3-5). But we must live out this principle in daily life, sacrificing what we could have in this life so that we might live eternally.

12:27 This is a wonderful insight into the internal thought process of Jesus as He struggled with temptation. Because He endured temptation, He is able to support us when we are tempted (Heb. 4:15,16).

12:32 We need to reconstruct in our own minds the picture of Christ hanging crucified upon the cross. If we are God's people, we will be drawn closer to Him by it. "All men" here doesn't refer to every human being, but to those who draw near to Jesus on the cross. This group of people are 'all things' to God.

12:34 *Son of man* – This was Jesus' favourite self-description. He thus emphasized His humanity, that He was one of us, of our nature.

12:40 God blinds the eyes of those who don't want to see. We must be careful not to slip into the downward spiral, but remain instead in an upward spiral of belief and response to that belief.

him. ⁴² Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. ⁴³ For they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God. ⁴⁴ And Jesus cried and said: He that believes on me does not believe on me, but on him that sent me. ⁴⁵ And he that sees me, sees him that sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in the darkness. ⁴⁷ And if anyone hear my sayings and keep them not, I judge him not. For I came not to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He that rejects me and receives not my sayings has one that judges him. The word that I spoke, the same shall judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I spoke not from myself, but the Father that sent me, He has given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.

⁵⁰ And I know that His commandment is everlasting life. The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father has said to me: So I speak.

CHAPTER 13 Apr. 20 Oct. 20

The Last Supper

Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come, that he should depart out of this world to his Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² And during supper, when the Devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which

12:42 Many people today 'believe' but will not openly admit it, because they are worried what people will think of them. God arranged circumstances so that rulers like Nicodemus and Joseph 'came out' openly; but others didn't respond to that and because they hid their candle under a bucket, they lost their faith, their light went out.

12:43 If we believe and confess that faith, through baptism and an open life of commitment, then God glorifies us – in His own book, in His own way, even if the world doesn't see it.

12:48 It's as if Bible verses, the words of Jesus, will be quoted back to us at judgment day and we will be asked how we responded to them. There will be a process of judgment, not just a yes / no statement from our Judge.

13:1 To give your life for God's people is 'love to the end'. Jesus defined that for us in His crucifixion.

13:3, 4 We sense in these verses the very definite sense of purpose which there was in Jesus. We who carry His cross should have the same. The stream of small decisions we face each day we will make in the context of the purpose-driven life which we have in Christ.

13:5 To wash the guests' feet was the job of the lowest servant. Jesus showed us that true greatness is in humble service, being a "servant of all". Even Peter struggled to

he was girded. ⁶ When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him: Lord, are you going to wash my feet? ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him: What I am doing you do not comprehend now, but later you shall understand. ⁸ Peter said to him: You shall never wash my feet! Jesus answered him: If I do not wash you, you have no part with me. ⁹ Simon Peter said to him: Lord, wash not only my feet but also my hands and my head. ¹⁰ Jesus said to him: He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you. ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said: Not all of you are clean. ¹² So when he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and sat down again, he said to them: Do you comprehend what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me teacher and lord, and you say well; for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one an-

other's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you: A servant is not greater than his lord, neither is one sent greater than he that sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, and if you do them, you will be blessed. ¹⁸ I speak not of you all. I know whom I have chosen; but the scripture must be fulfilled: He that eats my bread lifted up his heel against me. ¹⁹ From this time forward I will tell you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you: He that receives whoever I send receives me, and he that receives me, receives Him that sent me. ²¹ When Jesus had said this, he was disturbed in his spirit, and testified: Truly, truly, I say to you: One of you shall betray me. ²² The disciples looked at each other, wondering of whom he spoke. ²³ There was at the table reclining on Jesus' chest one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned

understand the huge extent of this principle (v. 7) and we also find it hard to grasp.

13:8 *No part* – This could be a reference to the vital importance of baptism in order to be “in Christ”; “he who believes *and* is baptized shall be saved” (Jn. 3:3-5); unless a person is born of water and spirit, they cannot enter God’s Kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5).

13:16 Jesus repeatedly describes Himself as “sent” by God; He therefore recognized that God was greater than Him, as He stated specifically in Jn. 14:28. He wasn’t therefore ‘God’ in a Trinitarian sense.

13:19 The purpose of prophecy / Biblical prediction is not to give us a road map of events in the future, but rather so that when events happen, we will be able to understand them in their Divine context.

13:20 We are the representatives of Jesus in this world, and our behaviour should be appropriate.

13:23 This other disciple was probably John. In preaching the Gospel, John de-emphasized himself. He describes himself as simply a disciple whom Jesus loved. We should have such self-effacement when preaching Christ, focusing upon Him rather than ourselves.

to him, and said to him: Tell us who it is of whom he speaks. ²⁵ He leaning back, as he was on Jesus' breast, said to him: Lord, who is it? ²⁶ Jesus answered: It is he to whom I gave the morsel of bread after I dipped it. When he had dipped the morsel, he had given it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ Then after Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him: What you are about to do, do quickly. ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew for what reason Jesus spoke this to Judas. ²⁹ Some thought because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus said to him: Buy what things we have need of for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ He then having received the morsel went out immediately into the night.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denials

³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said: Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² And God shall glorify him in Himself, and will glorify him immediately. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me, but as I said to the Jews, where I go, you cannot

come. So now I say to you. ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you: Love one another. Even as I have loved you, you also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know you are my disciples- if you have love for one another. ³⁶ Simon Peter said to him: Lord, where do you go? Jesus answered: Where I go, you cannot follow now, but you shall follow afterwards. ³⁷ Peter said to him: Lord, why cannot I follow you even now? I will lay down my life for you! ³⁸ Jesus answered: Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you: The cock shall not crow, till you have denied me three times.

CHAPTER 14 Apr. 20 Oct. 20

Knowing the Father and Son

Do not let your heart be disturbed. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And where I go, you know the way. ⁵ Thomas said to him:

13:26 This was the sign of being the specially favoured guest. Realizing the greatness of Christ's love for us leads us to either repent, or as Judas, go out into the darkness.

13:34 What's "new" about this commandment is to love *as Jesus has loved us*. And He died for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

13:35 Our unusual love for others should be a startling witness which grabs the attention of those around us.

14:2 God's house refers to His temple, His family – not to Heaven as a location. There is a specific place for each of us within His family and purpose. "I go" is in answer to Peter's question of 13:36: 'Where are you going?'. Jesus was going to the cross, and would 'come again' in His resurrection. These verses do not teach that we will go to Heaven.

Lord, we do not know where you go. How do we discern the way? ⁶ Jesus said to him: I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. ⁷ If you had truly known me, you would have truly known my Father also. From this time forward you will truly know Him and will have seen Him. ⁸ Philip said to him: Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. ⁹ Jesus said to him: Philip, have I been with you such a long time, and still you do not truly know me? He that has seen me has seen the Father. How do you ask: Show us the Father? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me does His works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. ¹² Truly, truly, I say to you: He that believes in me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father. ¹³ And whatever you shall ask in my name,

that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you shall ask anything in my name, that will I do.

The Comforter

¹⁵ If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that he may be with you for ever- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. For it neither sees him nor knows him. You truly know him, for he abides with you and shall be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you desolate as orphans. I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you will see me. Because I live, you shall live also. ²⁰ In that day, you shall truly know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you. ²¹ He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him: Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to

14:6 Non-Christian religions therefore cannot lead us to God in truth.

14:9 'Seeing' in John's Gospel often means to understand. Nobody can literally see God, but Jesus has revealed Him to us (Jn. 1:18); we can 'see' Him insofar as we 'see' or understand Jesus.

14:10 The words and works of Jesus are paralleled here. Our words too must be backed up by our actions and congruent with them.

14:13 This is not a blanket promise to do whatever anybody asks; whatever we ask that glorifies God, He will do.

14:19 The resurrection of Jesus guarantees our resurrection – if we are baptized into Him and His new life is lived in us (Rom. 6:3-5).

14:21 *Has... and keeps* – Correct knowledge of Christ's word is important. We cannot keep His word without knowing what it is.

14:22, 23 The reason why not everyone 'gets it' about God and Jesus is because they don't keep their word.

us, and not to the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said to him: If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him; and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ He that does not love me, does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. ²⁵ These things have I spoken to you, while still with you. ²⁶ But the comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and cause you to remember all that I said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give it to you. Let not your heart be disturbed, neither let it be fearful. ²⁸ You heard how I said to you: I go away and I come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father. For the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer say much to you. For the prince of the world comes; but he has

no claim on me. ³¹ And he comes so that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, thus I shall now do. Arise, let us leave here.

CHAPTER 15 Apr. 21 Oct. 21

The True Vine

I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. ² Every branch in me that carries no fruit, he prunes away; and every branch that carries fruit, he cleanses it, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can you, except you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him, the same carries much fruit. For severed from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If a man does not abide in me, he is thrown out as a branch and withers, and these are gathered and thrown into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in me and

14:26 The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, therefore had special relevance to the disciples who heard Jesus; it brought all things He had said to them back to their memory, so that they could write the inspired Gospel records.

14:27 *Peace* – In Hebrew, *shalom*. Jewish people called out “Shalom!” to each other, but the “Shalom” of Jesus isn’t mere words but a real peace which can be felt, known, experienced.

14:28 *The Father is greater than I* – This clearly refutes the idea that Jesus is the same as God. God was greater than Jesus.

15:1, 2 Jesus doesn’t say “I am the trunk and you are branches”. He is us and we are Him. This is how intimately connected He is with us, and why no branch can claim to not be in association with the other branches.

15:4, 5 True spiritual fruit cannot be produced by those outside of Christ.

15:6 If we go out of association with the vine, we will wither. Christianity can’t be lived in isolation from other believers.

15:7 John also writes that if we ask anything according to *God’s* will, then we will be

my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you. ⁸ Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so shall you be my disciples. ⁹ Even as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. ¹² This is my commandment: That you love one another, even as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: That a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends, if you do the things which I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants. For the servant does not know what his lord does; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain. So that whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it to you.

¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you may love one another.

The Believer and the World

¹⁸ If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things will they do to you for my name's sake, because they do not truly know Him that sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He that hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ All this happens so that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law: They hated me without a cause. ²⁶ And when the

heard (1 Jn. 5:14). But if God's word abides in us, then we will ask according to *our* will and be heard – because our will becomes God's will if His word abides in us. We will not ask what *we* want but what *God* wills – His will shall become *our* will.

15:15 Islam and many other religious systems speak much of 'submission'. But we are the friends of Jesus, not His slaves. Our work for Him is from a motive of love, and is performed in active co-operation with Him as we work together to the same end – the glorification of God.

15:16 The initiative was with God and Jesus – because we are saved by pure grace. We should take the initiative in showing love and grace to others, as God did to us.

15:18-20 We should therefore expect opposition from the world, as predicted in the opening promise of the Bible in Gen. 3:15.

15:22 Knowledge of God's word brings responsibility.

Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me. ²⁷ And you also shall testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

CHAPTER 16 Apr. 21 Oct. 21

These things have I spoken to you, so that you should not be made to stumble. ² They shall put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time is coming, when whoever kills you shall think that he offers service to God. ³ And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor me. ⁴ But these things have I spoken to you, so that when the time comes, you may remember what I told you. And these things I did not say to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I go to Him that sent me; and none of you asks me, Where do you go? ⁶ But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I do not

go away, the Comforter will not come to you. I will send him to you. ⁸ And he, when he comes, will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. ⁹ Of sin, because they do not believe in me. ¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to the Father and you see me no more. ¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. ¹² I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he shall guide you into all the truth. For he shall not speak from himself; but whatever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify me; for he shall take what is mine and shall declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things, whatever the Father has, are mine. Therefore I said: that he shall take of mine and declare it to you.

Jesus Promises to See the Disciples Again

¹⁶ A little while, and you will see me no more; and then a little while, and you shall see me, because I go to

16:2 Jesus didn't tell His disciples to leave the synagogues, even though they were full of false teaching and behaviour. He predicted that His followers would be excommunicated from the synagogues because they taught the Truth about Him. The early church grew initially from witness made to Christ in the synagogues. We shouldn't be worried about 'guilt by association' with those who believe and act wrongly; we should try to teach them and witness to them about the real Christ, and in time they will exclude us if they are not of the Truth.

16:5 *None of you asks* – Did Jesus say this in tones of sadness and disappointment, or of irritated criticism? Consider how He spoke v. 31 also.

16:12 Have a look at 1 Cor. 3:2 and Heb. 5:11. These verses in the later New Testament allude here. The New Testament writers such as Paul were so full of the words of Jesus that they consciously and unconsciously alluded to them all the time. The word of Jesus should so abide in us that we do likewise.

the Father. ¹⁷ Some of his disciples questioned each other: What is this that he said to us? A little while and you will see me no more; and then a little while and you shall see me, because I go to the Father? ¹⁸ They said: What is this that he said? A little while? We cannot decipher what he said. ¹⁹ Jesus perceived that they wanted to ask him, and he said to them: Do you inquire among yourselves what I said? A little while and you will see me no more, and then a little while and you shall see me? ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you: You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy! ²¹ A woman when she is in labour has sorrow, because her hour comes; but when she has delivered the child, she does not remember her anguish, because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² You now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one will take away from you. ²³ And in that day, you shall ask me no questions. Truly, truly, I say to you: If you shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my name. ²⁴ So far you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be made full. ²⁵ These things have I spoken to you in figurative language. The

hour comes, when I shall no longer speak to you in figurative language, but shall show you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ In that day you shall ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I will pray to the Father for you. ²⁷ For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from the Father. ²⁸ I came from the Father and came into the world. Now I leave the world and go to the Father. ²⁹ His disciples said: Now you speak plainly and not in figurative language! ³⁰ Now we are sure that you know all things, and do not need anyone to question you. By this we believe you came from God. ³¹ Jesus answered them: Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour comes, yes, has come, when you shall be scattered, every man to his own home, and you shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. ³³ These things have I spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good courage; I have overcome the world.

CHAPTER 17 Apr. 22 Oct. 22

Jesus' Prayer to God

These things spoke Jesus, and lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he said: Father, the hour comes. Glorify Your son, that the son may glorify

16:17 This is a paradox – the believers would see Jesus when they could no longer see Him. The work of the Comforter is such that we can as it were see Jesus as realistically as the disciples did during His life on earth. But this is *if* we let the Comforter operate fully.

16:33 *I have overcome* – But He had not yet died and thereby overcome the world. He so believed that He would overcome that He spoke as if He already had.

you,² even as You gave him authority over all flesh, so that he should give eternal life to all whom You have given him.³ And this is everlasting life, that they should know You, the only true God, and him whom You sent, Jesus Christ.⁴ I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You gave me to do.⁵ And now Father, glorify me with Your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was.⁶ I manifested Your Name to the men whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were and You gave them to me, and they have kept Your word.⁷ Now they know that all things, whatever You have given me, are from You.⁸ For the words which You gave me I have given to them, and they received them, and knew as a truth that I came forth from You;

and they believed that You did send me.⁹ I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given me; for they are Yours.¹⁰ All things that are mine are Yours, and Yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.¹¹ I am no more in the world; but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them whom You have given me in Your Name, that they may be one, even as we are one.¹² While I was with them, I kept them in Your Name which You have given me, and I guarded them; and not one of them perished except the son of perdition, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.¹³ Now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves.¹⁴ I have given them Your word, and the world hated

17:3 “Know” is in the Greek continuous tense. We will spend eternity growing to know God. This is what eternal life will be about. If we don’t want to know God now, then there will be no point giving us eternity in God’s Kingdom to do this.

17:5 We need to remember that the Lord was speaking, and John was writing, against a Jewish background. The language of ‘pre-existence’ was common in Jewish thinking and writing. To be ‘with God’ didn’t mean, in Jewish terms, to be up there in heaven with God literally. Mary had favour *para* God (Lk. 1:30) in the same way as Jesus had glory *para* God, but this doesn’t mean she pre-existed or was in Heaven with God with her “favour”. The Torah supposedly pre-existed, everything on earth was a pattern of the pre-existing ideas of those things which were held in the plan and mind of God in Heaven. John 17:5 has reference to these things: “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed”. The Talmud and Genesis Rabbah speak of the “Throne of Glory” pre-existing before the world existed. And the Lord Jesus seems to be alluding to that. The Jewish mind wouldn’t have understood the Lord Jesus to be making any claim here to have bodily, physically existed before birth. Peter reflected Jewish thinking when he wrote (albeit under inspiration) that Jesus was “foreknown” before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20 ESV). Think through the implications of being “foreknown” – the Greek word used is the root of the English word ‘prognosis’. If God ‘foreknew’ His Son, the Son was not literally existent next to Him at the time of being ‘foreknown’. Otherwise the language of ‘foreknowing’ becomes meaningless.

17:14–18 We are to be “in” the world, but not “of” the spirit of this world.

them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out from the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. ¹⁶ They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent me into the world, even so I send them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ Neither for these only do I pray, but for those also that believe in me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they may also be one in us; that the world may believe You did send me. ²² And the glory which You have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one. ²³ I in them and You in me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know You did send me and that You have loved them just as You loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also whom You have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which You have given me. For You loved me from before the

foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, the world did not know You; but I knew You, and these knew that You sent me. ²⁶ And I declared to them Your Name, and will declare it, so that the love with which You loved me may be in them, and I in them.

CHAPTER 18 Apr. 22 Oct. 22

Jesus in Gethsemane

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden into which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, the one who betrayed him, also knew the place. For Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ Judas along with a detachment of temple guards whom he had been given, and the servants of the chief priests, and the Pharisees, arrived there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Jesus knowing all the things that must come upon him, went forward and said to them: Whom do you seek? ⁵ They answered him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them: I am he (Judas, the one who betrayed him, was standing with them). ⁶ When he said to them:

17:23 The unity of believers was a major theme in the Lord's mind as He faced His death. It should be of paramount importance to us too.

17:26 God's Name refers to His characteristics. As the Angel declared these to Moses as he hid in a cave, humbled by God's glory passing by (Ex. 34:4-6), so Jesus declared that Name to perfection in His death. He did this in the life He lived ("I made known to them your name"), but in a very special way at the crucifixion ("and will make it known"). The result of us perceiving this in the cross is that we shall love one another, with the love of Christ.

18:4 *Knowing all... went forward* – His bravery and sense of mission appears the greater when we realize that He 'knew all' that would come. We are to carry His cross, and have His spirit.

18:6 The "I am" was probably a reference to His Father's Name which Jesus carried.

I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them: Whom do you seek? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. ⁸ Jesus answered: I told you that I am he. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way—⁹ that the word might be fulfilled which he spoke: Of those whom you have given me I lost not one. ¹⁰ Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. Now the servant's name was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter: Put the sword into its sheath. The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

Jesus Before the High Priest

¹² So the detachment of temple guards and their chief captain and the magistrates' attendants of the Jews seized Jesus and bound him, ¹³ and led him to Annas first. For he was father in law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴ It was Caiaphas that had counselled the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. ¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest; and he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest. ¹⁶ But Peter was standing outside the door. So

the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the maid who kept watch at the door. ¹⁷ The maid keeping watch at the door said to Peter: Are you also one of this man's disciples? He said: I am not! ¹⁸ Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of coals. For it was cold, and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. ¹⁹ The high priest asked Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world. I often taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and have never spoken in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those that have heard me what I spoke to them. Behold, these know the things which I said. ²² And when he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying: Do you answer the high priest so? ²³ Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, testify of the evil, but if well, why do you hit me? ²⁴ Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. ²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him: Are you also one of his disci-

The fact He came in His Father's Name (Jn. 5:43) is quite normal and to be expected, but it in no way suggests He was one and the same as His Father.

18:10, 11 This incident was a contradiction of Jesus' stated principle that His servants did *not* fight, because His Kingdom is not yet (18:36). We can embarrass and shame Jesus even now by the contradiction between our lives and His life in the eyes of the world, to whom we are His representatives.

18:15 *Another disciple* – John, the author of the Gospel, doesn't push himself nor his own name in the preaching of the Gospel. Neither should we.

18:22 Jesus did not literally turn the other cheek and invite more abuse; instead He challenged His abusers.

ples? He denied and said: I am not! ²⁶ One of the servants of the high priest, being a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said: Did I not see you in the garden with him? ²⁷ Peter denied again; and immediately the cock crew.

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ They lead Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium; but it was early, and so they did not enter into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled and might eat the Passover. ²⁹ Pilate went out to them, and said: What accusation do you bring against this man? ³⁰ They answered and said to him: If this man were not an evildoer, we should not have delivered him up to you. ³¹ Pilate replied to them: Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law. The Jews said to him: It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. ³² That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying by what manner of death he should die. ³³ Pilate therefore went into the Praetorium and

called Jesus, and said to him: Are you the King of the Jews? ³⁴ Jesus answered: Do you say this of yourself, or did others tell it to you concerning me? ³⁵ Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you to me. What have you done? ³⁶ Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but my kingdom is not from here. ³⁷ Pilate replied to him: Are you a king then? Jesus answered: You say that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end I came into the world, that I should testify to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice. ³⁸ Pilate said to him: What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them: I find no crime in him! ³⁹ But you have a custom, that I should release to you one prisoner at the Passover. Will you have me release to you the King of the Jews? ⁴⁰ Therefore they cried out: Not this

18:28 The legalistic mind is very careful not to break the letter of the Law whilst committing the awful sin of crucifying God's Son.

18:36 The Kingdom of Christ will come when He returns, at His second coming. One implication of that is that true Christians will not seek to enforce His principles and Kingdom upon this world in this time by using violence. There is no such thing as a 'just war'.

18:40 Barabbas is a symbol of us all. According to Jewish tradition at the time (*Pesach* 8.6) "They may slaughter the Passover lamb... for one whom they [the authorities] have promised to release from prison". The Passover amnesty freed a man justly condemned to death – on account of the death of the lamb. We can imagine the relief and joy and almost unbelief of Barabbas, as he watched or reflected upon the crucifixion of Jesus – that he who rightfully should have been there on the cross, was delivered from such a death because of the cross of Christ. The image of condemned prisoners being released due to the death of Messiah is an Old Testament figure for our redemption from slavery.

man but Barabbas! (Now Barabbas was a bandit).

CHAPTER 19 Apr. 23 Oct. 23

S^o Pilate had Jesus scourged. ² And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple garment. ³ And they came to him, and said: Hail, King of the Jews! And they struck him with their hands. ⁴ Pilate went out again to the Jews, and said: Look, I bring him out to you, so you may know that I find no crime in him. ⁵ Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate said to them: Behold the man! ⁶ When the chief priests and the servants saw him, they cried out: Crucify him! Crucify him! Pilate said to them: Take him yourselves and crucify him. For I find no crime in him. ⁷ The Jews answered him: We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. ⁸ When Pilate heard this he was even more afraid. ⁹ And he went back into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus: Where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ Pilate said to him: Why do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have the power to release you and have the power to crucify you? ¹¹ Jesus answered him: You would have no power against me unless it was given to you from

above. So the man that delivered me to you has the greater sin. ¹² Upon this, Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, saying: If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone that makes himself a king speaks against Caesar! ¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews: Behold, your King! ¹⁵ They cried out: Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate said to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Caesar! ¹⁶ Therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

¹⁷ So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And there was written: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. ²⁰ This title many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city; and it was written

19:11 Let's remember that all our abusers are ultimately in the hand of God. The power of evil men is ultimately from God, seeing that 'Satan' doesn't exist.

19:15 *No king* – The Old Testament clearly taught that God was Israel's King and they were therefore His Kingdom. Therefore by saying this, the Jews were declaring themselves no longer God's Kingdom.

in Hebrew, in Latin and in Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Do not write, The King of the Jews; but that: He claimed, I am King of the Jews. ²² Pilate answered: What I have written I have written. ²³ The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. ²⁴ They said to each other, Let us not tear it but cast lots for it, to determine whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled, which said: They divided my garments among them, and for my robe they cast lots. ²⁵ These things the soldiers did. There was standing by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by, he said to his mother: Woman, behold your son! ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple: Behold, your mother! And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. ²⁸ After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now finished, so that the scripture

might be accomplished, said: I thirst. ²⁹ Nearby was a vessel full of vinegar. So they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon a hyssop stick, and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said: It is finished! And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. ³¹ The Jews, because it was the preparation day, and so that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the Sabbath (for the day of that Sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs be broken so that they might be taken away. ³² Therefore the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ However one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out of his side. ³⁵ And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. ³⁶ For these things happened so that the scripture might be fulfilled: A bone of him shall not be broken. ³⁷ And again another scripture says:

19:20 *Written in Hebrew, in Latin, in Greek* – This explains the slight differences between the Gospel records in the descriptions of the title on the cross.

19:26 Jesus would've motioned with His eyes towards John – Mary was to see John now as her son. But tragically and so painfully, when Mary first heard the words, she would likely have understood them to mean 'Look at me here'. If we find our lives tragic, then think of Jesus crucified, with men gambling over His one valuable possession, i.e. His coat, which probably His mother had made – and she was watching it all.

19:29 Hyssop isn't very long, therefore Jesus was not lifted up very high above the earth, contrary to the impression given by Catholic crosses and architecture.

19:36 We are the body of Christ, His bones (Eph. 5:30).

They shall look on him whom they pierced.

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸ And after these things Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus (but secretly for fear of the Jews), asked of Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. Therefore he came and took his body away. ³⁹ And there came also Nicodemus, he who came to him at the first by night; but now he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds {⁴⁵ kg.} weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as it is the custom of the Jews to bury. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb wherein no one had lain. ⁴² There, because of the Jews' preparation day, they laid Jesus (for the tomb was nearby).

CHAPTER 20 Apr. 24 Oct. 24

Mary Magdalene Meets the Risen Jesus

Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been tak-

en away from the tomb. ² She ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them: They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him! ³ Peter with the other disciple therefore went out and went to the tomb. ⁴ They ran there together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came first to the tomb. ⁵ Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not enter. ⁶ Simon Peter arrived behind him and entered into the tomb, and he saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the napkin that had been upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple also entered, he who had arrived first to the tomb; and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ So the disciples went away again to their own home. ¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. So, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ And they said to her: Woman, why do you weep? She said

19:38 Only close relatives could ask for the corpse of the crucified. Beholding the cross motivated Joseph to 'come out' openly for Jesus, feeling as part of His family.

19:39 This is a huge amount, more than the Caesars were buried with. The cross motivated Nicodemus to spend his wealth to honour Christ.

20:7 After Jesus rose, it seems the first thing He did was to fold up His graveclothes. We sense a great calm about Him – the peace which comes to all those who have identified with His death and resurrection through baptism and living in Him.

20:13 Sometimes we can be so distracted by our immediate situation, sorrow or bitterness, that we fail to see the glorious answer and resolution of God is there right before our eyes.

to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned herself around and saw Jesus standing there; but did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her: Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him: Sir, if you have taken him from here, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. ¹⁶ Jesus said to her: Mary. She turned and said to him: Rabboni! Which is to say, teacher. ¹⁷ Jesus said to her: Don't keep touching me; for I am not right now going to ascend to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them: I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples: I have seen the Lord! And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹ When it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and for fear

of the Jews, the doors were locked where the disciples were; and Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them: Peace to you. ²⁰ And when he had said this, he showed to them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus again said to them: Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, even so send I you. ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. ²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him: We have seen the Lord! But he said to them: Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and said: Peace to you. ²⁷ Then he said to Tho-

20:17 *Touch me not* – The Greek means ‘Don’t keep grabbing hold of me’; she thought He was about to go to Heaven any moment and was trying to keep hold of Him so He didn’t; but He comforted her that she needn’t worry, He was not right then at that moment planning on ascending to Heaven.

20:17 *My Father... Your Father... My God... Your God* – Jesus didn’t want His exalted status post His resurrection to become a barrier between Him and His followers. He calls God “my God” even *after* His resurrection. This destroys the Trinitarian argument that Jesus was only less than God during His mortal life. No. Even *after* His resurrection He emphasizes that God is still “my God” and that He has an analogous relationship with God as God and Father as we can have also with the same God. He is our pattern to follow, rather than something to be gazed at like an icon.

20:20 *Were glad* – The Biblical record doesn’t use superlative language to record events such as the resurrection and crucifixion of the Lord. This is the mark of Divine inspiration.

mas: Reach here your finger and see my hands, and reach here your hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless but believing. ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord and my God. ²⁹ Jesus said to him: Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed. ³⁰ Many other signs Jesus did in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name.

CHAPTER 21 Apr. 24 Oct. 24

The Risen Jesus Appears in Galilee

After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and he manifested himself in this way: ² There was together Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee and another two of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them: I am going fishing. They said to him: We will go with you. They went out and entered into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when day was breaking, Jesus

stood on the beach. The disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus called to them: Boys, have you something to eat? They answered him: No. ⁶ And he said to them: Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find. There they cast their net; and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord! So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat about him (for he was naked) and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, only about 100 meters from shore), dragging the net full of fishes. ⁹ So when they reached the shore, they got out of the boat; and saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them: Bring some of the fish which you have now taken. ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹² Jesus said to them: Come. Break your fast. And none of the disciples did inquire of him: Who are you? Knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus took the bread and gave it to

20:27 The *finger* fitted the nail marks in His hands; the *hand* fitted the gash in His side made by the spear.

21:5 *Children* – The Greek word is a kind of slang, dynamically equivalent of “Fellas!” or “Guys!”. Jesus was at such pains to show the disciples that although He has been exalted, He is very much with them, quite aware of colloquial language, and comfortable using it. This isn’t only yet another nail in the coffin of Trinitarianism; it comforts us, that our Lord is so with us and understanding of us.

21:11 The net wasn’t broken – showing that in being “fishers of men”, somehow our resources will not fail. 153 is the numerical value of the phrase “Sons of God”.

them, and the fish likewise. ¹⁴ This was the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after he had risen from the dead.

Jesus Challenges Peter

¹⁵ So when they had broken their fast, Jesus said to Simon: Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him: Yes, Lord. You know that I love you. He said to him: Feed my lambs.

¹⁶ He said to him, a second time: Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him: Yes, Lord. You know that I love you. He said to him: Tend my sheep. ¹⁷ He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he asked him a third time: Do you love me? And he said to him: Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him: Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you: When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry

you where you do not wish to go.

¹⁹ Now this he spoke, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him: Follow me.

²⁰ Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following- he who had leaned back on his breast at the supper and asked: Lord, who is he that betrays you? ²¹ Peter therefore seeing him, said to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do? ²² Jesus said to him: If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? You follow me. ²³ This saying therefore went forth among the brothers, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he should not die, but: If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? ²⁴ This is the disciple that testifies of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true. ²⁵ And there are many other things which Jesus did, which if each one of them should be written down, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.

21:15 *These* – The pile of huge fish lying there? Do we love our occupations, our working life, more than the Lord?

21:17 The three questions, asked again by a fire, were to undo Peter's three denials. Our love for Jesus personally is revealed in our care for His sheep.

21:22 We are so easily distracted from following the Lord by our focus upon the discipleship of others. If they follow Him, if they shall be saved, how they follow Him... so easily distracts from the call to us to personally follow Him and not take our focus off Him.

ACTS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 25 Oct. 25

The former account I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach, ² until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandments through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ To whom, after his suffering, he also showed by many convincing proofs that he was alive, being seen by them for forty days, and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ And, being assembled together with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you heard from me: ⁵ For John indeed baptized with water, but soon you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit. ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked him: Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? ⁷ And he said to them: It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has set within his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be

my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the remotest part of the earth.

The Ascension of Jesus

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were watching, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were looking earnestly into heaven as he went, two men stood by them in white clothing, ¹¹ who also said: You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall return in like manner as you saw him going into heaven. ¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near to Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. ¹³ And when they arrived, they went into the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ These all with one accord continued earnestly in prayer with

1:1 *Former account* – The Gospel of Luke. This was the record of what Jesus “began” to do. Jesus didn’t stop His activity when He ascended to Heaven – the book of Acts is the account of how He *continues* to work with His people on earth, and that work continues to this day.

1:7 Even after His resurrection, Jesus didn’t know the exact time of His return; only God knows (Mk. 13:32). This shows that Jesus wasn’t only ‘less than God’ during His mortal life; even after His resurrection, God the Father is still greater than and different to Jesus. Trinitarian theology is totally mistaken.

1:10 *Two men* – Angels.

1:11 *In like manner* – Jesus will literally return to earth, perhaps to the Mount of Olives from which He ascended (v. 12).

the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

A Replacement for Judas

¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons) and said: ¹⁶ Brothers, it was necessary that the Scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to those that took Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and received his part in this ministry. ¹⁸ Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem, so much so that in their language that field was called Akeldama, that is, The field of blood. ²⁰ For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let his habitation be made desolate and let no one dwell therein, and his office let another take. ²¹ Therefore, of the men that have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John, to the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness

with us of his resurrection. ²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus; and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed, and said: Lord, you who knows the hearts of all men, show us which of these two is the one whom you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place. ²⁶ And they cast lots for them; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 26 Oct. 26

The Holy Spirit is Given

And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues like fire, separating and resting upon each one of them personally. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them to speak. ⁵ Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem devout men, Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the crowds came together,

1:20 *Let another take* – Peter sets us an example of how to proceed in decision making. He looked at the Old Testament prophecies and principles, and then concretely did something. It was written in the Psalms that another would take the place of the betrayer – and so Peter got on and did something about that. Bible prophecy requires that we do our part in fulfilling it.

2:4 *Languages* – Some translations say “tongues”. Acts 2 shows that ‘speaking in tongues’ means ‘speaking in another language’ – a human language which was understood by the people hearing it. It doesn’t refer to speaking ‘mumbo jumbo’, unintelligible utterances. Therefore the listeners were amazed that they heard “each in his own native language” (v. 8), “in our language” (v. 11).

and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying: Look, are not all those who speak Galileans? ⁸ And how is it each of us heard in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our language the mighty works of God. ¹² And they were all amazed and were perplexed, saying to each other: What does this mean? ¹³ But others mocking said: They are filled with new wine! ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: You men of Judea and all that dwell in Jerusalem, let this be understood by you, and listen to my words. ¹⁵ These are not drunk as you suppose, seeing it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is the fulfilment of that which has been spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour

out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ Yes, and in those days will I pour out My Spirit on My servants and on My handmaids, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapour of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, that great and notable day. ²¹ And it shall be that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter Preaches About Jesus From the Old Testament

²² You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God, by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in the midst of you, even as you yourselves know. ²³ Him, being delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you, by the hand of men outside the Law, did crucify and slay; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosened the pangs of death;

2:17 *The last days* – This phrase refers to both the ‘last days’ of the Jewish state in the run up to the AD70 destruction of the temple, and it can also refer to the ‘last days’ around the return of Christ to earth. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit will be used to re-establish God’s Kingdom on earth – they are “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5); they aren’t possessed today. They will be given to us when Jesus returns.

2:22 *A man* – Even after His ascension to Heaven, Peter and Paul still refer to Jesus as a “man” (1 Tim. 2:5).

2:23 *Men outside the Law* – The Romans, who were not under the Law of Moses. We cannot get others to do our ‘dirty work’ for us and still be innocent. We are judged according to our intentions more than our literal actions.

because it was not possible that he should be held by it. ²⁵ For David said concerning him: I saw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. ²⁶ Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced, moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope; ²⁷ because You will not leave my soul in the grave, neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸ You made known to me the ways of life, you shall make me full of gladness with Your countenance. ²⁹ Brothers, I may say to you freely about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body he would set one upon his throne; ³¹ he foreseeing this, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left in the grave, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus did God raise up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. ³⁴ For

David did not ascend into Heaven, but he himself said: The Lord said to my Lord, sit on My right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ³⁶ Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain, that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

3000 People are Baptized

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart; and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: Brothers, what shall we do? ³⁸ And Peter said to them: Every one of you should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to him. ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and encouraged them, saying: Save yourselves from this crooked generation. ⁴¹ They that received his word were baptized, and there were added in that day about three thousand people. ⁴² And they continued earnestly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship in the break-

2:27 *Hades* – Translated “hell” in some Bibles. ‘Hell’ or *hades* is simply the grave. Jesus went to the grave for three days and was resurrected by God from it. Therefore *hades* / hell / the grave isn’t a place of eternal punishment for wicked people.

2:34 David didn’t go to Heaven when he died; instead his hope was in the coming of the Messiah, his great descendant, Jesus – who would raise David from the dead. The Biblical hope is the resurrection from the dead when Jesus returns, and eternal life in God’s promised Kingdom on earth. The idea of a soul going to Heaven on death isn’t Biblical.

2:36 God made Jesus Lord – showing His difference to and superiority over Jesus.

2:41 Baptism is the natural sign that we have accepted the word of the Gospel.

2:42 The Greek can be read as “Fellowship in the breaking of bread”. Believing what

ing of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And fear came upon everyone; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together and had all things common. ⁴⁵ And they sold their possessions and goods, and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, continuing earnestly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to them daily those who were being saved.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 27 Oct. 27

Peter and John Cure a Lame Man

Now Peter and John were going into the temple at the hour of prayer, at the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for alms. ⁴ And Peter, looking straight at him (as did John) said: Look at us. ⁵ And he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said: Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that I give you. In the name

of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk! ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. ⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ And they recognised him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. ¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's, astounded. ¹² And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people: You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this man? Or why fasten you your eyes on us, as though by our own power or reverence towards God we had made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and rejected before the presence of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the holy and righteous one, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And by faith in

the apostles did, praying together and breaking bread together are all signs of our fellowship. Fellowship isn't limited to just breaking bread together.

3:10 The Holy Spirit gifts were possessed in the first century church to back up the verbal preaching of the Gospel. The healings were in public places and uncontested; in contrast to the many claims to 'healing' made today. The miraculous gifts were withdrawn and will be poured out at Christ's return.

3:16 *By faith* – The faith of Peter and John. The healed man didn't seem to have any

his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is through him, has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Peter Appeals for People to Repent

¹⁷ And now, brothers, I know that in ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But the things which God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Therefore, repent and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ and that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you, Jesus; ²¹ whom the heaven must receive until the time of the restoration of all things, of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, that have been since the world began. ²² Moses indeed said: A prophet like me shall the Lord God raise up for you from among your brothers; you shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be, that every soul that

shall not listen to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. ²⁴ Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham: And in your descendant shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His servant, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you away from your sins.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 27 Oct. 27

Jewish Opposition to the Gospel

And as they spoke to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came upon them, ² being greatly annoyed because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and jailed them until the next day; for it was now evening. ⁴ But many of those that heard the word believed, and the number of

faith or understanding. Modern ‘healings’ demand faith from the person being healed; but the Holy Spirit gifts enabled people to be healed who had no faith or understanding. Those kinds of gifts aren’t possessed today.

3:19 This could mean that when the Jewish people repent, then God will send Jesus back to earth.

3:21 The Kingdom of God on earth will be a “restoration”. Israel in the past were God’s Kingdom – God was their King (Ex. 19:6); but that Kingdom was overturned by God until His Son comes again (Ez. 21:25-27). The restoration of Israel and the return of Christ are paralleled in Acts 1:6-11.

3:22 *From among your brothers* – The humanity of the Lord Jesus is emphasized. He was “from among” us.

3:26 The blessing promised to Abraham was the blessing of forgiveness of sins. By baptism into Christ, those blessings become ours. In this way, the Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8,27-29).

the men came to be about five thousand.⁵ And it came to pass that the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;⁶ and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander and as many as were of the family of the high priest.⁷ And when they had set them in their midst, they enquired: By what power, or in what name, have you done this?⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: You rulers of the people and elders,⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,¹⁰ be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in him does this man stand here before you healed.¹¹ He is the stone that was rejected by you the builders, which has become the cornerstone.¹² And in no other is there salvation; for neither is there any other

name that is given among men under heaven, wherein we must be saved.¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they realised that they had been with Jesus.¹⁴ And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they took advice with one another, saying:¹⁶ What shall we do to these men? For indeed a notable miracle has been done through them. It is obvious to all that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it!¹⁷ But that it spread no further among the people, let us warn them, that from this time forward they are not to speak to anyone in this name.¹⁸ And they called them, and ordered them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them: Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to

4:12 Non-Christian religions therefore cannot be a way to salvation. We can be saved only “in” that name... “wherein” we shall be saved. This only becomes possible if we are baptized into Christ, in His Name.

4:13 *Unlearned* – Greek ‘a-grammatos’, ‘without grammar’; *Ignorant* – Greek ‘idiotes’. The early preachers and leaders of the church appeared as idiots, as men without even basic education. But God used their witness to confound the mighty of this world. Erudition and education aren’t qualifications for preaching the Gospel; we should never feel we’re not good enough, but just do what we can and let ourselves be used by God.

4:16 Even the enemies of Christianity couldn’t deny that the miracles done by the Holy Spirit were indeed real. Modern claims to possessing Holy Spirit gifts are debatable; whilst God hears prayer, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit aren’t available today. What is claimed to have been done by Pentecostals simply doesn’t compare with the usage of the miraculous Spirit gifts in the first century.

4:19 We must be obedient to state laws, until such time as they contradict the law of God and of Jesus. This is especially true of military service.

God, you must judge; ²⁰ for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. ²¹ And they, when they had threatened them further, let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people. For all men glorified God for what was done. ²² For the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was done. ²³ And being let go, they came to their friends, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said: O Lord, you that made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that are in them, ²⁵ who by the Holy Spirit, and by the mouth of our father David your servant, did say: Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples imagine vain things? ²⁶ The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ. ²⁷ For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel foreordained to happen. ²⁹ And now Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to your servants to speak Your

word with all boldness, ³⁰ while You stretch out Your hand to heal, that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy servant Jesus. ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Powerful Preaching by the Apostles

³² And the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them said that anything of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. ³³ And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For neither were there among them any that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each, according to anyone's need. ³⁶ And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (we say Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, ³⁷ having a field, sold it; and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

4:30 *Your holy servant* – Jesus after His resurrection and ascension to Heaven is still God's servant and therefore less than God (Jn. 13:16).

4:31 The Holy Spirit refers to God's power set apart for specific purposes. God gave it to people to do specific things – they were 'filled' – but then had to be filled again to do other tasks and fulfil other purposes.

4:37 Levites weren't supposed to own property, according to the Law of Moses. But they 'got around' this by owning property outside Israel, e.g. in Cyprus. But when

CHAPTER 5 Apr.28 Oct. 28

Ananias and Sapphira

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ² and with his wife's knowledge kept back part of the proceeds, and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ And Peter said: Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your power? How is it you have conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God. ⁵ And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all that heard it. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, and they carried him out and buried him. ⁷ And it was about the space of three hours after when his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. ⁸ And Peter said to her: Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. And she said: Yes,

for so much. ⁹ But Peter said to her: How is it you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door; and they shall carry you out. ¹⁰ And she fell down immediately at his feet and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her next to her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things. ¹² And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders done among the people; and they were all gathering together in Solomon's porch.

The Apostles Arrested

¹³ None of the rest dared join them, although the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And many more believers were added to the Lord, crowds of men and women. ¹⁵ So much so, that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that, as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might fall on some

Barnabas converted to Christ, he realized that all such 'getting around' God's laws is wrong; simple, loving obedience from the heart is what God wants.

5:3 Ananias could control whether or not 'Satan' filled his heart, and was condemned for not doing so. If we think that a being called 'Satan' irresistibly influences us to sin, filling us with the desire to sin against our will, then we are making the same fatal mistake as Ananias.

5:4 The sin was conceived within the mind of Ananias – sin begins within (Mk. 7:19-23). Yet v. 3 says that 'Satan', the adversary, filled the mind of Ananias. The real enemy or adversary is our own mind, from where sin is conceived.

5:7 Appearing zealous, spiritual and generous when we aren't in our hearts is a terrible sin, and will be judged very hardly by God.

5:14 This growth in acceptance of the Gospel happened immediately after God had killed Ananias and Sapphira for the sin of hypocrisy (v. 11). The 'harder side of God', the fact He is serious about His demands upon us, is actually an attraction for genuine people, rather than a repulsion.

of them. ¹⁶ And there also gathered crowds from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those that were vexed with unclean spirits; and every one of them was healed. ¹⁷ But the high priest rose up and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and they were filled with jealousy, ¹⁸ and arrested the apostles and put them in prison. ¹⁹ But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said: ²⁰ You go and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. ²¹ And when they heard this, in the morning they entered into the temple and taught. But the high priest came and they that were with him, and called the council together and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²² But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, saying: ²³ We found the prison shut in all safety, and the keepers standing at the doors, but when we had them opened, we found no one within. ²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the upshot of all this would be. ²⁵ And there came someone that told them:

Behold, the men whom you put in the prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people. ²⁶ Then went the captain with the officers and brought them, but without violence. For they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. ²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying: ²⁸ We strictly ordered you not to teach in this name, and yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered and said: We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging him on a tree. ³¹ Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. ³² And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those that obey Him.

Gamaliel's Advice

³³ But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart and decided to kill them. ³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honour by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.

5:26 *Feared the people* – The crowd were so fickle. They initially believed Jesus, cheering Him as He entered Jerusalem; then they turned against Him and shouted “Crucify Him!”. And now they are again supportive of His cause. God wants stable, loyal hearts and not commitment which is blown about so easily because it has no root in His word.

5:30 *You slew* – The Jews got the Romans to do it, because they were not under the Mosaic Law (2:23). But God of course sees through such behaviour; we are responsible for our intentions, even if we get others to do the deeds for us.

³⁵ And he said to them: You men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, there rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the census, and drew away some of the people after him. He also perished and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. ³⁸ And now I say to you, keep away from these men and leave them alone. For if this counsel or this work is of men, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might be found to be fighting against God. ⁴⁰ They took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and at home, they did not cease to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 28 Oct. 28

Administrative Problems

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring amongst the Greek speaking Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples to them, and said: It is not fitting that we should forsake the teaching of the word of God and instead handle finances. ³ Therefore, brothers, choose from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will continue earnestly in prayer and in the service of the word. ⁵ And the decision pleased the whole crowd; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ They set them before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them. ⁷ And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly

5:41 It's very hard to truly rejoice at every connection we see between our sufferings and those of Jesus. But this is the essence of life "in Christ".

5:42 The early preaching of the Gospel was in homes (as in 2:46); just as the ministry of Jesus focused upon homes. House churches and family groups are often the ways in which God chooses to work.

6:2 *The word of God* – The [teaching of] the word of God (see v. 4). Sometimes we have to read in an ellipsis into the phrases we read in the Bible. People 2000 years ago had a different style than we have today.

6:4 Prayer was of such huge importance in the early church, and it should be with us too.

6:7 The unity achieved between the Jewish and Gentile believers in the church attracted yet more people to join. Jesus predicted that our unity would convert the world

in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Stephen is Arrested

⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰ And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹¹ Then they secretly induced men to say: We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and came upon him and seized him, and brought him into the council, ¹³ and set up false witnesses, who said: This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us. ¹⁵ And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel.

(Jn. 17:23). Our disunity will discourage people from joining Christ; because initially, the church of Jesus is all that people see of Jesus.

7:2 Brothers – Stephen was willing to use this term about unbelievers. Neither he nor the early church were obsessed with ‘separation’ in an external sense from the unbelieving world.

7:2 Stephen’s point is that God had a relationship with Abraham when Abraham didn’t even live in the land of Israel; and without any temple building. That relationship was based around the promises God gave him, of eternal inheritance of the land in the Kingdom of God, due to the work of his “seed”, or descendant, who was to be Jesus.

CHAPTER 7 Apr. 29 Oct. 29

Stephen’s Defence

And the high priest said: Are these things so? ² And he said: Brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ³ and said to him: Leave your land and your kindred, and go into the land which I shall show you. ⁴ Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran, and from there, when his father was dead, God sent him into this land, wherein you now dwell. ⁵ And He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not enough to set his foot on it, and He promised that He would give it to him in possession and to his seed after him, when he had no child. ⁶ And God spoke in this way, that his seed should live in a strange land, and that they would bring them into bondage and treat them badly for four hundred years. ⁷ And the nation to which they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God, and after that shall they come out and serve Me in this place. ⁸ And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begat Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs. ⁹ And

the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him,¹⁰ and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom before Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house.¹¹ Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance.¹² But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers the first time.¹³ And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's race became manifest to Pharaoh.¹⁴ And Joseph sent and called to himself Jacob his father and all his extended family, seventy five people.¹⁵ And Jacob went down into Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.¹⁶ And they were carried back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.¹⁷ But as the time of the fulfilment of the promise which God made to Abraham drew near, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,¹⁸ until there arose another king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.¹⁹ The same dealt craftily with our race and ill-treated our fa-

thers, casting out their babies so that they might not live.²⁰ At this time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair; and he was nourished three months in his father's house.²¹ And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him as her own son.²² And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and works.²³ But when he was nearly forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers the children of Israel.²⁴ And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, striking the Egyptian.²⁵ And he supposed that his brothers understood that God by his hand was giving them deliverance; but they did not understand.²⁶ And the following day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them, saying: Gentlemen, you are brothers! Why do you injure each other? ²⁷ But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying: Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? ²⁸ Would you kill me, as you killed the Egyptian yesterday? ²⁹ And Moses fled at this saying and went to live in the land of Mid-

7:9 The Jewish elders rejected the Saviour – Stephen was hoping that his audience would see the similarity with what they had done to Jesus.

7:20, 21 The repetition of the word “nourished” shows how Moses was under two distinctly different influences as he grew up – those of God, and of the world; of Israel and of Egypt. We, and our children, have the same tension; it took Moses a long time to shake off the influence of Egypt and decide openly for God.

7:25 Again Stephen hopes that his audience will perceive that Moses as Israel's Saviour wasn't initially understood by them and was rejected – and this was how they had treated Jesus.

7:29 Moses fled partly from fear, but partly in faith, because he didn't fear the wrath

ian, where he begat two sons.³⁰ And when forty years were fulfilled, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.³¹ And when Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, there came the voice of the Lord:³² I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. And Moses trembled and dared not look.³³ And the Lord said to him: Take off the shoes from your feet; for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.³⁴ I have surely seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them; and now, come, I will send you into Egypt.³⁵ This Moses whom they refused, saying: Who made you a ruler and a judge? Him God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush.³⁶ This man led them out, having done wonders and signs in Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.³⁷ This is that Moses, who said to the children of Israel: A prophet like me shall God raise up to you from among your brothers.³⁸ This is he that was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him in Mount Sinai and with our

fathers, who received living words to give to us.³⁹ Our fathers would not be obedient to him, but thrust him from them and turned back in their hearts to Egypt,⁴⁰ saying to Aaron: Make us gods that shall go before us. As for this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.⁴¹ And they made a calf in those days and brought a sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands.⁴² But God turned and gave them up to serve the host of heaven. As it is written in the book of the prophets: Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?⁴³ You took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Remphan, figures which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.⁴⁴ Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, even as He who spoke to Moses appointed, that he should make it according to the figure that he had seen.⁴⁵ Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought into the land with Joshua when they received possession of the nations that God thrust out before the presence of our fathers, to the days of David;⁴⁶ who found favour in the sight of God and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob.⁴⁷ But it was

of Pharaoh (Heb. 11:27). Our motives are so often mixed, as it seems Moses' were at this time.

7:43 Israel carried two tabernacles through the wilderness – that of God, and that of their idols. If the exodus through the Red Sea is symbolic of our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), then the wilderness journey speaks of our journey after baptism towards the Kingdom of God. We must carry only one tabernacle with us, one worship system – that of God.

Solomon who built Him a house.
⁴⁸ However the Most High dwells not in houses made with hands. As said the prophet: ⁴⁹ The Heaven is My throne and the earth a footstool for My feet; what manner of house will you build Me? says the Lord; or what is the place of My rest? ⁵⁰ Did not My hand make all these things? ⁵¹ You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers. ⁵³ You who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and did not keep it! ⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up earnestly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and

he said: ⁵⁶ Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord. ⁵⁸ And they threw him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he called upon the Lord, saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ⁶⁰ And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice: Lord! Do not charge them with this sin. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER 8 Apr. 30 Oct. 30 *Saul Persecutes the Church*

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem, and except the apostles, they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. ² And devout men buried Stephen and made great

7:48 We don't need to go into a church or religious building in order to worship God. God wishes to live in our hearts [i.e. our minds], and where two or three are gathered together in His worship (Mt. 18:20).

7:56 The New Testament often describes Jesus as *sitting* at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). But He still feels passionately for us, and as He saw Stephen dying, He *stood* – in mediation before God's throne for Stephen.

7:59, 60 The last words of Stephen are very similar to those of Jesus just before He died. The crucifixion is therefore not something to merely look at and admire from a distance, as an icon or picture; it's something which speaks to *us* personally and directly. We should be transformed by it; He there becomes a pattern for me here and now, today.

7:60 *Fell asleep* – For the believer, death is but an unconscious sleep. The next we will know will be the resurrection when Jesus returns.

8:2 They were "devout" because they were willing to risk shame and abuse for the sake of identifying with a Christian brother. We sometimes have to be brave in this way too.

lamentation over him. ³ But Saul treated the church shamefully, entering into every house, dragging out men and women and putting them into prison. ⁴ Therefore those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶ And the crowds, when they heard and saw the signs which he did, gave heed with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip. ⁷ For from many of those that had unclean spirits, the unclean spirits came out, crying with a loud voice; and many that were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ And there was much joy in that city.

Simon the Sorcerer

⁹ But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who previously used sorcery in that city and amazed the people of Samaria, boasting that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰ To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying: This man has that power of God which is called Great. ¹¹ And they gave heed to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he was preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and

women were baptized. ¹³ And Simon also himself believed, and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and seeing signs and great miracles done, he was amazed. ¹⁴ Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet it had not fallen upon them. These had only been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying: ¹⁹ Give me also this power, that on whosoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ But Peter said to him: May your silver perish with you, because you have thought to obtain the gift of God with money. ²¹ You have neither part nor share in this matter because your heart is not right before God. ²² Therefore, repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord, that perhaps the thought of your heart shall be forgiven you. ²³ For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and held captive by iniquity. ²⁴ And Simon answered and said: Pray for me to the

8:3 Paul's conversion is a pattern for us all (1 Tim. 1:16); our position before baptism was as bad, in essence, as Paul's. For this is how serious sin is.

8:12 Baptism follows naturally and immediately after believing the Gospel. Infants can't be baptized because they're not capable of believing the Gospel.

8:13 Simon's motivation probably appeared suspect from the start (v. 18). But we can't judge the motives of others, we must baptize all those who profess belief in the Gospel.

Lord, that none of the things which you have spoken come upon me. ²⁵ Therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Philip and the Ethiopian Official

²⁶ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying: Arise and go toward the south, to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. The same is desert. ²⁷ And he arose and went, and a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ And he was returning, and sitting in his chariot, was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip: Go near and join this chariot. ³⁰ And Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said: Do you understand what you read? ³¹ And he said: How can I, unless someone guides me? And

he begged Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can declare his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. ³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip: I beg you, of whom does the prophet speak? Of himself, or of somebody else? ³⁵ And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ And as they went along the road, they came upon some water; and the eunuch said: Look, water! What is stopping me from being baptized? ³⁷ And Philip said: If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And

8:24 *Pray for me* – But Peter had told him to pray himself to God (v. 22). We often balk at the direct relationship with God which He asks of us. We’d rather someone else did it for us, just as Israel didn’t want God speaking direct to them, but asked Moses to listen to His voice and tell them what He said.

8:31 People cannot hear the Gospel without a preacher (Rom. 10:14). There are people out there waiting for us to explain the Bible to them. Let’s go to them.

8:33 *Generation* – His children. The Eunuch couldn’t have children, and so he was interested to read this prophecy about Jesus in Isaiah 53, which predicted He would die without having children. We each see in Jesus some direct similarity or point of contact with our life experience, and this attracts us to Him.

8:36 The initiative for baptism came from the person wishing to be baptized. The idea of infant sprinkling is wrong.

8:37 There was a simple statement of faith before the person was baptized; he was mature enough to understand, and was baptized as an adult not a child.

8:38,39 *Went down into... came up out of the water* – Nobody crosses a desert without water. They surely had a few drops of water to sprinkle with, if that’s what baptism is.

when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through that area, he preached the gospel to all the towns, until he came to Caesarea.

CHAPTER 9 May 1 Oct. 31

The Conversion of Saul

But Saul, yet breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ² and asked from him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ And as he journeyed, it came to pass, that he drew near to Damascus; and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven. ⁴ And he fell upon the earth and heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ⁵ And he said: Who are you, Lord? And he said: I am Jesus, whom you persecute. ⁶ But rise and enter into the city, and you shall be told what you must do. ⁷ And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were

opened he saw nothing, and they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink. ¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision: Ananias. And he said: I am here, Lord. ¹¹ And the Lord said to him: Arise and go to the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus. For he prays, ¹² and he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. ¹³ But Ananias answered: Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to your saints at Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon your name. ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him: Go your way. For he is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. ¹⁷ And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, said: Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road upon which you travelled, has sent me, that you may receive

But it isn't. Baptism means a complete dipping in water, which is what we see done here.

9:3 Paul asks us to see his conversion as typical of that of us all (1 Tim. 1:16). The blinding light of Christ has also shined in the darkness of *our* hearts (2 Cor. 4:6).

9:5 *Whom you persecute* – Jesus is His church; we are baptized into the body of Christ. What is done to us is done to Him.

9:15 God calls the most unexpected people to Him; it's not for us to judge whom He might call.

your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ And he took food and was strengthened, and was several days with the disciples that were at Damascus.

Saul Zealously Preaches the Gospel

²⁰ And immediately in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. ²¹ And all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is this not he that in Jerusalem made havoc of those that called on this name? And he had come here for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. ²² But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the real Christ. ²³ And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him. ²⁴ But their plot became known to Saul; and they watched the gates day and night that they might kill him. ²⁵ But his disciples took him by night and lowered him down the wall in a basket. ²⁶ And when he came to Jerusalem, he decided to attach himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid

of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, ²⁹ preaching boldly in the name of the Lord; and he spoke and disputed against the Greek speaking Jews, and they that were seeking to kill him. ³⁰ And when the brothers knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus. ³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Peter Cures People

³² And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all regions, he came also to the saints that dwelt at Lydda. ³³ And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him: Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed. And immediately he rose. ³⁵ And all that dwelt at

9:18 Baptism is the assumed immediate first step to be taken by someone who believes in Christ and has repented.

9:20 People typically expect a forgiven person to be quiet for some time before they openly serve God. But God's forgiveness is immediate; He is quick and eager to forgive and work with people, and we should be likewise.

9:27 We must be open minded to how God may be working. We must allow people the chance of repentance, be prepared to accept that they really have changed, and that God is willing to use them. It may be that we have to persuade other believers of this, just as Barnabas did. Ananias also had to learn the same lesson.

Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. ³⁶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds. ³⁷ And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸ And as Lydda was near to Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him: Come to us without delay. ³⁹ And Peter rose and went with them. And when he had arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood by him, weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made, while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter sent them out, and kneeled down and prayed; and turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, rise. And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he

presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ And it came to pass, that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon a tanner.

CHAPTER 10 May 2 Nov. 1

Peter and Cornelius

Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Regiment, ² a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much charity to the Jewish people and prayed to God always. ³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God, who came to him and said: Cornelius. ⁴ And he, fastening his eyes upon him and being afraid, said: What is it, Lord? And he said to him: Your prayers and your charity have gone up as a memorial before God. ⁵ And now send men to Joppa and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter. ⁶ He lodges with someone called Simon, a tan-

9:40, 41 This incident of healing a woman called Tabitha has many similarities with the way Jesus healed another female called Talitha (Mk. 5:41,42). Peter remembered the actions, body language, attitudes and words of Jesus which he had witnessed during His ministry – and replicated them in *his* life. This is what we should do – read the Gospels and absorb the spirit of Christ, and apply it in our lives, so that *we* act like *Him*.

9:43 Tanners were despised by Jews because they dealt with blood and the skins of unclean animals, and had to live separately from society, on the edge of towns and villages. It was just these types of people who were attracted to and accepted Christianity. It's the same today, in essence.

10:1 Being a soldier isn't a good choice for a Christian, but there's no evidence Cornelius left his job after his conversion (see too Lk. 3:14).

10:5 Peter was in Joppa, the very place where Jonah had failed to understand his call to preach to the Gentiles. God arranges circumstances so that we have the chance to learn from the mistakes of others; He reminds us of them, as Peter must have been reminded of Jonah by being in Joppa.

ner, whose house is by the sea side.
⁷ And when the angel that spoke to him had departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of them that served him continually. ⁸ And having related all things to them, he sent them to Joppa. ⁹ Now the next day, as they were on their journey, and drew near to the city, about the sixth hour, Peter went upon the housetop to pray. ¹⁰ And he became hungry and desired to eat, but while they made the food ready, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ And he saw the heaven open and a certain vessel descending, as if it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth, ¹² wherein were all manner of fourfooted animals, and creeping things of the earth and birds of the sky. ¹³ And there came a voice to him: Rise, Peter. Kill and eat. ¹⁴ But Peter said: Not so, Lord. For I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. ¹⁵ And a voice came to him again the second time: What God has cleansed, do not call common. ¹⁶ And this was done three times; and immediately the vessel was received up into heaven. ¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about

the meaning of the vision, the men that had been sent by Cornelius, having made enquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, ¹⁸ and called and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, were lodging there. ¹⁹ And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him: Look, three men seek you. ²⁰ So, rise and get downstairs and go with them, without doubting. For I have sent them. ²¹ And Peter went down to the men and said: I am the one you seek. Why have you come? ²² And they said: Cornelius a centurion, a righteous man and one that fears God, and who is praised by all the nation of the Jews, was instructed by a holy angel of God to summon you to his house and to hear words from you. ²³ So he called them in and lodged them. And the next day he arose and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And the next day they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relatives and his near friends. ²⁵ And when it happened that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and did

10:6 Tanners were a low class profession, who were so despised they had to live out of town, e.g. on the beach. Cornelius was humble enough to accept teaching and baptism from someone of a lower social class.

10:13 The unclean animals which Peter was to "kill and eat" [possibly a reference to sacrificing them] represented the Gentiles. Paul speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles as an acceptable offering to God (Rom. 15:16). Yet Jesus had previously told Peter to go into all the world and baptize people from all nations into Christ (Mk. 16:15,16). Peter had been very slow to understand this; just as we are slow to realize the extent to which we too are to preach the Gospel to all people.

10:15 The idea that Christians can only eat 'clean' food is therefore wrong. We aren't any longer under the Law of Moses.

homage to him. ²⁶ But Peter raised him up, saying: Stand up. I myself am also a man. ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many gathered together. ²⁸ And he said to them: You yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come to one of another nation; and yet to me God has shown that I should not call anyone common or unclean. ²⁹ Therefore also I came without objection, when I was sent for. Therefore, I ask with what intent did you send for me. ³⁰ And Cornelius said: Four days ago, about this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house, and a man stood before me in bright apparel, ³¹ and said: Cornelius, your prayer is heard and your charitable acts are held in remembrance in the sight of God. ³² Therefore, send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is surnamed Peter. He lodges in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side. ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Therefore, now we are all here in the presence of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord to say. ³⁴ And Peter opened

his mouth and said: Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; ³⁵ but in every nation, he that fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. ³⁶ The word which He sent to the children of Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he being Lord of all!), ³⁷ that message you yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached- ³⁸ about Jesus of Nazareth. How God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the Devil. For God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. Whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and gave him to be revealed, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses that were chosen before by God, to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he ordered us to preach to the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained by God to be the judge of the living and

10:31 Good works alone will not justify us to God; we need to have the knowledge of the Gospel and baptism into Christ. The greatest thing we can give someone is the knowledge of God and Jesus – this is far more than any material gift.

10:36 *Lord of all* – Now Peter appreciated the significance of the little word “all” – it included not just all Jews, but all peoples. We too are often taught by God the huge implications of terms and phrases we are over familiar with.

10:40,41 God didn’t show the resurrected Jesus to everyone, but to just a few people, who would then go and testify this fact to the rest of the world. God always loves to work through people – rather like how Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes, but insisted on distributing them to the crowd through the hands of the disciples. God is also eager to use *you* today as His witness in this world.

the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness- that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then said Peter: ⁴⁷ Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these who have received the Holy Spirit just as we? ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

CHAPTER 11 May 3 Nov. 2
Peter Explains his Conversion of Cornelius to the Jewish Brothers

Now the apostles and the brothers that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² And when Peter had arrived in Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision criticized him, saying: ³ You went in to men uncircumcised and ate with them! ⁴ But Peter began to explain it all to them in order. ⁵ I was in the city of

Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners; and it came down even to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I saw the fourfooted beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the sky. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me: Rise, Peter. Kill and eat. ⁸ But I said: Not so, Lord. For nothing common or unclean has ever entered into my mouth. ⁹ But a voice answered the second time out of heaven: What God has cleansed, do not make common. ¹⁰ And this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And then three men stood before the house in which we were, having been sent from Caesarea to me. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying: Send to Joppa and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter, ¹⁴ who shall speak to you words, whereby you shall be saved, you and all your household. ¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the

11:3 Considering that Jesus had clearly commanded to go and preach to the Gentiles (Mk. 16:15,16), the early believers [who were all Jews] were very slow to grasp the fact that in Christ, Jew and Gentile now meant nothing. We too are at times very slow to grasp the most basic teachings of Jesus, because our culture and background is so against those teachings.

11:14 *Whereby* – Faith and salvation are dependent to some degree upon the preaching of the word to people (1 Cor. 15:2,11). This is why sharing God's word with others is so important, and why we should respect those who preached the Gospel to us.

Lord, how he said that John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ If then God gave to these the same gift as He also gave to us, when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could oppose God? ¹⁸ And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying: Then to the Gentiles also has God granted repentance to life.

The Church in Antioch

¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they reached Antioch, spoke to the Gentiles also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. ²² And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas as far as Antioch. ²³ Who, when he had arrived and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he encouraged them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the

Lord. ²⁴ For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; and many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ And he went to Tarsus to seek out Saul. ²⁶ And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that for a whole year they were gathered together with the church and taught many people; and there, in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. ²⁷ Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ And one of them, named Agabus, stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world. This took place in the days of Claudius. ²⁹ And the disciples, every man according to his ability, decided to send relief to the believers that lived in Judea. ³⁰ Which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

CHAPTER 12 May 3 Nov. 2

Peter is Delivered from Prison

About that time, Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ² And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³ And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And those were the days of unleavened bread. ⁴ And

11:19, 20 Bad experiences often work out so that the Gospel is spread wider (Phil. 1:12). Perhaps, in this case, if the Jewish believers had gone out into the Gentile world with the Gospel, they wouldn't have needed this persecution?

11:23 *Purpose of heart... cleave* – Belief and baptism are a beginning, but we must focus our hearts [i.e. our minds] on the Lord – “cleave” is the language of a person leaving their parents and ‘cleaving’ to their partner in marriage (Gen. 2:24). We are married to Jesus by baptism, He becomes the focus of our lives.

12:3, 4 There are several similarities with the situation at a previous Passover when

when he had taken him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵ Therefore Peter was kept in the prison; but earnest prayer was offered to God for him by the church. ⁶ And when Herod was about to bring him out, that same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and guards before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷ And an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying: Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. ⁸ And the angel said to him: Dress yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so. And he said to him: Wrap your cloak around you and follow me. ⁹ And he went out and followed; and he did not perceive that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city. This opened to them of its own accord; and they

went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel departed from him. ¹¹ And when Peter came to himself, he said: Now I know of a truth, that the Lord has sent his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all that the Jews were expecting. ¹² And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark. There many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³ And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ And when she recognised Peter's voice, she did not open the gate, but in joy ran inside and told everyone that Peter stood before the gate. ¹⁵ And they said to her: You are mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was so. And they said: It is his angel. ¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷ But he, motioning with the hand to hold their peace, declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said: Tell these things to James and to the brothers. And he

Jesus was killed. We should always be looking for points of contact between His sufferings and our own experience.

12:10 The Angel actually went with Peter through every street he ever walked; it's just that as he walked those two streets, he could see the Angel. We each have a guardian Angel who is constantly with us. If only we could see the Angel, we would feel so much differently about our lives and situations.

12:12 Holding a prayer meeting all night indicates the intense focus of mind which these early believers had. But when their prayer meeting was interrupted with the news that the prayers had been answered – they just didn't believe it and even mocked the idea. We too can pray without real expectation that the answer will come, and may come sooner and more powerfully than we could ever imagine.

12:15 The Christians believed that we each have a guardian, representative Angel.

departed and went to another place.

¹⁸ Now as soon as it was day, there was no small anxiety among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ And when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

The Death of Herod

²⁰ Now Herod was highly displeased with those at Tyre and Sidon. They came with one accord to him and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was fed from the king's country. ²¹ And upon a set day, Herod dressed himself in royal apparel and sat on the throne and delivered an oration to them. ²² And the people shouted: The voice of a god and not of a man. ²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. ²⁴ But the word of God grew and multiplied. ²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had completed their service, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

CHAPTER 13 May 4 Nov. 3

The First Missionary Journey

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them. ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. ⁴ So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; they had also John to assist them. ⁶ And when they had gone through the whole island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus, ⁷ who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same summoned Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who is also called

12:23 God is so sensitive to pride – He hates it.

13:1 Niger – probably a black brother, who was an elder in the church on the same level as Paul.

13:2 *As they ministered* – It is in the course of daily service to God that He invites us further in His service. The calls to service don't come dramatically out of the blue, they are within a context of what we already are doing for God.

13:9 Paul means "the little one". There's no record of any specific name change, but it seems that as he began his missionary preaching, Saul changed his name to "the little one". Humility is vital if we are to preach the Gospel. Arrogant, proud evangelists are

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, ¹⁰ and said: You son of the Devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and all villainy, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

¹¹ And now, the hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

¹² Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

¹³ Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. ¹⁵ And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent for them, saying: Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, speak. ¹⁶ And Paul stood up and beckoning with the hand, said: Men of Israel and you that fear God, listen.

Paul's Sermon at Antioch

¹⁷ The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm He led them out of it. ¹⁸ For about the time of forty years, as a nursing father He carried them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. ²⁰ And after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ And afterwards they asked for a king; and God gave to them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years. ²² And when He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, to whom also He bare witness and said: I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who shall do all My will. ²³ Of this man's seed has God according to His promise raised up to Israel a Saviour, Jesus; ²⁴ after John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was fulfilling his ministry, he said: Who do

an abomination to God. Saul, Israel's first king, was only acceptable to God whilst he was "little in his own eyes" (1 Sam. 15:17). Paul seems to have thought on this carefully, and taken the implications to heart.

13:11 This is exactly what happened to Paul on the Damascus road. He wanted others to share his conversion path.

13:18 *Nursing-father* – We see here the gentleness of God as He lead His people through the wilderness. After baptism we pass through the wilderness of life towards God's Kingdom... and God is so gentle in His leading.

13:21 God was Israel's King, they were His Kingdom. So it grieved God that they wanted a human king, to be like the nations around them. But He made a concession to their weakness, and gave them a king. We should not be unbending, but also willing to make concessions to others' weakness, even as God does to us.

you suppose I am? I am not he! But look, there comes one after me the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to untie. ²⁶ Brothers, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us is the word of this salvation sent. ²⁷ For they that dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸ And though they found no cause of death in him, they asked Pilate to have him slain. ²⁹ And when they had fulfilled all things that were written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead. ³¹ And he was seen for many days by those that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² We bring you good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled the same to our children, in that He resurrected Jesus. As also it is written in the second Psalm: You are My Son, this day have I begotten you. ³⁴ And as for the fact that He raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken in this way: I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. ³⁵ Because

He said also in another Psalm: You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ³⁶ For David, after he had in his own generation served the will of God, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption. ³⁷ But he whom God raised up saw no corruption. ³⁸ Therefore, be it known to you, brothers, that through this man is proclaimed to you the remission of sins. ³⁹ And through him, everyone that believes is declared righteous in all things in which the law of Moses could not declare you righteous. ⁴⁰ Therefore beware, lest that which is spoken in the prophets comes upon you: ⁴¹ Behold you despisers, wonder and perish. For I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no way believe, even if someone declares it to you.

Paul Turns to the Gentiles

⁴² And as they went out, they pleaded that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ Now when the meeting of the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ And the next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God.

13:25 To untie the sandals of a man was an idiom which meant 'to be his messenger or herald'. John in this sense *did* untie the sandals of Jesus by preaching of His coming; but he said that he was unworthy to do that. Humility is vital for the preacher.

13:39 *Declared righteous* – If we are in Christ, and believe in God's grace, then He counts us *as if* we are righteous, although we are not. We are clothed in His white garments at our baptism into Him. Keeping the Law of Moses [including the Sabbaths, food laws and feasts] doesn't make us righteous; faith in Christ does.

13:45 Jealousy is a word and idea which keeps occurring in the Gospels and Acts.

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul and blasphemed. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, and said: It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing you thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so has the Lord commanded us: I have set you for a light of the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the uttermost part of the earth. ⁴⁸ And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spread about throughout all the region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the religious women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and came to Iconium. ⁵² And the dis-

ciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 14 May 5 Nov. 4
Opposition to the Work of Preaching

Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ Therefore they stayed there for a long time speaking boldly in the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the crowd of the city was divided; part held with the Jews and part with the apostles. ⁵ And when there was an attempt by the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding region. ⁷ And there they preached the gos-

Opposition to us comes so often because people are jealous that we have something which they don't have – even though they say they don't want or need it.

13:46 Judge yourselves – The only people who will be condemned at the last day are those who have effectively condemned themselves. God's judgment is only a confirmation of peoples' own judgment of themselves.

13:47 Paul here quotes a prophecy about Jesus as the light of the world, and applies it to himself. All that is true of Jesus is to be true of us. If we imagine how He would be in our situation, then we have our life's mission. He Himself taught that He personally was "the light of the world"; and yet He said that we also are "the light of the world".

13:52 After such opposition, they were joyful! This is the unique ability of Christians, to perceive victory in defeat [the cross is the greatest example], to bring good out of bad.

14:1 In such a way – Their style of preaching resulted in the conversions. God has delegated the salvation of others into our hands; how far it prospers depends to some extent upon our efforts and attention to style.

pel.⁸ Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled since birth and had never walked.⁹ The same listened to Paul speaking. Paul looked at him intently and perceiving that he had faith to be made whole,¹⁰ said with a loud voice: Stand upright on your feet! And he leaped up and walked.¹¹ And when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in the language of Lycaonia: The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!¹² And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.¹³ And the priest of Jupiter, whose temple was before the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and would have done sacrifice with the crowds.¹⁴ But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their clothes and ran in among the crowd, crying out and saying:¹⁵ Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.¹⁶ Who in the generations gone by allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways;¹⁷ and yet He did not leave Himself

without witness, in that He did good, and gave you rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.¹⁸ Even with these words the people were scarcely restrained from offering sacrifice to them.¹⁹ But there came Jews from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.²⁰ But as the disciples stood around him, he rose up and entered into the city, and the next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe.²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,²² confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.²³ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.²⁴ And they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.²⁵ And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.²⁶ And from there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had

14:7 Again, persecution, opposition and slander campaigns against God's people only resulted in the Gospel being spread yet further

14:17 The natural creation, e.g. the rain and seasons, is in fact a witness from God which thoughtful people will perceive.

14:22 *Tribulations* – We cannot expect Christianity to be an easy ride. Our salvation is through many traumas in this life, and God won't always preserve us from them, but rather He works through them so that we might come to His Kingdom when Jesus returns.

fulfilled. ²⁷ And when they had come and had gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done through them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed no little time with the disciples.

CHAPTER 15 May 5 Nov. 4
Controversy about Circumcision

But some men came down from Judea and taught the brothers: Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. ² And Paul and Barnabas argued and debated with them; consequently Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders to resolve this question. ³ Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the believers. ⁴ And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all things

that God had done through them. ⁵ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying: It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses. ⁶ And the apostles and the elders gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷ And when there had been much debate, Peter rose up and said to them: Brothers, you know that a good while ago God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, did bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did to us. ⁹ And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Therefore, why do you now put God to the test, putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as them. ¹² And all the crowd kept silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul relating what signs and wonders

14:27 God opens doors to those who knock (Lk. 11:9). Maybe there had been Gentiles who had been begging for acceptance by God in His Messiah / Son, and so God worked through the persecution of the Jewish Christians, and in the life of Paul, to ensure that this happened.

15:1 There is always a desire amongst some Christians to seek justification by some form of works, often connected with obedience to the Law of Moses; the New Testament letters show how Paul strongly resisted this.

15:4 They felt they were being used by God, rather than giving the impression they had done their work in their own strength. Likewise in v. 7 Peter says that his preaching was merely being a mouthpiece for God.

15:10 The yoke we have is that of Jesus (Mt. 11:29,30). We can't have two yokes upon us. We either accept salvation by faith in Christ, or we attempt to bring about our own salvation by obedience to the Mosaic Law. We can't seek justification, therefore, by taking upon ourselves the yoke of Sabbath keeping and legal obedience.

God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ And after they finished speaking, James replied, saying: Brothers. Listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. ¹⁵ And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written: ¹⁶ After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and I will build again the ruins of it, and I will raise it up; ¹⁷ so that the residue of mankind may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, ¹⁸ said the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. ¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we do not trouble those from among the Gentiles that turn to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. ²¹ For Moses from generations of old has in every city those that preach him, he being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

The Compromise Reached About the Gentile Converts

²² Then it seemed good to the apos-

ties and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men out of their company and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and the elders, brothers, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. ²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard that some who went out from us have disturbed you with words, subverting you, to whom we gave no commandment, ²⁵ it seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to select men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men that have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled and from fornication. From which if you keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Farewell. ³⁰ So they, when they were

15:13 *Brothers* – Note how many times this word occurs in this chapter. In resolving disagreements within the church, it's important to keep reminding ourselves that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, of the same indivisible family that was brought into being by the death of our Lord and Master. Once someone is baptized into Christ, we can never say they have left Him – once someone is a brother or sister, they are for the rest of our lives. For we cannot say they have left Christ and the family of God.

15:14 By being baptized into “His Name”, we become a people for His Name.

15:20 This was a concession to the weakness of the Jewish Christians; sometimes to make peace within a church, we have to make concessions.

15:28 *Holy Spirit and to us* – God through His power at work confirmed the conclusions which the brothers had come to.

sent off, went to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the encouragement. ³² And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, encouraged and strengthened the believers with many words. ³³ And after they had spent some time there, they were sent off in peace by the brothers back to those that had sent them. ³⁴ But it seemed good to Silas to stay there. ³⁵ And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Another Missionary Journey

³⁶ And after some days Paul said to Barnabas: Let us return now and visit the believers in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare. ³⁷ And Barnabas wanted to take with them John also, who was called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone

with them to the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus; ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

CHAPTER 16 May 6 Nov. 5

And he went also to Derbe and to Lystra; and a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewess that believed; but his father was a Greek. ² The same was well reported of by the believers that were at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴ And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which had been determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened

15:36 If we bring someone to Christ, they are our lifelong responsibility – our spiritual child in Christ.

15:39 This doesn't justify division within the church, nor does it mean that personal disagreement is inevitable. This incident indicates that Paul wasn't perfect; and it comforts us that we are all human, and will never find the perfect church anywhere.

16:3 Paul often writes in his letter that circumcision is meaningless (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:19). But he was sensitive to the feelings of the Jews. There are times when we must try to take down the barriers which there are between us and our audience. We must at times give in on non-essentials.

16:5 The decree of chapter 15 was a series of concessions aimed at producing unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians. The unity achieved by these concessions meant that more people were attracted to the faith – because our unity is our greatest witness (Jn. 17:21-23). The churches increased “daily” because presumably they baptized people each day – they saw the crucial importance of it, and didn't leave it until the weekends or some convenient time of year.

in the faith, and increased in number daily. ⁶ And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they came to the border of Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing, urging him and saying: Come into Macedonia and help us! ¹⁰ And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Preaching and an Earthquake in Philippi

¹¹ Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace and the day following to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony; and we stayed in this city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by a river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women that had gathered. ¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, one that worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to give heed

to the things which were spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she urged us, saying: If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay. So she persuaded us. ¹⁶ And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain slave girl met us, who had a spirit by which she predicted the future and who brought her masters much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ The same following after Paul and us was crying out, saying: These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation! ¹⁸ And this she did for many days. But Paul, being greatly disturbed by it, turned and said to the spirit: I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very moment. ¹⁹ But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers, ²⁰ and when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said: These men, being Jews, are disturbing our city, ²¹ and advocate customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans. ²² And the crowd rose up together against them; and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³ And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they threw them into

16:15 Again it is assumed that people who believe are immediately baptized. If we seriously believe, we must be baptized as Jesus commands (Mk. 16:16).

16:17 Mentally ill people often have great spiritual perception – hence the especial efforts of Jesus to cure them [the language of ‘unclean spirits’ and ‘demons’ refer to mentally ill people].

prison, ordering the jailor to guard them carefully. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in shackles. ²⁵ But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God; and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying: Do not harm yourself! For we are all here. ²⁹ And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ and brought them out and said: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹ And they said: Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household. ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all that were in his household. ³³ And at that

hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ And he brought them into his house, set food before them, and rejoiced greatly with all his family, having believed in God. ³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent their officers, saying: Let those men go. ³⁶ And the jailor reported the words to Paul, saying: The magistrates have sent word to let you go. Therefore come out and go in peace. ³⁷ But Paul said to them: They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men that are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison, and now they want to throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and bring us out. ³⁸ And the officers reported these words to the magistrates; and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. ³⁹ And they came and pleaded with them, and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the city. ⁴⁰ And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the believers, they comforted them and departed.

16:25 Joy in the face of persecution and suffering is a theme of Acts.

16:33 The Acts record emphasizes how “immediately” people were baptized, the same day they heard and believed the Gospel. The content of the Gospel wouldn’t therefore have been presented in a very complicated nor lengthy manner. The vital importance of baptism is shown by how the family were baptized in the middle of the night, after an earthquake had struck, and with the prisoners able to escape. But they put God first; and all other things fell into place.

16:37 Why didn’t Paul declare his Roman citizenship earlier, so as to avoid a beating? Whatever the reason, there was a reason, and it was connected with the furtherance of the Gospel. There are times when we can take an easier way and it’s no sin; but the cause of the Gospel is better served by taking the harder way.

16:40 Paul and Silas comforted others! Despite having had so much distress themselves.

CHAPTER 17 May 6 Nov. 6***Paul Preaches in Thessalonica***

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul, as his custom was, went in to them for three Sabbath days and reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary that the Christ suffer and rise from the dead, saying: This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ. ⁴ And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas, as did many of the devout Greeks; and not a few of the chief women. ⁵ But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, taking along some wicked men from the market place and having assembled a mob, set the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people. ⁶ And when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the rulers of the city, crying: These that have turned the world upside down have come here also. ⁷ Jason has received them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus. ⁸ And

they agitated the crowd and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. ⁹ And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ¹⁰ And the brother immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea; who when they arrived there, went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore, many of them believed, including Greek women of high standing and many Greek men. ¹³ But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there, likewise stirring up and inciting the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ But they that escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy (that they should come to him with all speed), they departed.

Paul Preaches in Athens

¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them

17:7 There was no other religion in the area which produced such profound unity between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor. Today too, God calls very different people to faith in His Son, just as the disciples were a very diverse group. This means that the potential for both unity and division is very high in the church.

17:11 The Bereans are our example – to not just accept what we are taught, but to daily, systematically “search the Scriptures”. We should be in daily contact with the Bible.

17:12 *Therefore* – People believed *because* they searched the Scriptures daily (v. 11). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

17:16 We should also have hearts that bleed for the lostness and ignorance of this world.

at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with Jews and the religious persons, and in the marketplace every day with those that met him. ¹⁸ And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also encountered him. And some said: What will this babbler say? Others: He seems to be a preacher of strange gods! Because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying: May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by you? ²⁰ For you bring certain strange things to our ears. Therefore, we would like to know what these things mean. ²¹ (Now all the Athenians and the strangers living there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing). ²² And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said: You men of Athens, I perceive you are very religious in all things. ²³ For as I walked along, I observed the objects of your worship; and I found an altar with this inscription: To the unknown god. Whom you worship in ignorance, Him I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples

made with hands. ²⁵ Neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He gives to all life and breath and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one, every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times set for them and the bounds of their habitation, ²⁷ that they should seek God; so that they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For in Him we live and move and have our being- as some even of your own poets have said: For we are also his offspring. ²⁹ Being then the offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine is like gold, or silver, or stone, something crafted by art and the imagination of man. ³⁰ Therefore, the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands men that they should all everywhere repent. ³¹ Inasmuch as He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained; of which He has given assurance to all men, in that He has raised him from the dead. ³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said: We will hear you concerning this yet again. ³³ Thus Paul went out from among them. ³⁴ But some people joined him and believed, among

17:23 We should walk through this world observant and sensitive, and use whatever we see around us as a springboard into sharing the Gospel with people. Likewise in v. 28 Paul quotes one of their poets to them, rather like we may quote a line from a popular song, in order to get over the content of the Gospel.

17:31 Doctrine has meaning in practice. If we believe that Jesus is returning and there will be a judgment day – then we ought to repent now rather than then!

17:34 There is emphasis throughout Acts 16 and 17 on how women believed; religion

whom was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

CHAPTER 18 May 7 Nov. 6

Paul Preaches at Corinth

After these things he departed from Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome; and he went to them. ³ And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they worked together, for by trade they were tentmakers. ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Gentiles. ⁵ But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them: Your blood is on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. ⁷ And he departed from there, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house was attached to the

synagogue. ⁸ And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his family; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. ⁹ And during the night in a vision, the Lord said to Paul: Do not be afraid, but speak out and do not keep silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one shall attack or harm you. For I have many people in this city. ¹¹ And he lived there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³ saying: This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of criminal villainy, O you Jews, it would be logical that I should bear with you. ¹⁵ But if they are questions about words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these matters. ¹⁶ And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ And they all laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things. ¹⁸ And Paul,

was largely a hobby for men, but Christianity was very much a woman's religion because of the unusual meaning and value it attached to all people, including women.

18:6 As explained throughout Ezekiel 33:2-7, if we do not witness to people and they die in ignorance, then we must bear the responsibility for their loss of salvation.

18:8 Baptism always follows belief. Infant baptism can't be right because the infant cannot understand or believe the Gospel.

18:10 Somehow, everything will work out all right for us if our focus is upon bringing people to be part of God's people.

18:12 When this happened, Paul must have kept remembering the promise of verse 10, trying to reassure himself that God will not break His promises.

having stayed after this for many days, took his leave of the believers, and with Priscilla and Aquila sailed to Syria, having shorn his head in Cenchrea. For he had made a vow.¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus; and he left them there, but he entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.²⁰ And when they asked him to stay a longer time, he did not consent²¹ but took his leave of them, saying: I will return again to you if God wills. He then set sail from Ephesus.²² And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.²³ And having spent some time there, he departed and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, in that order, strengthening all the disciples.

The Conversion of Apollos

²⁴ Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures.²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John.²⁶ And he began to speak boldly in

the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.²⁷ And when he decided to go into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he helped them who through grace had believed.²⁸ For he powerfully refuted the Jews publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

CHAPTER 19 May 7 Nov. 6 *Rebaptizing Some of John the Baptist's Converts*

And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus and found some disciples.² And he said to them: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said to him: No. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.³ And he said: Into what then were you baptized? And they said: Into John's baptism.⁴ And Paul said: John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus.⁵ And when

18:26 *More accurately* – There are unbelievers and there are misbelievers. We mustn't assume that everyone outside our circle of understanding is the enemy, not of God etc. There are misbelievers, who need correction and more teaching, but we cannot judge their standing with God.

18:27 We believe "through grace". Salvation is of grace; we believe not only because we read the Bible and want to believe, but because God opened our hearts to believe (Acts 16:14; Ps. 119:18). If this factor wasn't at work, then salvation would be by our own strength of will and understanding. Those factors are significant, but the "grace" element must never be lost sight of. It's this which will keep us humble.

19:5 This could be used as an example of re-baptism. But the people who had been baptized by John were baptized before Jesus had died and resurrected – Christian

they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ And they were in all about twelve men.

Paul Preaches at Ephesus

⁸ And he entered into the synagogue and spoke boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the crowd, he departed from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for the space of two years, so that all those who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Gentiles. ¹¹ And God did special miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs

or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and their mental illnesses were cured. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had manic illnesses, saying: I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul proclaims. ¹⁴ And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. ¹⁵ And the maniac answered and said to them: Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? ¹⁶ Then the man who had the mania jumped on them and subdued and overpowered all of them, so they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all that dwelt at Ephesus, both Jews and Gentiles; and fear fell upon them all. And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸ Many also of those that had believed came, confessing and declaring their sinful

baptism is into the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the command to be baptized was only given by Jesus after His resurrection. Re-baptism must be a personal choice. If we were baptized by sprinkling or as an infant, then that's not real baptism. Re-baptism after we more accurately understand the things about Jesus is a very personal decision.

19:18 *Those that had believed* – After seeing what happened to the sons of Sceva, it would appear that some who had ‘believed’ went up to a higher level of commitment. This would seem to imply that despite having ‘believed’, perhaps with the same level of shallow conviction as some ‘believed’ in the teaching of Jesus during His ministry, their faith wasn’t so deep. They were taken up to an altogether higher level of commitment, resulting in ‘confessing and declaring’, and quitting their involvement with magic. There are levels up the ladder of faith and commitment. The language here seems to be intended to connect with the description of baptism in Mt. 3:6, where converts confessed and shewed their deeds *at baptism*. The way the Ephesians made their statement “before all men” again recalls the concept of baptism as a public declaration. Yet the Ephesians did all this *after* they had believed. It would seem that we are being invited to consider this as a re-conversion; and we can all go through such a process.

deeds. ¹⁹ And not a few of those that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. ²¹ When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go up to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying: After I have been there, I must also see Rome. ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of those that assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, he stayed in Asia for a while. ²³ And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ He gathered them together, with the workmen of similar occupation, and said: Sirs, you know that by this business we have our wealth, ²⁶ and you see and hear, that not only at Ephesus but throughout most of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and led astray many people, saying that they are no gods that are made with hands. ²⁷ And not only is there a danger that this our trade will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana will be made

of no account, and that she whom all Asia and the world worships should even be deposed from her magnificence. ²⁸ And when they heard this, they were filled with anger and cried out, saying: Great is Diana of Ephesus! ²⁹ And the city was filled with confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel. ³⁰ But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹ And some also of the Asiarchs, being his friends, sent word to him, pleading that he not venture into the theatre. ³² Therefore, some cried one thing and some another. For the assembly was in confusion and most did not know why they had come together. ³³ And they brought Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews putting him forward; and Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made a defence to the people; ³⁴ but when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out: Great is Diana of the Ephesians! ³⁵ And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: You men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana and of the

19:21 Paul had great spiritual ambition; he was determined to take the Gospel as far as he could, even to Rome. Within the limitations of our lives and situations, we can have the same spirit.

19:23 Christianity was called "the Way" because it is a way of life in practice; but there is also an allusion to how the Angel-cherubim keep the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). Our life in Christ is a walking along the "way" to eternal life, watched over by the Angels.

image which fell down from Jupiter?

³⁶ Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷ For you have brought here these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸ Therefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen that are with him have a matter against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them accuse one another. ³⁹ But if you seek anything about other matters, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰ For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion. ⁴¹ And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

CHAPTER 20 May 8 Nov. 7

Paul at Troas

And after the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ² And when he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came into Greece. ³ There he spent three months; but as he was about to set sail for Syria, he was informed that the Jews planned to ambush him, so he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus from Berea, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy;

and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵ These had gone ahead earlier, and were waiting for us at Troas.

⁶ And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread; and in five days came to those at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

⁷ And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart the next day; and prolonged his speech until midnight.

⁸ And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. ⁹ And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep, and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and embracing him, said: Don't be alarmed. For his life is in him. ¹¹ Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. ¹² And they brought the lad alive and were greatly comforted.

Paul's Sermon at Miletus

¹³ But going ahead to the ship we set sail for Assos, there intending to pick up Paul. For so had he arranged, he intending to go by land. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and came to Mitylene. ¹⁵ And sailing from there, the following day we arrived off Kios, the next day we

20:7 This could suggest that the early believers did the 'breaking of bread' service weekly. But there is no clear Biblical command about which day to do it on, nor exactly how often to do it.

crossed over to Samos and the day after we came to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia. For he was in a hurry, hoping to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them: You know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews. ²⁰ You know how I did not hesitate to declare to you anything that was helpful, and taught you in public, and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Gentiles repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. ²³ Except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city, saying that

imprisonments and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my race, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom of God will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I did not hesitate to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departing, fierce wolves shall enter in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ And from among you, men shall arise speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore be alert, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn every

20:20 *House to house* – Again we see the emphasis upon the home as the basis for organization of believers and spreading of the Gospel.

20:23 The Holy Spirit told Paul that he would suffer if he went to Jerusalem; but he also felt bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (see v. 22 and 19:21; 21:4,11). Sometimes it seems God gives us contradictory guidance; this is so that we can work through the choices and come to a decision from the right motives, even if sometimes it doesn't always matter what the decision is. In some matters it's the process, not the product; the journey, not the destination... which is important.

20:26 Paul felt so truly and absolutely forgiven that he could say that he was “pure from the blood of all men”. Yet as he said that, he must surely have had the blood of Stephen on his mind, trickling out along the Palestinian dust, as the clothes of the men who murdered Stephen lay at Paul's feet as a testimony that *he* was responsible for it. But he knew his forgiveness. He could confidently state that he was pure from that blood. Righteousness had been imputed, the sin covered – because he was in Christ.

20:31 *Three years... night and day with tears* – This is a huge statement. It reflects how major was and is the danger of false teaching and abuse entering the church. It

one night and day with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those that are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver, or gold, or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I gave you an example, that so labouring you should help the weak, and to remember the words that the Lord Jesus spoke, saying: It is more blessed to give than to receive. ³⁶ And when he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And they all wept freely, embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of his statement, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

CHAPTER 21 May 9 Nov. 8

The Journey to Jerusalem

And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And having found a ship

crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ And having found the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem. ⁵ When our time was up, we departed and went on our way, and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, until we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. ⁶ And we went on board the ship, and they returned home. ⁷ And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the believers and stayed with them one day. ⁸ And the next day we departed, and went to Caesarea, and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. ¹⁰ And as we stayed there some days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. ¹¹ And coming to us and taking Paul's belt, he bound his own feet

shouldn't therefore surprise us to conclude that 'Christianity' as a human religion is corrupted; but God has preserved His word the Bible, so that those who truly seek Him can still find Him.

20:32 The word of God's grace has the power to build us up and lead us to the Kingdom. This isn't to say that Bible reading alone guarantees salvation; but if we perceive within the Bible the word of grace, *this* will inevitably and naturally transform us into Kingdom people.

21:5 Women and children were often counted as non-persons in 1st century Mediterranean society. But Jesus gave special value to them, and the critics of Christianity mocked it as a religion largely comprised of women and children.

21:9 To 'prophesy' means to speak forth God's word, not just to predict the future. Women as well as men (:10) prophesied in the early church.

and hands, and said: Thus said the Holy Spirit: So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this belt, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. ¹² And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered: What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁴ And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying: The will of the Lord be done. ¹⁵ And after these days we took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ And there went with us also some of the disciples from Caesarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge. ¹⁷ And when we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly.

Paul in Jerusalem

¹⁸ And the following day Paul went with us to James; and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ And when he had greeted them, he related one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said to him: You saw, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law. ²¹ And they have been informed concerning you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to our customs. ²² What then? They will certainly hear you have come. ²³ Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴ These take and purify yourself along with them, and

21:12, 13 This incident is very similar to how Peter and the disciples tried to discourage Jesus from journeying up to Jerusalem to die on the cross (Mt. 16:21-24). We too can discern points of contact between the recorded experiences and feelings of Jesus, and our situations which we pass through in life. In this sense, He is 'with us' through the medium of His word.

21:20 Acts 8:1 records that the entire membership of the Jerusalem ecclesia was scattered; the way we read of them numbering thousands by the time of Acts 21:20 suggests that to avoid persecution those who remained reconciled themselves with the temple, becoming a sect of Judaism, presumably with the tithe and temple tax going to the temple rather than to the ecclesia. These "thousands" of Acts 21 were probably largely converted since the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen. The original Jerusalem ecclesia had gone and preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:19,20), which wasn't what the later Jerusalem ecclesia supported. Early Christianity went wrong at two ends – the Jewish Christians merged back with Judaism to avoid opposition from the Jews, and the Gentile Christians tended to merge back with paganism to avoid persecution from the Roman empire.

21:21 Paul did indeed write in his letters that circumcision is of no spiritual meaning for the believer in Christ, regardless of whether we are Jews or Gentiles (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:19). But sometimes the way of Christian wisdom is to not insist upon principle, but to go along with the weakness or limited understanding of others.

pay their expenses, that they may shave their heads; and all shall know that there is no truth in the things of which they have been informed concerning you, but you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the law. ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles that have believed, we wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. ²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple, declaring the fulfilment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them. ²⁷ And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out: Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law, and this place, and moreover he brought Gentiles also into the temple and has defiled this holy place. ²⁹ For they had previously seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. ³⁰ And all the city was moved, and the people ran together, laid hold on Paul and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the chief captain of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² And he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and they, when they saw the chief

captain and the soldiers, stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the chief captain came near, laid hold of him and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ And some among the mob shouted one thing, some another; and when he could not know the certainty because of the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the fortress of Antonia. ³⁵ When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. ³⁶ For the mob followed after, crying out: Away with him! ³⁷ And as Paul was about to be brought into the fortress, he said to the chief captain: May I say something to you? And he said: Do you know Greek? ³⁸ Are you not that Egyptian, who some time ago stirred up sedition and led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were terrorists? ³⁹ But Paul said: I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I beg you, please let me speak to the people. ⁴⁰ And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand to the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying:

CHAPTER 22 May 9 Nov. 8

Paul's Defence to the Jerusalem Jews

Brothers and fathers, hear the defence which I now make to you. ² And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they were even more quiet;

and he said: ³ I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as you all are this day. ⁴ And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵ as also the high priest does bear me witness, and all the council of the elders. From whom also I received letters to the brothers and journeyed to Damascus, to bring them also that were there to Jerusalem in bonds to be punished. ⁶ And it came to pass, that as I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ⁸ And I answered: Who are you Lord? And he said to me: I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. ⁹ And they that were with me saw indeed the light, but they did not understand the voice of him that spoke to me. ¹⁰ And I said: What shall I do Lord? And the Lord

said to me: Arise and go into Damascus, and there you shall be told all things which are appointed for you to do. ¹¹ And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand by those that were with me, I came into Damascus. ¹² And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, ¹³ came to me; and standing by me, he said to me: Brother Saul, receive your sight. And in that very moment I looked upon him. ¹⁴ And he said: The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth. ¹⁵ For you shall be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. ¹⁷ And it came to pass, that when I had returned to Jerusalem and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, ¹⁸ and saw him saying to me: Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not welcome your testimony concerning me. ¹⁹ And I said: Lord,

22:2 If we communicate with people in their language, literally or metaphorically, i.e. in the terms they understand and are familiar with, then they will listen the more carefully.

22:13 Paul was called “brother” even before his baptism, and even after his baptism, he refers to the Jews as his “brethren” (v. 5). Of course, he knew all about the higher status and meaning of brotherhood in Christ; but he wasn’t so pedantic as to not call the Jews his ‘brethren’. He clearly didn’t have any of the guilt-by-association paranoia which has led many believers to be so separate from the world that they can’t effectively witness to it.

22:16 There should be no delay to baptism – it is for the forgiveness of our sins. This is why baptism is a complete immersion in water – to symbolize the washing away of sin. “Calling [up]on [yourself] His name” (Greek) is what we do at baptism – we become His.

they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those that believed in you; ²⁰ and when the blood of Stephen your witness was shed, I also was standing by and approved, and guarded the robes of those that slew him. ²¹ And he said to me: Depart! For I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.

Paul Uses his Roman Citizenship

²² And they listened until this word, and then they lifted up their voice and said: Away with such a fellow from the earth! For it is not fitting that he should live. ²³ And as they cried out and threw off their cloaks and threw dust into the air, ²⁴ the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the fortress, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him. ²⁵ And when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion that stood by: Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman citizen and undomined? ²⁶ And when the centurion

heard it, he went to the chief captain and told him, saying: What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman. ²⁷ And the chief captain came and said to him: Tell me, are you a Roman? And he said: Yes. ²⁸ And the chief captain answered: With a great sum of money I obtained this citizenship. And Paul said: But I am Roman born. ²⁹ Then those that were about to torture him withdrew from him immediately; and the chief captain also was afraid when he knew that he was a Roman, because he had bound him. ³⁰ But the next day, desiring to know with certainty why he was accused by the Jews, he released him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

CHAPTER 23 May 10 Nov. 9

Paul's Defence Before the High Priest

And Paul looked straight at the council, and said: Brothers, I have lived before God in all good

22:26 Paul was a Roman citizen. But he invites all of us to see ourselves as a citizen of a Heavenly state (Phil. 3:20); he downplayed his Roman citizenship in his own mind, because he was so conscious of being a citizen of God's Kingdom. We too should allow the wonder of our citizenship in Christ to lead us to despise all worldly advantage which we may have.

23:1 Can we say this? But the Lord Jesus Himself informs us that Paul kicked against the pricks of his own conscience *before* his conversion (Acts 9:5). Maybe Paul perceived his 'life' to have begun at his conversion? We have a conscience which in God's eyes is cleansed of sin, knowing that our sin has been overcome once and for all, and that we have access to this through baptism. Our hearts were purified by that faith (Acts 15:9); we were cleansed from the conscience of sins (Heb. 9:14); all things became pure to us (Tit. 1:15; Rom. 14:20). This is a good conscience, Biblically defined. When Paul said he had a pure conscience before God, they smote him for blasphemy because there is an association between a clear conscience and perfection (Heb. 9:9; 10:14). A clear conscience therefore means an awareness that in God's eyes, we have

conscience until this day. ² And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him: God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law? ⁴ And they that stood by said: Do you revile God's high priest? ⁵ And Paul said: I did not recognize, brothers, that he was high priest. For it is written, you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. ⁶ But when Paul noticed that one part was Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council: Brothers, I am a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee! Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. ⁷ And when he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees believe in both. ⁹ And there arose a great clamour; and some of the scribes of the Pharisees stood up and argued,

saying: We find no evil in this man. What if a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel? ¹⁰ And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the fortress. ¹¹ And the following night the Lord stood by him, and said: Take courage, for as you have testified concerning me in Jerusalem, so also you must testify in Rome.

The Plan to Kill Paul

¹² And when it was day, the Jews banded together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ And more than forty persons participated in this conspiracy. ¹⁴ And they came to the chief priests and the elders, and said: We have bound ourselves under a great curse, to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now then, you with the council petition the chief captain to bring him down to

no sin. Whilst we may still have twinges of guilt, and sins to confess, from God's viewpoint the slate is clean, and has been since our baptism. It is impossible to believe this without responding – we are purged in our conscience so that we might serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

23:5 This can be read as Paul claiming that he didn't recognize this high priest, as Christ was his high priest, therefore his cursing was justified.

23:6 The hope of the Gospel is that when Jesus returns, we who are in Christ by faith and baptism shall be resurrected from the dead and live eternally. Going to Heaven at death isn't taught in the Bible; the focus is upon the return of Christ to earth and the literal resurrection of the dead to live eternally in God's Kingdom on earth.

23:6 Paul says "I *am* a Pharisee", not "I *was* a Pharisee and now repudiate their false doctrines and crucifixion of Jesus". He didn't have any sense of being guilty by association with them. Rather he sought to be 'all things to all people', to the Jews he became as a Jew, in order that he might win people to Christ (1 Cor. 9:20,21).

you, as though you would judge his case more exactly; and we, before he comes near, will be ready to slay him. ¹⁶ But Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, and he went and entered into the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷ And Paul summoned one of the centurions, and said: Take this young man to the chief captain; for he has something to tell him. ¹⁸ So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said: Paul the prisoner summoned me, and asked me to bring this young man, who has something to say to you. ¹⁹ And the chief captain took him by the hand, and taking him aside asked him privately: What is it you have to tell me? ²⁰ He said: The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. ²¹ But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for your consent to their request. ²² So the chief captain let the young man go, ordering him: Tell no one you have told these things to me. ²³ And he summoned two of the centurions and said: Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Caesarea, and seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen, at the third hour of the night. ²⁴ And provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Felix the governor. ²⁵ And he wrote a letter after this form: ²⁶ Claudius Lysias to the most excellent gover-

nor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, when I intervened with soldiers and rescued him, having learnt that he was a Roman. ²⁸ And desiring to know the cause why they accused him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹ I found him to be accused about questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or imprisonment. ³⁰ And when it was told that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you, ordering his accusers also to speak against him before you. ³¹ So the soldiers, as commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³² But the next day they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the fortress. ³³ And they, when they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, presented Paul also before him. ³⁴ And when he had read it, he asked of what province he was; and when he understood that he was of Cilicia, he said: ³⁵ I will hear you fully when your accusers also have come; and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's palace.

CHAPTER 24 May 10 Nov. 9

Paul Before Felix

And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus; and these gave evidence to the governor against Paul. ² And when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: Seeing that by you we enjoy much peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation

by your foresight, ³ we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. ⁴ But, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. ⁵ For we have found this man to be a plague, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, ⁶ who moreover tried to profane the temple. We laid hold on him, and we would have judged him according to our law. ⁷ But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands, ⁸ commanding his accusers to come before you. You will be able, by examining him yourself, to gain knowledge of all these things of which we accuse him. ⁹ And the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so. ¹⁰ And when the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul answered: Inasmuch as I do know you have been for many years a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defence. ¹¹ You can verify that it was no more than twelve days ago that I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² And nei-

ther in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city did they find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd. ¹³ Neither can they prove to you the things of which they now accuse me. ¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that after the Way, which they call a sect, I serve the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; ¹⁵ having hope toward God, which these people also look for, that there shall be a resurrection, both of the just and unjust. ¹⁶ Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always. ¹⁷ Now after some years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation. ¹⁸ Whilst doing this, they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor with uproar; but there were certain Jews from Asia, ¹⁹ who should have been here before you and to make the accusation, if they had something against me. ²⁰ Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹ except it be for one statement that I cried standing among them: Concerning the resurrection

24:5 The true church of God was called a “sect”, they were [falsely] accused of being divisive just because they followed Christ rather than existing human tradition (28:22). The same happens today.

24:15 The unjust will be resurrected, judged, and then die again and remain dead for ever – “the second death” (Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14). The punishment for sinners will be at the resurrection – not immediately after death. For death is unconsciousness; and there is no such thing as an ‘immortal soul’ which must go somewhere, either good or bad, immediately after death.

24:16 We need to realize keenly the self-discipline and self-sacrifice which following the man Jesus requires of us. Paul ‘exercised’ himself in his spiritual life, the Greek word *asko* being the source of the English word ascetic.

of the dead I am called in question before you this day. ²² But Felix, having more accurate knowledge concerning the Way, adjourned the proceedings, saying: When Lysias the chief captain shall come, I will decide your case. ²³ Then he gave orders to the centurion, that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty; and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. ²⁴ But after some days, Felix came with Drusilla his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and listened to him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ And as he reasoned about righteousness, self control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid, and answered: Go away for now. When I have a convenient time I will call for you. ²⁶ He hoped meanwhile that money would be given to him by Paul. Therefore, he sent for him more often and conversed with him. ²⁷ But after two years, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favour with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

CHAPTER 25 May 11 Nov. 10

Paul Appeals to Caesar

Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ² And the chief priests and the prin-

cipal men of the Jews presented the charges against Paul; and they petitioned him, ³ asking a favour against Paul, that he would summon him to Jerusalem; for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. ⁴ However Festus answered that Paul should be kept in custody at Caesarea, and that he intended to go there soon. ⁵ Therefore, said he, let those that have authority among you come with me, and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him. ⁶ And when he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went to Caesarea; and the next day he sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. ⁷ And when he had arrived, the Jews that had come from Jerusalem stood round him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove; ⁸ while Paul said in his defence: Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I sinned at all. ⁹ But Festus, desiring to gain favour with the Jews, answered Paul and said: Will you go up to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me? ¹⁰ But Paul said: I am standing before Caesar's judgment seat, where I should be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as you also very well

24:25 The very fact of judgment to come is in itself a demand for righteousness and temperance. Felix realized this and trembled, in anticipation of rejection at the judgment. As the Lord had explained in Jn. 5, when a man hears the word of the Gospel, he hears the call to go to judgment. And if he rejects it, he rejects himself from the Lord's presence in the future. Likewise Acts 17:31 reasons that the very existence of the future judgment seat and the Lord ordained as judge of living and dead is a command to repent.

know. ¹¹ If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying, but if none of these things are true of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar. ¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered: You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar shall you go. ¹³ Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the King and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the King, saying: There is a certain man left as a prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵ about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for sentence against him. ¹⁶ To whom I answered that it is not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone, before the accused has the accusers face to face, and has had opportunity to make his defence concerning the matter charged against him. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they gathered here, I did not delay, and the next day sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought; ¹⁸ concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed. ¹⁹ Rather they

had certain questions against him of their own religion and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. ²⁰ And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters. ²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept for the decision of the Emperor, I commanded him to be kept until I should send him to Caesar. ²² And Agrippa said to Festus: I also would like to hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, you shall hear him. ²³ So the next day, when Agrippa had arrived and Bernice, with great pomp, they entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and principal men of the city; and at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ And Festus said: King Agrippa and all men who are here present with us, you see this man, about whom all the crowd of the Jews made appeal to me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he should not live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and as he appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶ But I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore, I have brought him before you all, and especially before you

25:11 Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? Maybe it was simply because he so wanted to go to Rome in order to spread Christianity at the very heart of the Roman empire. Maybe he was spiritually ambitious enough to think that he might be able to testify the Gospel to Caesar himself – and even convert him? After all, Paul prayed that King Agrippa would become a Christian (26:29).

25:26, 27 Being sent to the highest level of judgment seat in Rome, yet with no valid charges against him – was bizarre. Paul alludes to this when he wrote to the ecclesia in Rome (who surely knew the situation with Paul's case) that in Christ, there is now no-

King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, without specifying the charges against him.

CHAPTER 26 May 11 Nov. 10

Paul's Defence Before Agrippa

And Agrippa said to Paul: You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defence. ² I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before you this day concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews; ³ especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews. Therefore, I beg that you hear me patiently. ⁴ My manner of life from my youth, which was from the

beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, do all the Jews know; ⁵ having knowledge of me from the first (if they are willing to admit it) that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. ⁶ And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; ⁷ to which our twelve tribes earnestly serve night and day, hoping to attain the promises. And concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, O king! ⁸ Why would any of you think it incredible that God raises the dead? ⁹ I truly thought that I should do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And this I did in Jerusalem, and I shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my vote against

body to condemn us (Rom. 8:34). His letter from Rome to the Colossians has a similar message (Col. 1:22): "...to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable (Gk. 'free from accusation') in his sight". This freedom from accusation explains why none of our bad deeds will be mentioned to us then. One wonders if Paul's hearing in Acts 25 is described as it is in order to help us imagine this; he has no accusers, and therefore can be acquitted. We are in that same situation. We have been forgiven; there is no case against us before the judgment seat of Christ.

26:4 If Paul grew up in Jerusalem from his youth, he would surely have met Jesus and seen the miracles which He performed in Jerusalem at the feasts. He may even have seen the crucifixion.

26:6-8 The hope of resurrection from the dead is the hope which the Jewish fathers had. The promise that Abraham would personally inherit the land of Canaan and live there for ever required a resurrection of Abraham from the dead. The core of the Christian hope was taught to the Jewish fathers through the promises made to Abraham and David (Gal. 3:8). The New Testament Gospel of the Kingdom of God is in perfect harmony with the message of the Old Testament – see vv. 22,23.

26:8, 9 Note the connection between these verses. Paul is saying that the greatest proof that Christ had risen from the dead was the change in character which had occurred within him. This was "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10); and it works within us too. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth aren't just facts we know; if they are truly believed, there is within them the power of ultimate transformation.

them.¹¹ And in all the synagogues I often punished them, trying to force them to blaspheme, and being furiously enraged at them, I persecuted them even in foreign cities.¹² Thus I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,¹³ but at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining around me and those that journeyed with me.¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the cattle prod.¹⁵ And I said: Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said: I am Jesus whom you persecute.¹⁶ But arise, and stand upon your feet. For to this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a servant and a witness both of the things in which you have seen me, and of the things which I will reveal to you.¹⁷ Delivering you from the people of the Jews and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you,¹⁸ to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; to the end they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith in

me.¹⁹ Therefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision;²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to their repentance.²¹ For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.²² Therefore, having obtained the help that is from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should happen:²³ That the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.²⁴ And as he thus made his defence, Festus said with a loud voice: Paul, you are mad. Your much learning is turning you mad.²⁵ But Paul said: I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak words of truth and soberness.²⁶ For the king knows of these things, to whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him. For this has not been done in a corner.²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe.²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul: You al-

26:11 Paul's progressive appreciation of his own sinfulness is reflected in how he describes what he did in persecuting Christians in ever more terrible terms, the older he gets. He describes his victims as "men and women" whom he 'arrested' (Acts 8:3; 22:4), then he admits he threatened and murdered them (Acts 9:3), then he persecuted "the way" unto death (Acts 22:4); then he speaks of them as "those who believe" (Acts 22:19) and finally, in a crescendo of shame with himself, he speaks of how he furiously persecuted, like a wild animal, unto the death, "many of the saints", not only in Palestine but also "to foreign [Gentile] cities" (Acts 26:10,11). He came to be every more confident of his salvation, as he came to realize the more his own sinfulness. And this is surely a pattern for us all.

most persuade me to become a Christian. ²⁹ And Paul said: I will pray to God, that whether in a little time or a longer time, not you only, but also all that hear me this day might become as I am (apart from these chains). ³⁰ And the king rose up and the governor and Bernice and they that sat with them. ³¹ And when they had withdrawn, they spoke to each other, saying: This man does nothing worthy of death or of imprisonment. ³² And Agrippa said to Festus: This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Caesar.

CHAPTER 27 May 12 Nov. 11

Paul's Journey to Rome

And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan Regiment. ² And embarking in a ship from Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea; Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. ³ And the next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and refresh himself. ⁴ And putting to sea from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. ⁵ And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. ⁶ And there the centurion found a ship from Alexandria sailing for Italy; and he put us

onboard. ⁷ And when we had sailed slowly many days and had come with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. ⁸ Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. ⁹ Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them ¹⁰ and said to them: Gentlemen, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives. ¹¹ But the centurion gave more heed to the master and to the owner of the ship, than to those things which were spoken by Paul. ¹² And because the harbour was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and to winter there. ¹³ And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close inshore.

The Shipwreck

¹⁴ But after a short time there beat down a tempestuous wind, which is called Euraquilo. ¹⁵ And when the ship was caught, and could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and were driven along. ¹⁶ And running under the lee of a small island called Claudia, we were able, with difficulty,

27:2 "Adramyttium" means 'the house of death'. The whole journey can be understood as an allegory of our journey in Christ until the daybreak of God's Kingdom.

to secure the skiff. ¹⁷ And when they had hoisted it up, they used supports to undergird the ship; and fearing that they would be cast upon the Syrtis sandbar, they lowered the sail and so were driven by the wind. ¹⁸ The next day as we were being violently tossed by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹ And the third day with their own hands they threw overboard the tackle of the ship. ²⁰ And when neither sun nor stars shone upon us for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was now taken away. ²¹ And after they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood in the midst of them and said: Gentlemen, you should have listened to me, and not have set sail from Crete and gained this injury and loss. ²² And now I encourage you to be of good courage. For there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this night there stood by me an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, ²⁴ saying: Fear not Paul. You must stand before Caesar; and God has granted you the lives of all those who sail with you. ²⁵ Therefore gentlemen, be of good

courage. For I believe God, that it shall be even as it has been spoken to me. ²⁶ But we must be cast upon a certain island. ²⁷ But when the fourteenth night had arrived, as we were driven to and fro in the sea of Adria, about midnight, the sailors sensed that they were drawing near to some land. ²⁸ And they sounded and found thirty meters; and after a little space, they sounded again and found twenty five meters. ²⁹ And fearing that we should run aground on the rocks, they let go four anchors from the stern and wished for daylight. ³⁰ And as the sailors were seeking to abandon the ship and had lowered the skiff into the sea, under pretence that they would lay out anchors from the foreship, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers: Except these stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. ³³ And while the day was dawning, Paul pleaded with them all to take some food, saying: This day is the fourteenth day that you wait and continue fasting, having eaten nothing. ³⁴ Therefore, I beg you to take some food. For this is for your health; for

27:24 It often happens that those associated with us are blessed because of us, even if they are unbelievers. Especially is this true of our children and partners (1 Cor. 7:14).

27:31 The legalists in the early church taught that unless believers kept the circumcision laws, “you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). The very same Greek phrase is used by Paul when he calls out in urgency during the storm: “Except these stay in the ship, *you* cannot be saved”. Surely Luke’s record is making a connection; the legalists taught that it was time to quit the rest of the community unless they got their way, for the sake of their eternal future; and Paul responds by teaching that our salvation depends upon us *pulling together* against the desperate situation we find ourselves in. We should never walk out on our brethren or the body of Christ. Severed from Him, we can do and be “nothing” (Jn. 15:5); and He is His body, the church.

27:34 Paul is quoting here from Christ’s words of encouragement to the disciples that

not a hair shall perish from the head of any of you. ³⁵ And when he had said this and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ And in all we were two hundred and seventy six persons on the ship. ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea. ³⁹ And when it was day, they did not recognise the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, and they took counsel whether they could drive the ship upon it. ⁴⁰ And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time loosing the bands of the rudders; and hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. ⁴² And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prison-

ers, lest any of them should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stopped them from their purpose, and commanded that they who could swim should throw themselves overboard first and get to land; ⁴⁴ and then the rest, some on planks and some on other things from the ship. And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safely to land.

CHAPTER 28 May 13 Nov. 12

Paul on Malta

And when we had escaped, then we knew that the island was called Malta. ² And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. ³ But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself onto his hand. ⁴ And when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand,

in the tribulation of the last days, they would survive (Lk. 21:18). The storm can therefore be seen as an allegory of our passing through the latter day tribulation.

27:35 The way Paul broke bread in v.35 is an echo of the way Christ did it. We get the impression that Paul was slowly, deliberately copying the example of how Jesus broke bread in the upper room. So it is as if Paul is seeing himself as typical of Christ, and those in the ship with him as typical of Christ's followers. Paul twice encouraged them "be of good cheer" (vv.22,25) as they huddled together breaking bread – also quoting the very words of the Lord Jesus, in the same context (Jn. 16:33); and remember that Jesus also said those words when the disciples were struggling in another great storm (Mk. 6:50). The way the Angel appeared to Paul at night to strengthen him (v.23) also echoes the experience of Christ in the Garden. If Jesus is a living reality for us, if we are constantly reflecting upon His words, actions and experiences as they are recorded in the Gospels, then we will start to act in the same way. His Spirit will become ours; He will live in us and we in Him.

28:3 Paul, a relatively old man afflicted by a "thorn in the flesh", was the one out there gathering firewood – a wonderful example of service.

they said to each other: No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped from the sea, yet Justice has not permitted to live. ⁵ However he shook off the creature into the fire and was unharmed. ⁶ But they expected that he would have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but when they had waited a long time in expectation and saw nothing amiss came to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. ⁷ Now in the neighbourhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. ⁸ And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. Paul came in to him and prayed, and laying his hands on him, healed him. ⁹ And when this was done, the rest also that had diseases in the island came and were cured. ¹⁰ They also honoured us with many honours; and when we sailed away, they put on board such things as we needed.

Paul in Rome

¹¹ And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered on the island, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. ¹² And landing at Syracuse, we stayed there three days; ¹³ and from there, we circled

round and arrived at Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴ where we found believers and were encouraged to stay with them seven days. And so we came towards Rome. ¹⁵ And from there the brothers, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns. Whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶ And when we entered into Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself, with the soldier that guarded him. ¹⁷ And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the leaders of the Jews; and when they came together, he said to them: Brothers, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ Who, when they had examined me, desired to set me free, because there was no cause for putting me to death. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar. Not that I had something of which to accuse my nation. ²⁰ Therefore, for this reason did I request you see me and speak with me. For because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. ²¹ And they said to him: We neither

28:20 The true Christian hope is “the hope of Israel”, based upon the promises made to Abraham which include the essence of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Gal. 3:8).

28:21 The Jewish synagogue system ‘disfellowshipped’ people and then acted as if they didn’t even exist; this would explain why nothing had been said about Paul. Some extreme Protestant groups behave similarly, but such behaviour shows a complete lack of appreciation of the value of the human person – even those with whom we disagree.

received letters from Judea concerning you, nor did any of the brothers come here and report or speak any evil of you. ²² But we desire to hear of you what you think. For as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against. ²³ And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number. To whom he expounded the matter, testifying of the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴ And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. ²⁵ So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed; after Paul had made this final statement: The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying: ²⁶ Go to this

people and say, By hearing you shall hear and shall in no way understand, and seeing you shall see and shall in no way perceive. ²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart; and should repent, and I should heal them. ²⁸ Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles; and they will hear. ²⁹ When he had said these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves. ³⁰ And he stayed two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and welcomed all that visited him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, no one forbidding him.

28:25 *The Holy Spirit spoke... through Isaiah* – The Bible writers were inspired by God, through the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16).

28:31 Paul preached ‘boldly’, but he had asked others to pray for him, that he would preach boldly (Eph. 6:19). We all find it hard to be bold in witness; Paul even asked others to pray for him, that he would be more bold; and the inspired record shows us that these prayers were heard, and Paul’s desire was granted. We probably need to pray for the same boldness.

ROMANS

CHAPTER 1 Jan.27 Jul. 28

Greetings and Introduction

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we received grace and apostleship, to obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake. ⁶ Among whom are you also called to be Jesus Christ's. ⁷ To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers ¹⁰ making request, if by any means now at length I may

succeed by the will of God to come to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to strengthen you. ¹² That is: that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ And I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that oftentimes I intended to come to you (but have so far been hindered), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes- to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith to faith. As it is written: But the righteous shall live by faith.

Humanity Without Excuse

¹⁸ For the anger of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness.

1:3 Jesus was the literal descendant of David; He therefore didn't pre-exist as a person before His birth. Otherwise the promises to David about Jesus would have been meaningless – they spoke about a future descendant, who would be both God's Son and David's Son.

1:10 Paul kept praying that he could visit Rome; but he also did all he could humanly so that this would happen. This is surely why he appealed to Caesar to have his case heard, even though this wasn't necessary and he would have been acquitted at the more local court (Acts 26:32).

1:16 Without the Gospel we cannot be saved. This is why there is no salvation in non-Christian religions; and why we must preach the Gospel as far as we can.

¹⁹ Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it to them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made- even His everlasting power and Divinity- that they may be without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honour Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted animals, and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the created rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this cause God gave them up to vile passions. Their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature. ²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in

their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness and receiving in themselves that reward of their error which was due. ²⁸ And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not appropriate, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; ³⁰ whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, proud, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful. ³² Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also give approval to them that practise them.

CHAPTER 2 Jan. 27 Jul. 28

The Just Judgment of God

Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever you are that judge; for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself! For you that judge practise the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those that practise such things. ³ And do you

1:24 *Gave them up* – As in verses 26 and 28. God confirmed them in the downward spiral they chose. He confirms people in the mental attitudes, the mindsets, which they choose.

1:26 *Against nature* – Lesbianism / homosexuality isn't therefore natural. It's a perversion, what God calls in v. 27 an "error" which He will punish.

1:32 We should not only try not to sin, but also not 'approve' sin when we encounter it. This principle affects what we watch, view and read. The list of sins in verses 29-31 are what much modern 'entertainment' is all about.

2:1 If we point a finger at another, we have three fingers pointing back at ourselves.

think (O man who judges those that practise such things and yet you do the same) that you shall escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up for yourself anger in the day of anger and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who will render to every man according to his works. ⁷ To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption- eternal life. ⁸ But to them that are factious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, anger and indignation- ⁹ tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that works evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek. ¹⁰ But glory and honour and peace to every man that works good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with

God. ¹² For as many as have sinned outside of law shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law. ¹³ For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles that do not have the law, do by nature the things of the law, these not having the law, are the law to themselves- ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them ¹⁶ in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.

The Hypocrisy of the Jews

¹⁷ But if you bear the name of a Jew and rely upon the law and boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

2:8 Things like anger are the masters of many people. They think they are expressing their freedom by being angry; but the anger is in fact their master, and they are enslaved to it.

2:11 Just as God doesn't distinguish between Jews and non-Jews, so we shouldn't 'respect persons'. As partakers of His grace, we shouldn't judge people on the basis of their social status, skin colour, ethnicity etc.

2:12 Knowledge brings responsibility to judgment. Those who never knew God's law will remain dead like the animals (Ps. 49:20). Those who knew God's law will be resurrected and judged as to how far they responded to it.

2:13 The difference between hearing and doing is illustrated by the parable of the two builders; the one who built quickly upon the sand was the person who only hears the word of God; building slowly upon the rock is like hearing *and* doing. As we read the Bible, there's a terrible temptation to merely read, to hear, but not to let this translate into action.

2:14 Romans was written to believers in Rome, who comprised both Jews and Gentiles. The "Gentiles" in this verse seem to refer to Gentile Christians. Likewise the 'uncircumcised' in v. 26 refers to the uncircumcised Christians in the church at Rome.

¹⁹ and are confident you yourself are a guide of the blind, a light to those that are in darkness, ²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth- ²¹ you therefore that teach another, don't you teach yourself? You that preach a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You that say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You that dread idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law actually dishonour God through your transgression of the law. ²⁴ For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written. ²⁵ For circumcision indeed profits, if you be a doer of the law; but if you be a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? ²⁷ And shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge you- who with the letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of

the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.

CHAPTER 3 Jan. 28 Jul. 29

Both Jews and Gentiles Are All Sinners

What advantage then has the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much every way! First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ For what if some were without faith? Shall their lack of faith make of no effect the faithfulness of God? ⁴ God forbid. Yes, let God be found true, but every man a liar. As it is written: You must be justified in Your words and must prevail when You come before judgment. ⁵ But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who visits with anger? (I speak after the manner of men). ⁶ God forbid. For then how shall God judge the world? ⁷ But if the truth of God through my lie abounded to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? (As some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just). ⁹ What then? Are we better than they? No, in no way. For we before laid to the

2:29 It's an amazing thought that a righteous God praises sinful humans like us. He does this on the basis that we are covered in Christ's righteousness and therefore can be presented faultless before Him (Col. 1:22; Jude 24).

3:3 There is no excuse to reject belief in God because of the unbelief and misbehaviour of His people, be they Jews or Christians.

3:9 We are no "better" than condemned sinners. We are different to them in that we have believed in God's grace and salvation. But we should never think we are "better" than unbelievers; such spiritual arrogance is an awful sin in God's sight.

charge both of Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one. ¹¹ There are none that understand. There are none that seek God. ¹² They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that does good, no, not so much as one. ¹³ Their throat is an open tomb, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, ¹⁴ whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ destruction and misery are in their ways ¹⁷ and the way of peace have they not known; ¹⁸ there is no fear of God before their eyes. ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever things the law said, it speaks to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God. ²⁰ Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

A Righteousness Obtained by Faith

²¹ But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been mani-

fest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets- ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all them that believe. For there is no distinction. ²³ For all have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ but are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show His righteousness in the passing over of the sins done previously, in the forbearance of God, ²⁶ for the showing of His righteousness at this present time; that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith! ²⁸ We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith. ³¹ Do we then make the law of no effect through faith? God forbid. No, we establish the law.

3:19 *The world* – The Jewish world, who were under the Law of Moses.

3:20 *For through the law comes...* – This is why those who never knew God's law will not be resurrected to judgment; they aren't responsible to Him (2:12).

3:27 The fact that we are saved by faith rather than works, and that the law of God hasn't been kept fully by any of us, is so that we shall be humble; giving glory to God's grace alone. Humility and not glorying in our own achievements is so very important to God.

3:28 As keeping the Mosaic Law is irrelevant for salvation, it is quite wrong to insist that Christians keep the Sabbath or Jewish feasts in order to be saved.

3:31 *Establish* – The principles of the law weren't wrong; the essence and spirit of it are confirmed in Christ.

CHAPTER 4 Jan. 28 Jul. 29***Abraham as Our Role Model***

What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ What did the scripture say: And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. ⁴ Now to him that works, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. ⁵ But to him that works not, but believes in Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. ⁶ Even as David pronounces blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works, saying: ⁷ Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not count sin. ⁹ Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say, to Abraham his faith was counted as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision?

Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they be in uncircumcision, that righteousness might be counted to them also. ¹² And the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had whilst he was uncircumcised. ¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his seed, that he should be heir of the world, did not come through the law- but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of no power. ¹⁵ For the law works anger; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed. Not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the

4:7 *Blessed are they* – The Psalm being quoted is David’s reflections about his sin with Bathsheba, and he is reflecting how he personally is blessed with the blessing of forgiveness by grace – seeing there was no sacrifice prescribed to cover the sins of adultery and murder which he had committed. The change of pronoun from “he” [referring to David personally] to “they” shows that David’s situation is typical of that of us all. He was ‘every man’; his forgiveness and salvation by grace, and his humble response in praise and zeal to God and people, becomes our pattern.

4:12 Abraham’s faith is our pattern; his faith was in the promises which were made to him. Those promises are effectively the same as the good news of the Kingdom which we also must believe – eternal life, inheritance of the earth, the blessing of forgiveness, and God as his personal God. In this sense the Christian Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8).

4:13 The promises to Abraham were that he would inherit “the land” of Canaan; but here they are extended to include the whole planet.

father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made you) before Him whom he believed, God, who gives life to the dead, and called things that are not, as though they were. ¹⁸ Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to what had been spoken: So shall your seed be. ¹⁹ And without being weakened in faith when he considered his own body, now as good as dead (he being about one hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰ but instead, looking to the promise of God, he did not waver through unbelief, but grew strong through faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and became fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. ²² Therefore also it was counted to him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was counted to him; ²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it shall be counted, who believe in Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification.

CHAPTER 5 Jan. 29 Jul. 30

The Problem of Sin

Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; ² through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and in which we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous man! Perhaps for the good man some one would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the anger of God through him. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the

4:17 This is why the Bible often speaks of things which don't yet exist as if they do; God in that sense is outside of linear time as we know it. Therefore we read of the believers and also of Jesus as if they existed at the beginning of the world, even though literally they didn't.

4:19 Abraham was impotent yet he still believed that somehow he would produce a child.

5:1 We are counted as if we are righteous even though we are not – because we believe in God's gracious offer to count as righteous all those who believe in Christ and are baptized into Him. This isn't mere theology – it gives the baptized believer a real and felt peace with God, which is the most valuable thing we can have in this life. If God accepts us, all else is of little importance.

5:10 The steps of logic here are so powerful. If so much was achieved through Christ's death, how much more through His resurrection? If so much grace was shown to us

death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Adam and Christ

¹² So through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, for that all sinned. ¹³ For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law! ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. ¹⁵ But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ This gift is unlike the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment came because of one man to condemnation; but the free gift came out of many trespasses to justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned on account of the one man; much more

shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life on account of the one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ So then. As through one act of sin the judgment came to all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came to all men to justification of life. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one man shall the many be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law was added to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned with the result of death, even so might grace reign through righteousness with the result of eternal life- through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER 6 Jan. 29 Jul. 30

The Meaning of Baptism into Christ

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid! We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live in it? ³ Or are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized

before we were born and whilst we were still living the sinful life – how much more now that we are repentant believers? If God gave us His Son, to die in shame and nakedness for us – it's not hard for Him to give us anything else, including eternal life.

5:17 *Reign in life* – We will be king-priests in the future Kingdom of God which Jesus will establish on earth when He returns (Rev. 5:10).

5:19 *The one man* – Adam

6:3 Paul didn't just decide to write about baptism in Romans 6; the classic exposition of baptism which we find there is within a context. And it's not an appeal for people to be baptized – it's written to baptized believers, appealing for them to live out in practice the "in Christ" status which they had been given as a result of their baptisms.

into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him through a baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin. ⁷ For he that has died is set free from sin. ⁸ But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. ⁹ Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death that he died, he died to sin once, but the life that he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ Even so count yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

A Change of Masters- From Sin to Christ

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts of it. ¹³ Neither

present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you- for you are not under law, but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid! ¹⁶ Do you not know, that to whom you present yourselves as slaves to obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey? Whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that whereas you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching which was delivered to you. ¹⁸ And being made free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your human nature; but as you presented your limbs as slaves of uncleanness and iniquity, now present your limbs as slaves of righteousness unto holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. ²¹ What fruit had you at that time in the things of

If we really feel the result of our baptism, we will not “continue in sin”. Martin Luther used to overcome temptation by taking a chalk and writing *baptizatus sum* – ‘I am baptized’. We simply cannot continue in servitude to sin.

6:5 Going under the water is like death or burial; death to the old life. Coming up out of the water is like resurrection with Christ, giving the sure hope of resurrection to eternal life when He returns to earth.

6:11 *Count yourselves* – We are not fully ‘dead to sin’, but God counts us as if we died with Christ and rose with Him, and He is now ‘dead to sin’. It’s hard, but we must try to have the same positive view of ourselves in Christ as God has of us.

6:18 We changed masters at baptism, from sin to righteousness. In this sense we are never totally ‘free’. The life of sin, doing what we want, isn’t freedom – it’s slavery to sin. So we are either slaves of sin or of God. But in His service we find freedom – this is the wonderful paradox.

which you are now ashamed? For the result of those things is death. ²² But now being made free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit unto holiness- and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 7 Jan. 30 Jul. 31

Freedom From the Law of Moses

Or are you ignorant brothers (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man for as long as he lives? ² For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. ³ So then if, while the husband lives, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is joined to another man. ⁴ Therefore my brothers, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; so that you should be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful pas-

sions, which were through the law, worked in our limbs to bring forth fruit to death. ⁶ But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter. ⁷ What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid! However, I had not known sin, except through the law. For I had not known coveting, except the law had said: You shall not covet. ⁸ But sin, grabbing an opportunity through the commandment, worked in me all manner of coveting. For apart from the law, sin is dead and powerless. ⁹ And I once was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which was intended to life, this I found to be to death. ¹¹ For sin, grabbing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it- slew me. ¹² Thus the law is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did then that which is good become death to me? God forbid! But sin was shown to be sin, by the way it worked death in me through that which is good; and thus through the commandment, sin became shown as indeed exceedingly sinful.

7:3, 4 The law is dead; we are free from it and therefore don't need to keep things like the Sabbath, feasts or food laws.

7:4 We are married to Jesus, and have 'fruit' by Him – acts and attitudes of righteousness.

7:11 Sin is personified – spoken of as a person although it is an abstract idea. Sometimes that 'person' is called 'Satan', the adversary. However, Paul's exposition of sin here in Romans makes no mention of a personal, cosmic being called 'Satan'. This is a pagan idea.

Paul's Struggle with Sin

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold unto sin.

¹⁵ For why I do what I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I intend, but instead I do what I hate.

¹⁶ But if I do what I would rather not do, then I agree that the law is good.

¹⁷ So now it is not I that do it, but the sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For the will to do good is present with me; but to actually do what is good is not present.

¹⁹ For the good which I would like to do I do not do, but the evil which I would not do, that I practice. ²⁰ But if I do what I would not wish to do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹ So I find then a principle,

that evil is present, although I wish to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; ²³ but I see a different law in my limbs, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my limbs. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body

of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

CHAPTER 8 Jan. 30 Jul. 31***Flesh and Spirit***

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for a sin offering, condemned sin, in the flesh. ⁴ That the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. ⁵ For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind of the flesh is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to

7:17 Sin within is the real problem we face, not an external Satan figure. Paul emphasizes here that he sins because of an internal principle within him (verses 18,20,23). We sin because we have within us an internal source of temptation to sin. Because sin comes from within (Mark 7:15-23) we must struggle for control of our thinking and to develop a spiritual mind. This is the essence of practical Christianity.

7:24 Paul felt “wretched” and yet elsewhere he shows his confidence that he will be saved and live for ever when Jesus returns. We can take comfort from his words here, when we feel that we are making little progress in the spiritual struggle against sin.

8:1 We must give these wonderful words their true weight and not skim read them. If we are “in Christ” by faith and baptism into Him, then we will not be condemned at the day of judgment. This is a good news almost too good to be believed by many.

8:3 The identity of Jesus with human nature and sinners is clearly taught here. He wasn't God in person, for God is Spirit and not flesh. Jesus condemned sin, in the flesh – because He had our nature yet didn't sin, He overcame sin.

the law of God, neither indeed can it be. ⁸ And they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you. ¹² So then brothers, we are debtors- but not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. ¹³ For if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

The Wonder of Being God's Children

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit,

that we are children of God. ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs- heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation awaits the revealing of God's children. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as children and the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope were we saved; but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, then we with patience wait for it.

8:11 If we are spiritually minded now, if Christ's thinking dwells within us, then this is the basis upon which we will be resurrected to eternal life when Christ returns.

8:15 We have been adopted, and yet we await full adoption as God's children when Jesus returns (v. 23). This is an example of the 'Now but not yet' paradox – we in one sense are saved, in another sense we await the physical revelation of that salvation when Christ returns.

8:17 The symbolism of baptism, dying and resurrecting with Christ (6:3-5), is lived out in our lives; insofar as we share in His sufferings, we will share in the joy and power of His new life, both now and at the resurrection of the body.

8:23 Bodies – Note the emphasis upon the salvation of the body in this chapter. The idea of an immortal soul going to Heaven isn't Biblical. Instead, we hope for the resurrection of the body, just as Christ rose literally from the dead.

Amazing Encouragement

²⁶ And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity. For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ And he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose—all things work together for good. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many other children. ³⁰ And whom He foreordained, those He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified, and who He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He that spared not His own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not also with him freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's chosen ones? It is God that justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that

condemns? It is Christ Jesus that died, yes rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God; who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Even as it is written: For your sake we are killed all the day long, we were deemed sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 9 Jan. 31 Aug. 1**God's Love for Israel**

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for the sake of my brothers,

8:27 Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven (v. 34). We should remember this when we offer prayers to God in Jesus' Name.

8:34 The judge and counsel for the defence are on our side; and in Christ, no accusation can be brought against us. And so in the court of Divine justice, we are acquitted. This reality is so wonderful that all earthly problems (verses 35-39) should mean little to us.

9:3 Paul is alluding to how Moses offered his place in God's 'book of life' – i.e. his eternal salvation – in order that Israel might be saved. This is an amazing level of love – to be prepared to offer up your place in eternity for the sake of others. Paul says he "could wish" this – because he had learnt from the fact that God had refused Moses' offer. God doesn't work on the basis of *substitution*; He saves people because

my kinsmen according to the flesh; ⁴ who are Israelites, whose is the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises. ⁵ Whose are the fathers and of whom is Christ, as concerning the flesh, who is over all. God be praised forever! Amen. ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has come to nothing. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel. ⁷ Neither, because they are Abraham's seed are they all children, but: In Isaac shall your seed be called. ⁸ That is: it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: According to this season will I come and Sarah shall have a son.

Predestination and Foreknowledge

¹⁰ And not only so, but Rebecca also having conceived by one, by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose

of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calls), ¹² it was said to her: The elder shall serve the younger. ¹³ Even as it is written: Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! ¹⁵ For He said to Moses: I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ¹⁶ So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the scripture says of Pharaoh: For this very purpose did I raise you up, that I might show in you My power, and that My Name might be published abroad in all the earth. ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He wishes to, and hardens who He wishes. ¹⁹ Then you will say to me: Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will? ²⁰ No, O man; who are you to answer back to God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it: Why did you make me thus? ²¹ Or

of their freewill identification with Messiah, i.e. Jesus, as the *representative* of God to man and man to God.

9:5 The fact that Christ was ethnically Jewish shows He was the literal descendant of Abraham and David, the special descendant whom they had been promised. He therefore didn't exist before His birth, and was not God Himself; even though His status and glory is very great.

9:18 It is written in Exodus many times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; and also, that *God* hardened his heart. So God confirms people in the attitudes and positions which they themselves choose from their own freewill.

9:20 The questions we ask about the justice of God aren't appropriate for us to ask. We will only be concerned about them if we have failed to accept Bible teaching about our low status – for we are just dust, or clay, which God is working with. If we accept this is all we are, questions about His justice, let alone implied criticisms of Him, are inappropriate. Bible characters have argued with God and been angry with God, but ultimately the 'answer' is simply that it is not for us to know these answers, because we are but dust. It's like a small child insisting that the workings of a car are explained

has not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel to honour, and another to dishonour? ²² And so what if God is willing to show His anger and to make His power known, enduring with longsuffering vessels of anger prepared for destruction; ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He beforehand prepared for glory, ²⁴ even us, whom He also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As He said also in Hosea: I will call them My people, who were not My people; and she that was not beloved shall be called beloved. ²⁶ And it shall be, that in the place where it was said to them: You are not My people, there shall they be called children of the living God. ²⁷ And Isaiah cried out concerning Israel: Even if the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is only the remnant that shall be saved. ²⁸ For the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short. ²⁹ And, as Isaiah has said before: Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom and had been made like Gomorrah. ³⁰ What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is

of faith. ³¹ But Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. ³² Therefore because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works, they stumbled at the stone of stumbling. ³³ Even as it is written: Look, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and he that believes in him shall not be put to shame.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 1 Aug. 2

The Role of the Gospel in Saving Israel

Brothers, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for Israel, that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law regarding righteousness to everyone that believes. ⁵ For Moses writes, that the man that does the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. ⁶ But the righteousness which is of faith says thus: Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what did it say? The word is near you, in your mouth

to them. They wouldn't understand even if they were told, the concepts are far beyond them.

9:27 God has always worked with a "remnant", a minority. The majority are usually wrong when it comes to spiritual matters.

10:2 Zeal for God, a religious streak in our personality, isn't enough; we need true knowledge of Him to have a relationship with Him.

and in your heart. That is, the word of faith, which we preach. ⁹ Because if you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. ¹¹ For the scripture says: Whoever believes in him shall not be put to shame. ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for the same one who is Lord of all is rich to all that call upon him. ¹³ For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they do not have belief? And how shall they believe in him about whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, unless they are sent? Even as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶ But they did not all obey the glad tidings. For Isaiah said: Lord, who has believed our report? ¹⁷ So belief

comes of hearing, and hearing by the word of God. ¹⁸ But I say: Did they not hear? Yes, truly, their sound went out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world. ¹⁹ But I say: Did Israel not know? First Moses said: I will provoke you to jealousy with those who are no nation, with a nation void of understanding will I anger you. ²⁰ And Isaiah is very bold, and said: I was found by those that did not seek Me; I showed myself to those who were not asking for Me. ²¹ But to Israel He said: All the day long did I spread out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 1 Aug. 2

God's Plan for Israel

I say then, has God cast off His people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not cast off His people, whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah? How he pleads with God against Israel: ³ Lord, they have killed Your proph-

10:14 God has delegated the work of witnessing and reaching people to us. If we don't preach to people, they won't hear the Gospel. Their eternity is in this sense in our hands. Each day we should try to share the Gospel with at least someone in some way.

10:17 Faith isn't just a feeling; it has a definite basis, in the word of Christ and of God. This is why Bible reading is so important.

11:2 *Against Israel* – Elijah didn't specifically ask God to destroy Israel. He simply told God of what he felt Israel had done to him. But God saw the real request and motive that was behind the words he prayed. God reads our prayers likewise – the Lord Jesus searches our minds and relays our spirit to God, as He intercedes for us in prayer (8:26,27). This is a comfort to those who feel they can't find the right words in prayer; and a warning, that we can't impress God with words, for He sees to the real feelings that are behind them, and understands these feelings as our prayer.

11:3 We also can feel alone; when in fact there are more true believers around than we might realize. Elijah felt he was alone because he considered himself better than those

ets, they have destroyed Your altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. ⁴ But what was the answer of God to him? I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed their knee to Baal. ⁵ Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the calling of grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. ⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The chosen obtained it, but the rest were hardened. ⁸ According as it is written: God gave them a spirit of stupour, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day. ⁹ And David said: Let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumblingblock and a recompense unto them. ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bend their back forever. ¹¹ I say then, did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid! But by their fall, salvation came to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. ¹² Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? ¹³ But I speak to you who are Gentiles- inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and

may save some of them. ¹⁵ For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ¹⁶ And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and did become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree- ¹⁸ do not boast over the broken branches, for you are but branches too. For if you boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then: Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in. ²⁰ Well. Because of their unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by your faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. ²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare you. ²² Behold then the goodness and severity of God: Towards those that fell, severity; but toward you, God's goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also shall be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, shall be grafted in. For God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good

other 7000 – he didn't consider them as genuine believers when in fact they were. We can make the same mistake; spiritual elitism leads us to despair and isolation, because we cut ourselves off from the fellowship of others.

11:5 God has 'elected' or chosen some people and not others; and this feature of His working is because salvation has to be by His grace and not of our works.

11:22 'Once saved always saved' is simply not taught in the Bible; we must remain faithful to the end (Mt. 10:22).

olive tree, how much more appropriately shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

The Ultimate Salvation of Israel

²⁵ Brothers, I would not have you ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part has befallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles is made up. ²⁶ And so all Israel shall be saved. Even as it is written: There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is My covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins. ²⁸ As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but as touching their calling, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, ³¹ even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you, they may also now obtain mercy. ³² For God has shut up all to disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all. ³³ O

the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? ³⁵ Or who has given a gift to Him, that he might be repaid? ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 2 Aug. 3

Life Together in the Body of Christ

Therefore I urge you brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your logical service. ² And do not conform to the mould of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may experience what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God. ³ For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, accordingly as God has dealt to each man a measure of faith. ⁴ For even as we have many members in

11:25 *The full number* – There is, it seems, a specific number of Gentiles who must be converted; and then the Jews will respond to the Gospel, at the return of Christ (:26). When the Gospel has gone into all the world, then shall the end come (Mt. 24:14). In this sense we can hasten the return of Christ by spreading the Gospel worldwide and encouraging Israel to repent.

11:32 *Upon all* – Both Jew and Gentile believers.

12:1 The Old Testament sacrifices were cut up into their body parts, and even the most internal organs offered to God. This speaks of how every part of our lives, especially our innermost being, should be offered to God.

12:3 Faith is in one sense a gift from God (Eph. 2:8). Realizing this will keep us from boasting against unbelievers or feeling superior to them.

12:4 We become members of Christ's body by baptism into His body (1 Cor. 12:13).

one body, and all the members do not have the same office, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and although different, still members one of another. ⁶ And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of our faith, ⁷ or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry. Or he that teaches, to his teaching, ⁸ or he that exhorts, to his exhorting; he that gives, let him do it with generosity. He that rules, with diligence. He that shows mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour to others. ¹¹ Be diligent, not lazy, fervent in spirit in your serving the Lord. ¹² Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing earnestly in prayer. ¹³ Responding to the necessities of the saints by sharing, accustomed to showing hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not. ¹⁵ Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind one toward another.

Do not be arrogant, but condescend to those who are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits. ¹⁷ Render to no one evil for evil. Take thought to do things honourably in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written: Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰ But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head. ²¹ Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

CHAPTER 13 Feb 3. Aug. 4

Our Attitude to Governments and Rulers

Let every one of you be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no power but by God, and the powers that be have been ordained by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If you wish to live

Every one of us has some specific function within the body; let's not underestimate or ignore the part we are intended to play.

12:18 *As it depends on you* – We cannot always be at peace with others; Jesus and Paul weren't. But the frictions and separations must always be the choice of the other party, and not ours.

12:19 *Never avenge* – This is why litigation against others is so wrong. If we are badly treated, we are to believe in the future judgment of God – and leave Him to take vengeance.

13:2 We must compare this teaching with Peter's example in Acts 4:19; we can only submit to authorities until such a point as to do so further would lead us to be disobedient to God. Paul seems to take this as assumed and obvious, therefore he doesn't specifically state it.

without fear of the authorities- then do that which is good! And you shall have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil- be afraid! For he carries not the sword in vain. For he is a minister of God, an avenger of God's anger to him that does evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be in subjection, not only because of God's anger against sin, but also for the sake of your conscience. ⁶ For this cause you pay tribute also. For they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. ⁷ Render to all their dues. Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. ⁸ Owe no one anything, apart from to love one another. For he that loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For this, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet- and if there be any other commandment- it is summed up in this word, namely: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ¹⁰ Love works no evil to his neighbour. Love therefore is the fulfilment of the law. ¹¹ And consider this too:

Knowing the time, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

CHAPTER 14 Feb. 3 Aug. 4

Do Not Judge Others for Their Conscience

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not so as to just quarrel with him over opinions. ² One man has faith to eat all things, but he that is weak eats herbs. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has accepted him. ⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he

13:7 Tax evasion is clearly wrong for Christians.

13:10 Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses by dying on the cross (Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:44); but here Paul says that love fulfils the Law. The death of Jesus by crucifixion was therefore 'love to the end' (Jn. 13:1), the ultimate definition of love, in a very public, memorable and graphic display.

13:13 "The day" refers to the time of God's future Kingdom in v. 12. We should live now *as if* we are in the Kingdom. In this sense we 'have eternal life' in that we live right now the kind of life which we will eternally live.

14:1 The spiritually weak, in understanding and practice (e.g. regarding things like the Jewish food laws and the Sabbath, which this chapter goes on to talk about) should be welcomed and not rejected.

shall be made to stand up. For the Lord has power to make him stand.

⁵ One man esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. ⁶ He that regards the day, regards it to the Lord, and he that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. ⁸ For whether we live, we live to the Lord. Or whether we die, we die to the Lord. Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you set at nothing your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God. ¹² So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know, and I

am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself. Save that to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you walk no longer in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not about what we eat and drink, but about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he that herein serves Christ is wellpleasing to God, and approved of by men. ¹⁹ So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another. ²⁰ Do not overthrow the work of God for the mere sake of food. All things indeed are clean, however it is evil for that man who makes another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat nor drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. ²² The faith which you have, keep between yourself and God. Happy is he that has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But he that doubts is condemned if he eats, because he eats not from faith. And whatever is not of faith is sin.

14:6 Since keeping the Sabbath is a matter of personal conscience, it is wrong to insist that a believer 'must' keep the Sabbath.

14:10 *All stand* – The Greek can mean 'made to stand up'. In verse 11 we read of a scene we can well imagine – at the day of judgment we will be on our knees, begging for mercy, realizing our unworthiness. But we will be made to stand up (v. 4), to receive God's gracious acceptance. So if this is what will happen to us, we should not condemn our brother now.

14:19 We need to examine our attitudes and positions, and watch our words, to ensure that we are trying to make peace rather than division.

CHAPTER 15 Feb. 4 Aug. 5***The Importance of Unity***

Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to encourage him. ³ For Christ also did not please himself, but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached You fell upon me. ⁴ For whatever things were written previously were written for our education, that through patience and through the comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another, according to Christ Jesus. ⁶ That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore receive one another, even as Christ also received you each one, to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given to the fathers, ⁹ and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written: Therefore will I give praise to You among the Gentiles,

and sing to Your Name. ¹⁰ And again He says: Rejoice, you Gentiles, with His people. ¹¹ And again: Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him. ¹² And again Isaiah said: There shall be the root of Jesse and he that arises to rule over the Gentiles. On him shall the Gentiles hope. ¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ And I myself also am persuaded about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to encourage one another. ¹⁵ But I write the more boldly to you in some way, as if putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me by God, ¹⁶ that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Paul's Plans for Rome

¹⁷ I have therefore my boasting in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. ¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak

15:1 Jesus 'carried our infirmities' on the cross (Is. 53:4; Mt. 8:17). We are being asked to do for others what He did for us there. This makes the crucifixion far more than something to be gazed at from a distance. He there becomes the daily inspiration for us, here and now, in our lives. The spirit with which He met death is to be ours in life today.

15:5 *The same mind* – This doesn't mean we are to be identical. Unity isn't uniformity. We are each trying in our own way to have the same mind / attitude which Jesus had in His life. It's this which creates unity between us; we are of the *same* mind in that we are all trying to be of *His* mind.

15:8 The death of Christ ended the Old Covenant, i.e. the Law of Moses, but confirmed the New Covenant, the essence of which was contained in the promises to Abraham which had been made *before* the Law of Moses was given.

of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, ¹⁹ in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit. So that from Jerusalem and round about even to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ Yes, making it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation. ²¹ But, as it is written: They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, and they who have not heard shall understand. ²² Therefore I was hindered these many times from coming to you. ²³ But now, there is no need for me in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you during my journey, and to be helped on my way by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they

owe it to them also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸ When therefore I have accomplished this, and have given to them this fruit, I will leave for Spain by way of Rome. ²⁹ And I know that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. ³⁰ Now I beseech you brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹ that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints. ³² That I may come to you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

CHAPTER 16 Feb. 4 Aug. 5

Various Commendations and Greetings

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae, ² that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and I ask that you assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you. For she herself also has been a helper of many and of my own self. ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in

15:20, 21 When the Gospel goes into all the world, then shall the end come (Mt. 24:14). Our focus also, therefore, ought to be upon introducing Christ to unbelievers / the unchurched.

15:30 Prayer isn't to be a formality; in a sense it's a struggle with God. Jacob wrestled with God in prayer, and was an example to us (Hos. 12:2-4). If we believe in the power of prayer, and are humble enough to recognize our own weakness in prayer, we will often ask others to pray for us – just as Paul does here.

16:1 *A servant* – Greek 'diakonos'. Women played an important part in the early Christian church, at a time when religion was largely a hobby for men.

Christ Jesus, ⁴ who for my life laid down their own necks. To whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles, ⁵ and greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epänetus my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia to Christ. ⁶ Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet Ampliatius my beloved in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. ¹⁰ Greet Apelles the approved in Christ. Greet them that are of the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion my kinsman. Greet them of the household of Narcissus, that are in the Lord. ¹² Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who laboured much in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus the chosen in the Lord; and his mother, who also was as a mother to me. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the

believers that are with them. ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. ¹⁷ Now I urge you brothers, mark those that are causing divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. Turn away from these. ¹⁸ For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by their smooth and fair speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent. ¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all. I rejoice therefore over you, but I would have you to be wise regarding that which is good and simple concerning evil. ²⁰ And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²¹ Timothy my fellow-worker greets you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I Tertius, who write this epistle, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius my host (and of the whole church) greets you. Erastus the treasurer of the city greets you;

16:5 The early churches met in homes; there is little archaeological evidence of specific church buildings until two hundred years after Jesus.

16:17 The book of Proverbs gave similar advice to the ‘ecclesia’ of Israel in the Old Testament. There are those within the community of believers from whom we may not formally separate, but from whom it is wiser to just stay away. Paul says that we should “mark” those who are always stirring up division and putting obstacles in the way of those wishing to walk towards the Kingdom; and just quietly keep away from them.

16:23 Erastus must have been a very wealthy man of high social profile. In this list, he is purposefully placed next to Quartus – a common slave name – who is simply described as a “brother”. The true church of Christ will be characterized by an amazing unity between persons of very different social, ethnic and personal background. Our unity should be enough to stop this world dead in its tracks and win it for Christ (Jn. 17:23).

and Quartus the brother. ²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. ²⁵ Now to him that is able to establish you according to the gospel I preach, which is the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal ²⁶ but now is manifested, and in accordance with the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known to all the nations to obedience of faith: ²⁷ To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER 1 Feb. 20 Aug. 22

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ² to the church of God which is at Corinth, those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours. ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ That in everything you were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge. ⁶ Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ Who shall also confirm you to the end, unrepensible in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

An Appeal for Unity

¹⁰ Now I urge you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. ¹² By this I mean, that each one of you is saying: I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵ Lest any of you should say you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶ And I baptized also the household of Stephanas. Besides these, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ sent me not so much as to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not in the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no power.

1:4 To *always* be thanking God for what He has done for others is an indication of a very selfless spirit.

1:7 The purpose of the Holy Spirit gifts in the first century was to “confirm” the new believers (v. 6). Once the New Testament was completed, this was no longer required.

1:10,11 There were many serious moral and doctrinal problems in the church at Corinth. But Paul begins with the problem of their being divided. Division amongst believers is an awful sin which must be avoided at all costs.

1:14,15 Who physically baptizes us has no spiritual significance.

1:17 Paul doesn’t mean that baptism is unimportant – he has just said he did baptize some people, and the Acts record gives other examples. He means that the focus of the work the Lord had given him was to above all spread the Gospel; perhaps he left the follow up and baptizing of people to others.

God Uses the Weak Things

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nothing. ²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know God, it was God's good pleasure through the apparent foolishness of the message preached to save them that believe—²² seeing that Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek after wisdom. ²³ But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness. ²⁴ But to them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶ Consider your calling, brothers; not many of you had worldly wisdom, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame those that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the

world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong. ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. ²⁹ So that no flesh should boast before God. ³⁰ But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who was made to us by God to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. ³¹ That, according to what is written: He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

CHAPTER 2 Feb. 20 Aug. 22

And I brothers, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; ⁵ so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

True Wisdom

⁶ We speak wisdom, however, among them that are mature. Yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of

1:28 God has chosen us; so we are in some way the low and despised in this world and the societies in which we live.

2:4 The power of persuasion is in the Gospel itself, especially in the message of the cross (v. 2). Converts are not won by the slickness of the presentation, but by the power of the message.

2:6 If the rulers of this world are “coming to nothing”, we shouldn’t place our hopes in politicians, but rather in the politics of God’s coming Kingdom on earth at the return of Jesus.

this world, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even that which was hidden, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which not one of the rulers of this world has known. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But as it is written: Things which eye saw not and ear heard not and which did not enter into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for them that love Him, ¹⁰ God revealed them to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God nobody knows, save the Spirit of God. ¹² But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, so that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God. ¹³ Which things also we speak about, but not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but in words that the Spirit teaches, combining spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴ Now the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he that is spiritual judges all things; and he is ultimately judged by no man. ¹⁶ For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

CHAPTER 3 Feb. 21 Aug. 23

Spiritual Growth

And I, brothers, can not speak to you as spiritual people, but as carnal people, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not with solid food. For you were not yet able to bear it; no, not even now are you able. ³ For you are still carnal. For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are you not carnal and do you not walk after the manner of men? ⁴ For when one says: I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos—are you not mere men? ⁵ Who then is Apollos? And who is Paul? Ministers through whom you believed, and each as the Lord gave to him. ⁶ I

2:9 God has “prepared” an individual place for us in eternity; we will each as it were have our own especially prepared room in God’s eternal house (Jn. 14:1-3).

2:13 We combine spiritual things with spiritual by comparing the various parts of God’s word, which was written by His Holy Spirit; and by making sense of God’s Spirit working in our lives, combining this experience with the teaching of the words of His Spirit in the Bible.

2:14 It shouldn’t surprise us, therefore, that many people just ‘don’t get’ our message of Christ to them.

2:15 People *do* judge us; but our attitude should be that it means nothing to us, and in this sense we cannot be judged by them.

3:2 When we are baptize, we are born again (Jn. 3:3-5); in spiritual terms we are babies, and we grow spiritually from the milk of God’s word, the basic teachings of the Gospel; but as we mature, we move on to the meat of His word. But the Corinthians hadn’t matured.

planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters, but God that gives the increase. ⁸ Now he that plants and he that waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. ⁹ For we are God's fellow-workers. You are God's husbandry, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each man take care how he builds upon it! ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² But if anyone builds on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, ¹³ each man's work shall be revealed. For the day of judgment shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire itself shall test each man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work shall endure which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as having passed through

fire. ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy; and such are you. ¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone thinks that he is wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written: He takes the wise in their craftiness. ²⁰ And again: The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain. ²¹ Therefore, let no one boast in men. For all things are yours. ²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come- all are yours. ²³ And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

CHAPTER 4 Feb. 22 Aug. 24

Being Wise Stewards

Let a man regard us as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² In this, moreover, it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful. ³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should

3:8 The labour we expend upon others will receive an eternal reward – unlike the labour we expend upon our secular lives, careers etc.

3:9 Paul likens God to a fellow worker on a building site or on a farm; this shows the humility of God in being prepared to work with us as we try to help others to His Kingdom.

3:15 If those who we convert or try to build up in faith should fall away, we ourselves will still be saved, although we too must pass through the testing fire of the final judgment.

3:23 Christ even after His ascension is "God's" and therefore not God Himself.

4:1 As taught in the parables of Jesus, we have each been given certain talents and blessings which we must use faithfully in God's service. If we don't use them, or use them for our own selfish advantage in this life, then we are not faithful stewards.

4:3 The fact we will be judged by God is so significant that it means that how mere people judge us in this life is irrelevant and should matter little to us.

be judged by you, or any man's judgment. I do not judge even myself. ⁴ For I know nothing against myself in my own conscience. Yet hereby I am not justified; but he that judges me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God. ⁶ Now these things, brothers, I have applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes. That from us you might learn not to go beyond the things which are written, so that none of you get puffed up, one against the other. ⁷ For who makes you to differ? And what have you that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Paul's Qualification to Teach the Corinthians

⁸ Already are you filled, already you have become rich, you have come

to reign without us. Yes, and I hope that you will indeed reign, that we also might reign with you. ⁹ For I think God has sent us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You have glory, but we have dishonour. ¹¹ Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling-place; ¹² we toil, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we endure. ¹³ Being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the garbage of the world, the scum of the earth, even until now. ¹⁴ I do not write these things to shame you, but to encourage you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For though you have ten thousand would be teachers in Christ, yet you have not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus it was me who begat you through the gospel. ¹⁶ I therefore

4:4 On one level, our conscience is important. But even if our conscience is clear about something, this doesn't mean that we are therefore right. We stand before God's judgment of us; at the last day, our conscience will not as it were jump out of us and stand there and judge us. We will be judged according to our response to the Word which Jesus spoke (Jn. 12:48); and in some matters our conscience is faulty.

4:5 True judgement involves considering a person's deepest motives. Seeing these are hidden, both to us as observers and often to the person themselves, we cannot judge / condemn others; we simply *must* leave this to God. This doesn't mean that we can't have an opinion – otherwise we would be unable to tell right from wrong. But we must not pre-judge God's ultimate judgment of a person.

4:10 The life decisions we make because of our knowledge of Christ will often make us appear foolish in the eyes of unbelieving people. But *do* we appear fools to them – or do we usually act just like they do?

4:15 Those we bring to Christ are our spiritual children, and we must always care for them as long as we live; and we should likewise respect those who brought us to Christ as our spiritual parents.

urge you to be imitators of me. ¹⁷ For this cause have I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ Now some are inflated with pride, as though I were not going to come to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and I will discover not the talk of those that are inflated with pride, but the power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power. ²¹ What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

CHAPTER 5 Feb. 22 Aug. 24

A Case of Sexual Immorality

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you has taken to himself his father's wife. ² Instead of grieving, you have become arrogant. Remove the one who has done this deed from among you. ³ For I truly, though absent in body but present in spirit, have al-

ready judged him that has done this thing. ⁴ I command you that in the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are gathered together (and my spirit is present with you when you do), with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ deliver such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast raises the whole lump of dough? ⁷ Purge out the old yeast so that you may be a new lump, even as you actually are. For our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, even Christ. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old yeast, neither with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread of sincerity and truth which has no yeast. ⁹ I wrote to you in my letter to have no association with fornicators. ¹⁰ I did not mean with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters. For you must go out of the world to do this. ¹¹ But as it is, I wrote to you not to keep association, if anyone that is named a brother be a fornicator, or

5:2 Local church discipline is occasionally required in cases of severe immorality such as this. But the aim is that through the process, they will be saved (v. 5). We should not cast people out just because of personal disagreement with them and never in anger, only in love and a desire to save both them and others.

5:5 The common understanding of 'Satan' breaks down here; for the adversary [perhaps local Roman authorities, in this case] plays a part in the salvation of people, under God's hand.

5:6 The leaven or yeast which negatively influenced others in the church wasn't merely the sexually perverted person; it also refers to "malice" (v. 8). The reason for church discipline in this case was protective – so that others wouldn't be badly influenced.

5:11 Eating together in the first century was a sign of acceptance and fellowship. Jesus ate with all kinds of sinners in order to bring them to Him; He didn't refuse to eat with people because they weren't up to His spiritual level.

covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. With such a one have no association, not even to eat. ¹² For what have I to do with judging those that are without? Do you not judge those that are within? ¹³ But them that are without God judges. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.

CHAPTER 6 Feb. 23 Aug. 25

Don't Take Believers to Law

Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbour, go to law before the unrighteous and not rather take it before the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? ⁴ If then you have to judge things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are of no account in the church. ⁵ I say this to move you to shame. What! Is there

not among you even one wise man who shall be able to decide between his brothers? ⁶ But as it is with you at the moment, brother goes to law with brother- and that before unbelievers! ⁷ No, already there is totally a defect in you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ No, but you yourselves do wrong and defraud- and that your brothers. ⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God. ¹² All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. All

6:1 We should therefore not take other believers to court; instead we should try to resolve the issues through the mediation of wise, humble people within the church – even those who may be counted as nothing amongst us.

6:7 We should suffer ourselves to be defrauded rather than take people to court; we live in an age of litigation and legal threatening as never before, and we mustn't be caught up in it.

6:8 To take a brother to court for defrauding you is in fact [in God's eyes] to defraud them; so you show yourself no better than them, and thus condemn yourself.

6:9 If we believe that the wicked will not be allowed into the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns, this should be comfort enough for us. This is the only judgment that matters, and so we shouldn't take them to human judgment in this life. By refraining from doing so, we show our faith in God's judgment which is to come (see 4:3,4).

6:11 *Washed... in the name* – A reference to baptism. We also have committed [in essence] the sins which we are tempted to take others to court over. But we were graciously forgiven through our baptism. Therefore we should be forgiving to them.

6:12 Christ hasn't given us a long list of things which we must do and those we must

things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. ¹³ Food for the belly and the belly for food, but God shall bring to nothing both it and them. But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God both raised up the Lord and will raise us up also through His power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? God forbid. ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he that is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For the scripture says: The two shall become one flesh. ¹⁷ But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. ¹⁸ Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God? And you are not your own; ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. Glorify God therefore in your body and spirit, for they are God's.

CHAPTER 7 Feb. 24 Aug. 26

Paul Answers Questions About Singleness

Now concerning the things of which you wrote. It is good for a man not to touch a woman. ² But because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³ Let the husband render to the wife her due and likewise also the wife to the husband. ⁴ The wife has no power over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise also the husband has no power over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, unless it is for an agreed time, so that you may give yourselves to prayer and then come together again, that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ But this I say by way of concession, not by commandment. ⁷ Yet I would that all men were even as I myself. However each man has his own gift from God, one after this manner and another after that. ⁸ But I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they live as I do. ⁹ But if they do not have

not do. The question isn't 'What can I get away with?' but rather 'What is the expedient / wise thing?'.

6:16 The sexual act is designed to be used by God in an ongoing sense in order to make two people "one". To use it any other way is seriously sinful.

7:2 Paul often sets an ideal standard, and yet recognizes God's concessions to human weakness. Thus he advises the single life, but makes a concession to marriage; in marriage, there shouldn't be separation, but if there is, then remain single (v. 11).

7:5 We are tempted by our own internal libido, rather than a cosmic being. The internal desire for forbidden sexual relations is our real adversary / Satan.

7:7 Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God. Yet many single people so wish to be married, and some married so wish to be single again; thinking that they would serve God better in this case. But whatever state we are in, is a gift from God that we must use.

self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn. ¹⁰ But to the married I give this instruction; not I, but the Lord: That the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband) and the husband should not leave his wife. ¹² But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her. ¹³ And the woman that has an unbelieving husband and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵ Yet if the unbelieving departs, let him depart. The brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your

husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you shall save your wife? ¹⁷ Only as the Lord has distributed to each man, as God has called each, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has any been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing- but the keeping of the commandments of God is all important. ²⁰ Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. ²¹ Were you called while a slave? Do not worry, but if you can become free, do so. ²² For he that was called in the Lord being a slave, is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought with a price. Become not slaves of men. ²⁴ Brothers, let each man, wherein he was called, therein stay with God. ²⁵ Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of

7:12 *I, not the Lord* – All that Paul wrote was inspired by God's Spirit. Often, however, he is repeating the teaching which the Lord Jesus had already given (v. 10). However, now Paul tells us something which has been revealed additionally to him by the Spirit, and which is not to be found in the teaching of Jesus.

7:14 To some extent our unbelieving or immature family members are 'covered' in us. It's a motivation to remain faithful to God ourselves.

7:16 Whilst God through Jesus will save people, He has delegated this work to us. A believer can save another person; this is a great encouragement to 'stick it out' in marriage to an unbeliever, and in preaching the Gospel.

7:17 *In all the churches* – Paul's teaching to this one church was inspired by God and is therefore relevant and binding far wider than to that one church. His letters are therefore not merely historical documents, but the voice of God to all believers in all generations. We do of course live in a different place in time and geography, but the essence of God's teaching through him must be applied by us all.

7:20, 23 *If you can become free... become not slaves* – Maybe relevant to signing ourselves up for careers or employment which enslaves us and takes us away from the things of God.

the Lord; but I give my judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy. ²⁶ I think therefore that it is good by reason of the present distress that is upon us, that a man should remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But should you marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh, and I would spare you.

Serving the Lord Without Distraction

²⁹ But this I say brothers, because the time is shortened, that from this time forward both those that have wives may be as though they had none; ³⁰ those that weep, as though they wept not, those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and those that buy, as though they possessed not. ³¹ And those that use the world, as not using it to the full. For the fashion of this world passes away. ³² But I would have you to be free of worries. He that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. ³³ But he that is married is careful for the things of the world, how he may

please his wife, ³⁴ and is divided. Also the woman that is unmarried or betrothed is anxious about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ³⁵ And this I say for your own profit. Not that I may cast a snare upon you, but so you may do what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction. ³⁶ But if anyone thinks that he behaves himself inappropriately toward his betrothed, if she be past the flower of her age, and if need so requires, let him do what he will. He sins not. Let them marry. ³⁷ But he that stands steadfast in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desires under control, and has determined this in his heart, to remain betrothed; he shall do well. ³⁸ So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. ³⁹ A wife is bound for as long as her husband lives; but if the husband dies she is free to be married to whoever she chooses. But only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I am certain that I also have the Spirit of God.

7:36 It appears that 7:26-40 are Paul's comments upon a very specific situation in Corinth – he is writing an answer to various things which the Corinthians had written to him about (v. 1). We are reading only his answers, without having seen the original questions.

7:39 Marriage is for life. At no other time in human history has this principle been under such attack as it is today. Marriage for believers is to be only “in the Lord” – to those who have been baptized into Him.

7:40 *I think* – the Greek can imply ‘I am certain that...’.

CHAPTER 8 Feb. 25 Aug. 27***Food Offered to Idols***

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols. We know that we all have knowledge; yet knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ² If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he does not know anything as he ought to know. ³ But if anyone loves God, the same is known by Him. ⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that no idol has real existence and there is no God but one. ⁵ For though there are those called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are gods many and lords many, ⁶ yet to us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we are everything to Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ,

for the sake of whom are all things, and we exist for His sake. ⁷ However there is not in all men that knowledge, but some being used until now to the idol, eat things sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled. ⁸ But food will not commend us to God. Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. Nor, if we eat, are we the better. ⁹ But take heed, lest by any means this freedom of yours becomes a stumblingblock to the weak. ¹⁰ For if a man sees you who have knowledge dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be encouraged to eat things sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ For through your knowledge he that is weak perishes, the brother for whose sake Christ died. ¹² And thus, sinning

8:1 We can use knowledge, including spiritual knowledge, wrongly – even if the knowledge is theoretically correct. If we live in love, our concern will be to edify or build up others, and we will use and apply our knowledge appropriately and sensitively.

8:3 The wonderful thing is that God knows us; not so much that we have some limited knowledge of Him.

8:4, 5 Contrary to the popular beliefs of the time, Paul teaches that idols don't exist. He speaks of the idols as 'demons' (10:21); the people believed in the existence of demons as demi-gods, and made idols to them on earth. The Corinthians were tempted to worship both God and also the demons / idols. Paul is clearly stating that demons don't exist; the language of 'demon possession' in the New Testament is simply using the language of the day for unexplained [often mental] illnesses.

8:6 The only God is God the Father. The false doctrine of the Trinity claims that the one God exists in three persons, one of which is "God the Father". But the Bible teaches that the one and only God is God the Father. Therefore Jesus is not God. His existence as a separate entity from God is made clear by this verse.

8:9 We are free to eat what we want; but our decisions must be overshadowed always by the concern as to what effect our example will have upon others less mature in the Faith. This is a principle we often need to apply in our decision making. 'I see nothing wrong with it... it's OK in my conscience' is a spiritually selfish attitude. Our examples have more influence upon others than we imagine. If our example causes another to stumble, then we have sinned against Christ and His death for that person is as it were wasted (vv. 12,13). So what may not be a personal sin for us becomes sinful if it causes others to stumble.

against the believers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh again, so that I do not cause my brother to stumble.

CHAPTER 9 Feb. 25 Aug. 27

Paul's View of a Paid Ministry

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my works in the Lord? ² If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³ My defence to them that examine me is this: ⁴ Have we no right to eat and to drink? ⁵ Have we no right to lead a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶ Or are Barnabas and I the only ones who have a right not to have to work for a living? ⁷ What soldier ever serves at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who feeds a flock and does not drink the milk of the flock? ⁸ Do I speak these things after the manner of men? Or did not the law say the same? ⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses: You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out

the corn. Is it for the oxen that God cares, ¹⁰ or did He say it entirely for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written. Because he that ploughs ought to plough in hope, and he that threshes, hopes to partake in the harvest. ¹¹ If we sowed to you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your material things? ¹² If others have this rightful claim over you, do we not have more? Nevertheless we did not use this right, but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do you not know that they that labour in the temple get their food from the temple, and they that serve at the altar have their portion from that which is sacrificed on the altar? ¹⁴ Even so the Lord ordained that they that proclaim the gospel should live from the gospel. ¹⁵ But I have used none of these things, and I do not write these things that it may be so done in my case. For it is better for me to die, than that anyone should make my boasting void. ¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about. For necessity is laid upon me. For woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if against my own will,

9:5 *A wife that is a believer* – Again Paul stresses that marriage should only be to a believer (7:39).

9:12 Here we have an example of how we can chose to live spiritual life on different levels. It wouldn't have been wrong for Paul to take a salary for his work, and he explains there is even Old Testament precedent for this – and even an unrecorded saying of Jesus which teaches it (v. 14). But he chose to take a higher level – and not take a salary. If we love God truly, we will want to try to serve Him on the highest possible level. We will not be minimalists, thinking what we can 'get away with'.

9:17 Paul is saying that a sign that he has been truly called to preach the Gospel is because this isn't something which came naturally to him; his silent years in Arabia after

then I have clearly had a stewardship entrusted to me. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel.

All Things to All People

¹⁹ For though I was free from all, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. ²⁰ And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, I became as one under the law (though I am not under the law), that I might gain those that are under the law. ²¹ To them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. ²³ And I do all things for the

gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker of it. ²⁴ Do you not know that they that run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run like this, so that you may attain the prize. ²⁵ And every man that strives in the games exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶ I therefore run, but not with uncertainty. So fight I, but not as a shadow boxer. ²⁷ But like an athlete I discipline my body and make it my slave; lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 26 Aug. 28

Israel in the Wilderness Are Our Warning

Brothers, I would not have you ignorant that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, ² and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in

his conversion were perhaps due to him struggling against the command to preach (Gal. 1:17). If we feel it's so hard and 'not me' to share the good news of Christ with others – then we are in good company.

9:18 A paradox – by not taking a wage or reward from men for our service [be it money or the reward of praise], then we will receive a reward from God.

9:20 Without being hypocritical, we too must engage with people on their terms – rather than baldly presenting the Gospel to them in our terms with no real interest in their response.

9:27 The mere fact of telling others the Gospel won't justify us; we can still be rejected by God if we fail to practice personal self-control.

10:2 Israel in slavery in Egypt represent us in the world, before baptism. When Israel went through the Red Sea, they had water on both sides of them and a cloud (also water) above them. In this sense they were surrounded with water – and so Paul saw it as a symbol of baptism. They came through the Red Sea and had to walk through the wilderness (our life in this world after baptism), feeding daily on manna (God's word, Jesus), until they came to the promised land (the Kingdom of God on earth when Jesus returns). Israel failed in the wilderness, they wanted to return to Egypt, and we must learn from their example.

the sea. ³ They did all eat the same spiritual food, ⁴ and did all drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock represented Christ. ⁵ However with most of them God was not well pleased; for their dead bodies were scattered over the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted. ⁷ Neither be you idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. ⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and so in one day twenty three thousand died. ⁹ Neither let us put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and perished by the serpents. ¹⁰ Neither let us grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the Destroyer angel. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written about for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him that thinks he stands be careful lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Don't Participate in Idol Worship

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise people. Think upon what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partaking of the one loaf. ¹⁸ Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹ What say I then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I would not have you sharing communion with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? ²³ All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but his neighbour's good.

Don't Cause Others to Stumble

²⁵ Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question

10:13 The test may actually be beyond our ability to bear; but God gives us a way of escape. Whenever we sin, we are therefore guilty and responsible; we can't justify our failure by 'situational ethics', whereby we reason that the situation left us with no choice but to sin. God promises that He will not allow this ever to happen. It's a great comfort as well as a challenge.

10:21 Demons are another name for idols – which don't exist, even though many think they do (8:4,5).

on the ground of conscience, ²⁶ for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it. ²⁷ If one of them that do not believe invites you to a feast and you are inclined to go, whatever is set before you eat, asking no question for conscience sake. ²⁸ But if anyone says to you: This has been offered in sacrifice to idols! Do not eat it for the sake of he that tells you, and for conscience sake. ²⁹ Conscience, I say, not your own, but the other's. One may ask: Why is my liberty judged by another's conscience? ³⁰ If I eat my food with thankfulness, why is evil spoken of me, for that for which I give thanks? ³¹ The principle is that whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do or do not – do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no occasions of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Gentiles, or to the church of God. ³³ Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but that of the many, that they may be saved.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 27 Aug. 29
Headcoverings in the Church

Be imitators of me, even as I am of Christ. ² Now I praise you who remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, as I delivered them to you. ³ But I would have you

know, that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head. ⁵ But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonours her head. For it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. ⁶ For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. ⁷ For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. ⁸ For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. ⁹ For neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. ¹⁰ For this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman. ¹² For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves. Is it appropriate that a woman pray to God unveiled? ¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you, that if a man has long hair it is a dishonour to him? ¹⁵ But if a

10:29, 30 *Why is my liberty...? why is evil spoken of me...* ? – These appear to be Paul anticipating the kind of objections which people would raise to what he has just said (he has this same style in 15:35). We must be sensitive to the conscience of others, and not simply reason that we see nothing wrong in doing something.

11:1 Paul isn't someone to just be admired from a distance, as we may admire a painting; we really are to see him as our model, so that we might follow Christ better.

11:3 *The head of Christ is God* – Even now, *after* Jesus' mortal life, He is still subservient to God.

woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. For her hair is given her for a covering. ¹⁶ But if anyone seems to be contentious, let them know we have no such custom, neither do the churches of God.

The Breaking of Bread Service

¹⁷ But in giving you this instruction, I do not praise you- for you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that they that are approved may be revealed among you. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who do not have? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you! ²³ For I received

of the Lord that which I in turn delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: This is my body, which is for you. This do in remembrance of me. ²⁵ In the same manner also the cup, after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ Therefore whoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not discern the body of the Lord. ³⁰ For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few sleep. ³¹ If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we

11:19 Our response to division in the church reveals whether we are approved of God or not.

11:23-29 This section can be usefully read just before we take the bread and wine at the breaking of bread service. We can break bread alone; and this is an appropriate Bible passage to read.

11:28, 29 A few moments of silence before we take the bread and wine are necessary – so that we can examine ourselves. As we reconstruct in our own imaginations the death of Christ, we naturally will examine ourselves, because our conscience will be touched.

11:31 'Judge' is being used in the sense of 'condemn'. We cannot avoid the day of judgment; but if we condemn ourselves in our self-examination today, realizing that we are not worthy, then, we will not be condemned. This will work out to be the greatest paradox of all existence.

11:32 *Condemned with the world* – Those rejected at the day of judgment will simply be sent back into the world to share the world's judgment. If in this life we prefer to

are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. ³³ Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, that your coming together be not to condemnation. About the other things I will give instruction when I come.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 28 Aug. 30
Various Gifts Within the Body of Christ

Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. ² You know that when you were Gentiles you were led away to those dumb idols, in whichever way you might have been led. ³ Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are diversities of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of

activities, but the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ But to each individual is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit. ⁹ To another faith through the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings through the same one Spirit. ¹⁰ And to another workings of miracles, and to another prophecy and to another discerning of spirits; to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these gifts are energized by one and the same Spirit, apportioned to each man according as he is willing to receive it. ¹² For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though being many, are one body; so also is Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

be with the world rather than with Jesus and His people, then we will be sent back into the world when He returns.

12:3 There were people who claimed to have the Holy Spirit gifts who in fact didn't, and who were willing to curse Jesus as the pagans demanded they did. The problem of false claims to Holy Spirit possession continues with us today.

12:10 Only some people in the first century were given the gift of speaking in tongues [foreign languages]. See too v. 30. Those who claim that 'speaking in tongues' is experienced by every truly converted believer are therefore wrong.

12:13 We become parts of the body of Christ by being baptized into His body. This is why baptism is so important; and it means that everyone who's truly baptized is part of the body of Christ, and we therefore should not be divided from others in the body (v. 25); and we cannot say that we have no need of others in the body of Christ (v. 21). The bread which we break at the breaking of bread is a symbol of the body of Christ; we are one loaf (10:17). We should therefore welcome at the breaking of bread all those who have been validly baptized into Christ. Seeing there is only one body of Christ,

The Body of Christ

¹⁴ For the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵ If the foot shall say: Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body- that would not make it not a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say: Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body- that would not make it not a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where is the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where is the smelling? ¹⁸ But now has God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased Him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where is the body? ²⁰ But now they are many members, but one body. ²¹ Therefore the eye cannot say to the hand: I have no need of you; nor the head to the feet: I have no need of you. ²² No, on the contrary, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. ²³ And those parts of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our unattractive parts have more abundant covering; ²⁴ whereas our more attractive parts have no need of this. But God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the

same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and each individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then those who do miracles, then the gifts of healing, helping, administration and various kinds of languages. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with languages? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

CHAPTER 13 Feb. 28 Aug. 30***The Supremacy of Love***

If I speak with all the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become like sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. ⁴ Love suffers long, and is kind. Love

one loaf, one bread, we are effectively breaking bread with them anyway even if we (wrongly) refuse to break bread with them.

12:22 The quiet or weak members of the body of Christ are very valuable – and we should recognize this.

13:1 Speaking with tongues is therefore not a guarantee of salvation.

13:4 Love here is personified as a person. We should ‘be’ love; love is the foremost characteristic, the essence, of the Christian life.

envies not. It is not arrogant or rude, is not puffed up, ⁵ does not behave itself inappropriately, is not self seeking, is not easily provoked, keeps no record of evil done, ⁶ rejoices not in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ carries all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away. Whether there be speaking in foreign languages, this shall cease. Whether there be the gift of knowledge, it shall be done away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when that which is perfect comes, then that which is in part shall be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I am a man, I have put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known. ¹³ But now abides faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

CHAPTER 14 Mar. 1 Aug. 31

Pursue love, and in this pursuit therefore earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that of prophecy. ² For he that speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God. For no one understands, but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries. ³ But he that prophesies speaks to men, words of edification, exhortation and consolation. ⁴ He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he that prophesies edifies the church. ⁵ Now I would wish that you all speak with tongues, but especially I wish that you should prophesy; for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, unless he interpret, that the church may receive edification. ⁶ But now, brothers, if I came to you speaking with tongues, without speaking to you either by way of revelation, or of knowledge, or of prophesying, or of teaching- what shall I profit you? ⁷ Even things without life which give a voice, whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what

13:6 *Rejoices not in unrighteousness* – Much ‘entertainment’ invites us to do just this; to enjoy viewing and hearing unrighteous things and take pleasure from them, although we are not literally doing those things. We are not to rejoice in sinful things but to focus our minds upon spiritual things.

13:8 Paul here prophesies that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit would pass away. They will be given again when Jesus returns (Heb. 6:5).

14:2 The gift of tongues was the ability to speak in foreign languages, as happened in Acts 2. Paul is here describing, and criticizing, what was happening in the church at Corinth.

14:6 To speak in a foreign language for the sake of it, just to show off, wouldn’t help anyone; they’d need someone with the gift of translating to translate back to their own language. The essence of what Paul is saying in this chapter is: ‘Don’t show off. Use whatever gifts you’ve been given to practically upbuild others, rather than abusing them to exalt yourself, to show off before others, to appear different and cool in the eyes of men’.

is piped or harped? ⁸ For if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle, who shall prepare himself for war? ⁹ So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech easily understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are, surely, many languages in the world and none is without meaning. ¹¹ If then I do not know the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaks a barbarian and he that speaks will be a barbarian to me. ¹² So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to excel in edifying the church.

Commands Governing the Use of Tongues

¹³ Therefore let him that speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is it then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also. ¹⁶ Else if you bless with the spirit, how shall he that is in the place of the unlearned say the Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he does not understand what you say? ¹⁷ For you truly give thanks well, but the other is not

edified. ¹⁸ I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all. ¹⁹ However in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. ²⁰ Brothers, be not children in your thinking. Yet in malice be babes; but in thinking be men. ²¹ In the law it is written: By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak to this people, and not even thus will they hear Me, says the Lord. ²² Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe but to the unbelieving; but prophesying is for a sign, not to the unbelieving but to those that believe. ²³ If therefore the whole church be assembled together and all speak with tongues, and there come in unlearned or unbelieving people, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reproved by all, he is judged by all. ²⁵ The secrets of his heart are revealed, and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed. ²⁶ What is it then, brothers? As it is, when you come together, each one has a Psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. But let all things be done to edify. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in

14:10 ‘Tongues’ refers to “languages in the world”, i.e. not ‘mumbo-jumbo’ but intelligible speech, as happened in Acts 2.

14:19 Whilst these commands refer to the use of the gift of languages [“tongues”] in a first century church, we can grasp the principle – talk to people on their level, in a way and style which is spiritually helpful to them, rather than talking on your own level to them, insensitive to their needs. The Lord Jesus taught the people God’s word as they were able to understand, not as He was able to expound (Mk. 4:33).

a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three; and even then in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ And let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern them. ³⁰ But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence. ³¹ For you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be exhorted. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. ³⁴ Let the women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also said the law. ³⁵ And if they would learn anything, let them ask their men at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶ What? Was it from you that the word of God went out? Or came it to you alone? ³⁷ If any one thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandment of the Lord. ³⁸ But if anyone is ignorant,

let him be ignorant. ³⁹ Therefore my brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues. ⁴⁰ But let all things be done decently and in order.

CHAPTER 15 Mar. 2 Sep. 1

A Summary of the Gospel

Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, wherein also you stand. ² By which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which also I received: That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he rose on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to above five hundred believers at once, of whom the greater part remain until now (but some have fallen asleep); ⁷ then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ And last of all, as to the abnormally born, he appeared to me also. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who is unworthy to be called an apostle,

14:27 There were unlikely to be more than two or three language groups in the church audience, who didn't know any of the other languages being used.

14:28 This isn't obeyed in those churches which claim that 'tongues' are involuntary utterances.

14:32 Those who truly have the gift of prophecy will be in control of themselves and not out of their minds.

14:34 This command is specifically in the context of the use of tongues and prophecy; many churches today who claim to experience tongues simply disregard this.

14:37 Truly spiritual people will accept Paul's commands here and not short cut or ignore them.

15:2 Holding on to the true understanding of the Gospel is required for salvation. It is no bad thing to regularly remind ourselves of the basic teachings of the Gospel.

because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.¹¹ Whether I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Crucial Importance of Christ's Resurrection

¹² Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised.¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.¹⁵ Yes, we are found false witnesses of God. Because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised—¹⁶ for if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised.¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith

is vain, you are still in your sins;¹⁸ and therefore also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.¹⁹ If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all people the most pitiable.²⁰ But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep.²¹ For since by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead.²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.²³ But each in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's, at his coming.²⁴ Then comes the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power.²⁵ For he must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet.²⁶ The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.²⁷ For He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when He said all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things to him.²⁸ And when all things have been subjected

15:10 The idea of labour not being in vain recurs in v. 58. The connection teaches that Paul's zealous labour in response to grace is not just to be admired from a distance; he is to be taken as our example.

15:11 Peoples' faith is dependent to some extent upon the preacher; we can bring people to faith or leave them without faith and hope because we didn't preach to them (Rom. 10:14).

15:20 Firstfruits – Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead and be given eternal life. When we are resurrected and given eternal life, we will be like the rest of the harvest. If Christ was the “firstfruits”, then men like Enoch and Elijah, indeed nobody before the time of Christ, was given eternal life at the end of their mortal lives.

15:22 Shall all be made live – All those “in Christ” by baptism into His death and resurrection.

15:28 Christ will be eternally subject to God, and will give His Kingdom to God (v. 24). Christ wasn't just less than God during His mortal life; He will eternally be like this. Trinitarian theology can't satisfactorily answer this.

to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things to him, that God may be all in all. ²⁹ Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are people baptized for them? ³⁰ Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? ³¹ I protest by that boasting in you, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord: I die daily. ³² If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. ³³ Be not deceived. Evil companionships corrupt good moral habits. ³⁴ Awake to soberness righteously, and do not sin. For some among you have no knowledge of God. I speak this to move you to shame.

The Process of Resurrection

³⁵ But someone will say: How are

the dead resurrected? And with what type of body do they come forth? ³⁶ You foolish one, what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow is not the plant body that shall later be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body just as it pleases Him; and to each seed a body of its own. ³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is one and the glory of the earthly is another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown

15:29 Paul doesn't support the idea of 'baptism for the dead' – he's saying that it's inconsistent for people to do this in Corinth if they also deny the resurrection; because baptism symbolizes death (as we go under the water) and resurrection, as we come up out of the water (Rom. 6:3-5).

15:32 The colossal importance of the resurrection of the body at the return of Christ is effectively downplayed by those who wrongly believe in a 'soul' going to reward in Heaven at death. For us, we should live our lives in the context of knowing that we shall rise again, be judged, and by God's grace live eternally in His Kingdom.

15:33 We may think we can be friends with bad people without being corrupted; but let us give Paul's words their full weight.

15:38 We will be given a new body at the resurrection – we will live eternally in a bodily form. All existence in the Bible is bodily existence. But there will be a connection between who we are now, and who we will eternally be – when we die, our character is like a seed which is sown, to rise again in resurrection. The personality and character we develop in this life are therefore of huge and eternal importance.

15:41 There will be different levels of reward in the Kingdom, just as one star is brighter than another; some will rule over five cities, others over two (Lk. 19:19), in reflection of the fact that some people in this life bring forth more fruit than others (Mt. 13:8).

in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So also it is written: The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and only then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is heavenly. ⁴⁸ As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰ Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all remain asleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to fulfilment

the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

CHAPTER 16 Mar. 3 Sep. 2

Paul's Plans for Corinth

Now concerning the collection for the saints, do as I instructed the churches in Galatia. ² Upon the first day of the week let each one of you, as your income allows, put some money aside and store it up so that no collections are needed when I come. ³ And when I arrive, whomsoever you shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your generosity to Jerusalem. ⁴ And if it be fitting for me to go also, they shall go with me. ⁵ But I will come to you, when I shall have passed through Macedonia (for I plan to pass through Macedonia). ⁶ And perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go further. ⁷ But I do not wish to see you just in passing; I hope to

15:50 As we are still “flesh and blood”, we cannot fully now be in the Kingdom of God, neither is the church fully the Kingdom – because we must be changed at the resurrection before we can fully enter the Kingdom (vv. 51-53).

16:2 God wants regular, consistent generosity rather than occasional large acts of generosity.

16:7 *If the Lord permit* – We should always speak of our plans as being ‘God willing’ (James 4:15).

stay a while with you, if the Lord permit. ⁸ But I will stay at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ for a great door for effective work has opened to me, but there are many adversaries. ¹⁰ Now if Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear while he is with you. For he does the work of the Lord, as I do. ¹¹ Let no one despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come to me. For I expect him with the brothers. ¹² But as touching Apollos the brother, I pleaded with him to come to you with the brothers; but he was unwilling to come right now, but he will come when he shall have the opportunity. ¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all you do be done in love. ¹⁵ You know the family of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia and

that they have devoted themselves to serving the saints; now I beseech you, brothers, ¹⁶ you also be in subjection to such, and to everyone that helps in the work and labours. ¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. For what was lacking on your part they supplied; ¹⁸ they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, acknowledge those that are such. ⁹ The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. ²⁰ All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. ²¹ The greeting of me Paul with my own hand. ²² If anyone loves not the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²⁴ My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

16:14 It's possible to serve God without doing it in love – as Paul warns against in chapter 13. It's very important to do all we do consciously motivated by love; not because we 'have to', not for appearances, nor from habit and tradition.

16:15-18 Respect can never be demanded, it can only be earned. We should respect those who have clearly given their lives to serving others in Christ.

16:22 *Maranatha* – A watchword of the early church, meaning 'May the Lord come soon!'.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER 1 Mar. 4 Sep. 3

The Relationship Between Suffering and Comfort

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those that are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, even so our comfort is also in abundance through Christ. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which works in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is steadfast. Knowing that, as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also are you of the comfort. ⁸ Brothers,

we do not want you to be ignorant in regards to the hardships which we encountered in Asia. We were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, so much so that we feared even for our lives. ⁹ Yes, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in the God who raises the dead- ¹⁰ who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver. On whom we have set our hope, that He will also still deliver us. ¹¹ You also helping together on our behalf by your prayers, so that it works out that for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf.

Paul's Change of Travel Plans

¹² For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and Godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world- and more abundantly toward you. ¹³ For we write no other things to you, than what you read or even acknowledge, and I hope you will

1:4 One reason for our sufferings is so that the comfort we are given for them we may share with others who are suffering the same. But this will only be possible if we are meaningfully in relationship with others; and suffering has a way of making us self-centred. Paul understood this principle so well that he could write that his sufferings were so that he could comfort the Corinthians (v. 6).

1:9 *Sentence of death within ourselves* – Paul may be referring to having received a death penalty from the local authorities, or to his recovery from a terminal illness.

1:13 ‘What we write is what you read’ may be a way of saying that they knew within their consciences, at first reading of his words, that there was congruence between Paul’s words and his actions – as there should be in our words too.

acknowledge to the end; ¹⁴ as also you did once partially acknowledge us, that we are your boasting, even as you are also ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus. ¹⁵ And in this confidence I had decided to come first of all to you, that you might have a second benefit; ¹⁶ and by you to pass into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and from you proceed on my journey to Judea. ¹⁷ When I planned this, did I show fickleness? Or the things that I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, so that in the same breath I say, Yes, yes and then No, no? ¹⁸ But as God is faithful, our word toward you is not yes and no. ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no; but in him is yes. ²⁰ For no matter how many and whatever be the promises of God, in him is the ultimate Yes! Therefore also through him is the Amen, to the glory of God through us. ²¹ Now he that establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²² who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts. ²³ But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we have lordship over your faith but

are helpers of your joy. For in faith you must stand fast.

CHAPTER 2 Mar. 4 Sep. 3

Receiving Back the Disciplined Brother

But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow. ² For if I make you sorry, who then is he that makes me glad, but he that is made sorry by me? ³ And I wrote this very thing, lest when I came, I should receive sorrow from those in whom I ought to rejoice- having confidence in you all, that my joy is in you all. ⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears. Not that you should be made sorry, but that you might know the love that I have more abundantly for you. ⁵ But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not so much to me but in a sense (not to put it too severely) to you all. ⁶ Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority. ⁷ So that to the contrary you should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his excessive sorrow. ⁸ Therefore I beg you to confirm your love toward him. ⁹ For to this end also did I write, that I might

1:19 The totally positive nature of the Lord Jesus should be reflected in our positivity and sense of purpose in life (v. 17).

2:6 This may refer to the case of the immoral brother about which Paul had earlier written in 1 Cor. 5, advising the church to separate from this person. But Paul knew that excessive separation from even such an immoral person can result in psychological and spiritual damage if they have repented (v. 7).

2:12 *A door was opened* – God sometimes gives us opportunities to make a special witness for Him, and we must have the courage to take them.

know, by putting you to the test, if you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰ But to whom you forgive anything, I also. When I also forgive- if I need to forgive- then I do it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so ¹¹ that no advantage may be gained over us by the Satan. For we are not ignorant of his devices.

Paul Protests his Sincerity

¹² Now when I came to Troas for the sake of the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened to me in the Lord, ¹³ I had no relief for my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went into Macedonia. ¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and makes manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a sweet savour of Christ to God in those that are saved and in those that perish. ¹⁶ To the one a savour from death to death; to the other a savour from life to life. And who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not as most, corrupting the word of God; but as of sincerity and as of God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

CHAPTER 3 Mar. 5 Sep. 4

Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as

do some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter of recommendation, written in our hearts, known and read by all; ³ being revealed before all that you are as it were a letter from Christ, delivered by us; written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh. ⁴ And such confidence have we toward God, through Christ. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit. For the letter kills but the spirit gives life.

The Old and New Covenants

⁷ But if that which ministered death, written, engraved on stones, came with glory (so that the children of Israel could not look continually upon the presence of Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this glory was); ⁸ how shall the ministry of the spirit be without glory? ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness exceed in glory. ¹⁰ For truly, that which has been made glorious has not been made ultimately glorious in that the other glory is simply so surpassing. ¹¹ For if that

2:14 This alludes to the Roman triumph, whereby the victorious soldiers marched through the streets in glory and with the burning of incense after defeating their enemy. The victory of Jesus on the cross should fill us with such a sense of victory and glory.

3:2 The fact Paul had converted the Corinthians was the basis upon which he had authority with them; he didn't need any letter from any other authority figure.

which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains permanently is yet more glorious. ¹² Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, ¹³ and are not like Moses, who put a veil upon his face so the children of Israel could not gaze to see the outcome of that which was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is made redundant through Christ. ¹⁵ But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart. ¹⁶ But whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we, with an unveiled face and

reflecting the glory of the Lord, are all transformed into his likeness from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit.

CHAPTER 4 Mar. 5 Sep. 4

Preaching the Gospel of Glory

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we do not give up. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those that perish, ⁴ in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the im-

3:12 "Boldness" is a word often associated with the preaching of the Gospel in Acts. We who are naturally shy and not confident in witnessing to others can be inspired with boldness by the fact we have a sure hope. If we believe we shall live eternally in God's Kingdom, we will find strength to share this good news with others (see 4:13).

3:13 The things of the Old Covenant (v. 14), the Law of Moses, were fading away (v. 11). They would finally finish with the destruction of the temple in AD70. This means we aren't bound to keep the Law of Moses today – it has faded away.

3:18 When Moses spoke with the Angel, the glory on the Angel's face became reflected onto Moses' face, and he radiated it to others. If we are in a personal relationship with Jesus, His glory, His personality, will be reflected from our faces to others; and moreover, we will become like Him. His face will become ours. This is why we should regularly read the Gospels and meditate upon Jesus as a person; simply knowing Him will transform us.

4:4 It is darkness which blinds men's eyes (1 Jn. 2:11), i.e. not walking according to the light of God's word. There is only *one* God – not two. *God* (and not Satan) blinded Israel to the Gospel (Rom. 11:8); 2 Cor. 3:14 says that their minds were blinded or "hardened" (RV) as Pharaoh's was. Whoever "the god of this world" is or was, God worked through it and is therefore greater than it. In Eph. 4:18 Paul specifically defined what he meant by "darkness": "Having the understanding darkened... through the ignorance that is *within* them... the blindness of their heart" (AV). That opposition was the real adversary / Satan. Paul is likely quoting the phrase "the god of this world" from contemporary Jewish writings rather than actually believing such a 'god' existed.

age of God, should not dawn. ⁵ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ Seeing it is God that said: Light shall shine out of darkness, He shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthly vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, yet not crushed; perplexed, yet not in despair; ⁹ pursued, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed. ¹⁰ Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death works in us, but life in you. ¹³ But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe and on this basis we also speak. ¹⁴ Knowing that He that raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you. ¹⁵ For all things are for your sakes, that the grace may be multiplied through many, causing

thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ Therefore we do not give up, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our slight momentary affliction accomplishes for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison; ¹⁸ whilst meantime we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 6 Sep. 5

Paul's Longing for the Judgment Seat of Christ

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. ² For indeed in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven ³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. ⁴ For indeed we that are in this tent do groan, being burdened. Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ Being there-

4:5 Preaching can become a very proud exercise if we use it to project ourselves to others. The content of our message must be Jesus.

4:10 The principle of baptism is daily worked out in our lives; losing temporarily [dying] and yet sharing in the resurrection life of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-5).

5:3 *Found naked* – Those who will be rejected by Jesus at the final judgment will be “found naked” (Rev. 16:15) because they have not developed anything in God’s account. In a similar figure, Jesus tells us to store up treasure in Heaven with God by the way we live and think today (Mt. 6:20).

fore always of good courage and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord ⁷ (for we walk by faith, not by sight), ⁸ yes, we are of good courage; and we would rather be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him. ¹⁰ For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the result of the things done in a bodily form, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.

Ambassadors for Christ

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are revealed to God, and I hope that we are revealed also in your consciences. ¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ con-

trols us, because we have judged that in that one has died for all, therefore all have died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and rose again. ¹⁶ Therefore we, from this time forward, know no one after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. ¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹ That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating the world by us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He who knew no sin, he became a sin offering on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

5:9 *At home or absent* – Whether we are dead or alive at the return of the Lord Jesus. If we die, we will be unconscious until He returns; but effectively, our death will be His return for us, because the next conscious moment for us will be the resurrection and being with the Lord Jesus.

5:10 We will receive the result of how we lived our lives in a bodily form – either we will remain mortal and die “the second death”, or we will not be affected by the second death (Rev. 2:11) because we will be given an immortal body like Jesus now has. Note we will exist eternally in a bodily form; all existence spoken of in the Bible is bodily existence.

5:17 We are “in Christ” by baptism into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), and thus become part of a new creation, of which Christ is the creator.

5:20 We are Christ’s representatives on earth, and so when people meet us, they meet Jesus. Our behaviour must be appropriate to this (6:3,4).

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 6 Sep. 5

And working together with him we entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He said: In a time of acceptance I hearkened to you, and in a day of salvation did I succour you. Behold, now is the time of acceptance; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Paul's Ministry Commended by God

³ We aim to give no reason for stumbling in anything, that our ministry is not blamed. ⁴ But in everything, commending ourselves as servants of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, ⁵ in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings. ⁶ In pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, ⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸ by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report. As deceivers and yet true, ⁹ as

unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things. ¹¹ Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. ¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³ In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

Do Not be Unequally Yoked

¹⁴ Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God, even as God said: I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people. ¹⁷ Therefore come out from among them and be separate,

6:2 The emphasis on the word “now” reflects the crucial importance of life and living today. We are living in moments of amazing, eternal opportunity. At the day of judgment it will be too late.

6:8 *By evil report* – The fact we will be slandered is a proof we are God’s servants (v. 4).

6:11 The Corinthians were aggressive to Paul, and yet he opened his heart to them – there is more autobiographical detail about Paul in his letters to them than in any other of his letters.

6:14 *Unequally yoked* – This principle affects who we chose to marry and have deep relationships with, knowing that bad company corrupts good spiritual habits (1 Cor. 15:33).

6:17 We are to come out from this world, and yet be a light to the world. Our separation from them is therefore from their sinful behaviour. The command to separate is positive – we are to be separated *from* the world so that we can be separated *unto* God Himself; this is the meaning of the Hebrew idea of ‘holiness’.

says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will welcome you,¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 6 Sep. 5

Therefore beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Paul's Sufferings

²Open your hearts to us. We wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. ³I say it not to condemn you. For as I have said before, you are in our hearts, to die together and live together. ⁴Great is my confidence in you. Great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort, in all our affliction I am overflowing with joy! ⁵For even when we went into Macedonia, our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side. Without were conflicts, within were fears. ⁶Nevertheless God that comforts the lowly comforted us by the coming of Titus. ⁷And not by his coming only, but

also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, while he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me. So that I rejoiced yet more.

Godly Sorrow

⁸Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it, for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though only for a time. ⁹I now rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry to repentance. For you were made sorry in a Godly way, that you might suffer harm from us in nothing. ¹⁰For Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, it brings no regret; but the sorrow of the world works death. ¹¹For observe this very thing: you sorrowed in a Godly manner, and what diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be pure in the matter. ¹²So although I wrote to you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong; but that your earnest care

7:3 Paul usually speaks of dying together and living together in the context of sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, a process which begins with baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). But our brothers and sisters in Christ are also part of His body, and therefore we should think in terms of dying and living with them too – even with those like the Corinthian believers who were aggressive to Paul (12:16 etc.) and who were weak in their understanding and behaviour.

7:7 Elsewhere in 2 Corinthians it's clear that the Corinthians were aggressive to Paul; and yet he tried to be as positive about them as he could, believing their kind words as far as possible without being naïve.

7:10 Our salvation involves repentance, and this comes from “Godly sorrow”. How often do we experience this as we reflect upon our failures?

for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³ Therefore we have been comforted, and in our comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. ¹⁴ For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. ¹⁵ And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. ¹⁶ I rejoice that in everything I can have perfect confidence in you.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 7 Sep. 6
Generous Giving for the Poorer Believers

Moreover brothers, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia. ² For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For according to their power, I testify, yes and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly to accept this grace as a token of their fellowship in this service to the saints. ⁵ And their giving was beyond our

hope; for through the will of God, first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us. ⁶ So much so that we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you also this act of grace. ⁷ So as you abound in everything, in faith and speech and knowledge and in all earnestness and in your love to us, see that you excel in this grace also. ⁸ I speak not as direct commandment; but rather through showing you the earnestness of others I am probing the sincerity of your love. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor as a pauper, that you through his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And herein I give my judgment. For this is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to desire to give but to actually give. ¹¹ But now complete the doing also. That as there was the willingness to want to give, so there may be the completion of the desire also, according to your ability. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not say this so that others may be eased and you distressed. ¹⁴ But that as a matter of fairness, your abundance

7:13 If we are unselfish, then the joy of others becomes our joy. Joy is not only to be experienced in terms of things which make us personally joyful.

8:1, 2 The grace or loving kindness of God elicits generosity or ‘giving’ from us; for the Greek word translated “grace” means ‘gift’. We cannot be passive to the gift of saving grace.

8:12 In this way, a poor person can still be generous. If God’s grace motivates us to generosity but we simply don’t have the things we’d like to give to others, then our desire to give is still counted by Him as if we had done it.

at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be an equality. ¹⁵ As it is written: He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little had no lack. ¹⁶ But thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he indeed accepted our appeal; but being very earnest, he went to you of his own accord. ¹⁸ And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches. ¹⁹ And not only this but he is the one who was appointed by the churches to travel with us in this act of grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord and to show our own willingness to help. ²⁰ This was to avoid being blamed by anyone in this matter of charity which is ministered by us. ²¹ For we take care to do things honourably, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men. ²² And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have many times proved earnest in many things; but now, much more earnest, by reason of the great confidence which he has in you. ²³ Whether any inquire

about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker toward you; or our brothers, they are the messengers of the churches, they are the glory of Christ. ²⁴ Therefore show them in the presence of the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 7 Sep. 6

An Appeal for Generous Giving

FOR concerning the service to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. ² For I know your readiness, of which I boast on your behalf to those in Macedonia, that Achaia has been prepared for the past year; and your zeal has stirred up very many of them. ³ But I have sent the brothers, that our boasting on your behalf may not be made void in this respect. That, even as I said: You may be prepared. ⁴ Lest by any means, if there come with me some Macedonians and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you) would be embarrassed for my being so confident of your generosity. ⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing

8:15 This quotation from the Old Testament implies some Israelites gathered more manna each day than others who were maybe weak or old. But those who gathered more shared their excess with those who couldn't gather enough.

8:16 God puts things such as the needs of others into our hearts, and we must follow His leading.

8:23 Christ glories in those who do His work of caring for others; He has such a positive view of His servants.

9:2 Zeal and enthusiasm to be generous are contagious; but generosity and care for others mustn't be mere words, as it was with the Corinthians and as it so often is in conversations between believers; there must be concrete action (v. 3).

gift, not, as it were, as an extortion.

⁶ But this I say: He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ Let each man do according to what he intends in his heart. Not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that you, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound to every good work.

⁹ As it is written: He has scattered abroad, He has given to the poor. His righteousness abides for ever. ¹⁰ And He that supplies seed to the sower and bread for food shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the administration of this charity not only provides for the wants of the saints, but abounds also through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service they glorify God for your loyalty which you confess to the gospel of Christ, and for the generosity

of your contribution to them and to all. ¹⁴ While they also, with prayers on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 8 Sep. 7

Paul Threatens the Corinthians with Divine Authority

Now I Paul, I myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who in your presence am lowly among you but being absent am bold toward you: ² I beg you now, so that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not fight in a fleshly way ⁴ (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), ⁵ casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. ⁶ And being in readiness to avenge

9:6 Reaping the results of our generosity will come at the harvest, which is the return of Christ (Mt. 13:30). We can be generous with things other than money.

9:7 Giving to others, of anything (not only money), should be done with joy and not because we feel we have to, or it's expected of us; it should be the result of a conscious decision which we privately take.

9:8 If we truly desire to be generous, then God will give us what is required to be generous with – He will give us yet more seed to sow, so that the harvest from it (both in terms of praise to Him from the recipients and of glory we will receive in the Kingdom) will be greater (vv. 10-12). Jesus taught the same in Lk. 11:5-7 – we will be given whatever we ask, if we ask for it in order to give to others that which they truly need but we truly don't have.

10:5 The essence of Christianity is to be spiritually minded, to bring all our thoughts under control.

all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full. ⁷ Look at the things that are before your face, starting at you. If anyone trusts in himself that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we! ⁸ I could boast, unashamedly and somewhat abundantly, concerning our authority- authority which the Lord gave for building you up and not for casting you down. ⁹ But I will not, lest I appear to terrify you by my letters. ¹⁰ For they say: His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account. ¹¹ Well, let such a person reckon this, that what we are in word by letters, when we are absent, such will we be also in deed, when we are present. ¹² For we are not bold enough to class or compare ourselves with those that commend themselves. These are without understanding, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, which is unwise. ¹³ But we will not boast beyond our measure but rather

according to the measure of the province which God apportioned to us- a measure to reach even to you. ¹⁴ For we are not overextending ourselves in our boasting, as though we did not reach unto you. For we were the first to come as far as you in preaching the gospel of Christ. ¹⁵ So we are not boasting beyond our measure in other men's labours; but rather we hope that as your faith grows, our influence among you may be greatly increased, ¹⁶ so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. ¹⁷ But he that boasts, let him boast in the Lord. ¹⁸ For it is not he that commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

CHAPTER 11 Mar. 8 Sep. 7

Paul Protests His Great Love for the Corinthians

Iwish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me. ² For I am jealous over you with a Godly jealousy. For I betrothed you

10:7 *So also are we* – Whatever we know of our own experience of Christ, not least His gracious love, presence and forgiveness of us, we should recognize is also experienced by our brethren in Christ with whom we may have differences.

10:8 Authority, be it in a church, over children, in a marriage, in the workplace, is a gift from God to be used positively to build others up, to serve others with, rather than for our own glorification and negative destruction of others thereby.

10:10 Paul may have had some physical weakness or deformity which made him unattractive (10:1; 11:6) – a “thorn in the flesh” (12:7). God delights to use those with weakness to do His work, and Paul was a great example of this.

10:12 We tend to spiritually compare ourselves against other people and conclude that we're not bad. But the standard of comparison must be with Jesus. He was of our nature, our representative, so that we can realistically do this.

10:16 *So that...* – If Paul's converts at Corinth grew spiritually, then he felt he would be used to take the Gospel to other new areas. Their immaturity was therefore an obstacle to the spreading of the Gospel and the salvation of others.

to one husband, that is, that I might present you a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve with his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept- it seems you think you do well to go along with him. ⁵ But I reckon that I am not in the least inferior to these so called super apostles. ⁶ Although rude in speech, I am not in knowledge. No, in every way have we made this manifest to you in all things. ⁷ Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself so you might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nothing? ⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.

⁹ And when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on anyone. For the brothers, when they came from Macedonia, supplied all my needs; indeed in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I remain. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me boasting about this throughout the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ And why? Because I do not love you? God knows, I do! ¹² But what I do, that I will continue to do, so I may not provide an opportunity to those that desire such an opportunity, and so that their boasting will be shown to be not the same as ours. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel. For even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is no great thing therefore if his servants also fashion themselves as servants of

11:2 In baptism, we are betrothed to marry Christ. As Paul had brought them to Christ, he felt the need to ensure they were a virgin for Him; every act of unfaithfulness, going after other gods, is no less awful than a betrothed virgin sleeping around with other men. It was for the sake of Christ's feelings, for the sake of how Paul loved and felt for Christ, that he so wanted the Corinthians to be faithful to Him.

11:3 Paul saw the Corinthians as innocent Eve in Eden – even though it's clear from his letters to them that they were sexually immoral and very immature in their Christian understanding. He really tried to be as positive as possible about them.

11:4 *You do well* – Paul is being sarcastic, concerning how the Corinthians were so easily attracted by false Gospels. There is such a thing as “another Jesus”; just because a teaching says something about Jesus, this doesn't mean it is the truth.

11:7-9 Paul is writing in response to criticisms made of him. The way he protests that he never once took money from the Corinthians implies that he had been falsely accused of making money out of them. Such slander and personal attack is sadly almost an inevitable consequence of preaching the Gospel.

11:14 Paul is here quoting from contemporary myths or a common saying about Satan. He is saying that in the same way, the false apostles were making themselves appear true apostles. The ‘satan’ / adversary in the Corinthian church seems to have been Jewish false teachers, who were “Hebrews”, “Israelites” (11:22).

righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

Paul Lists His Sufferings

¹⁶ I say again, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, accept me as a fool so that I may also boast a little. ¹⁷ What I will now speak in this confidence of boasting, I speak not after the Lord but as in foolishness. ¹⁸ Seeing that many boast after the flesh, I will boast also. ¹⁹ For being wise, you bear with the foolish gladly. ²⁰ For it seems you follow a man if he brings you into bondage, if he devours you, if he takes you captive, if he exalts himself, if he hits you on the face. ²¹ To my shame, I can say, we were too weak to do that. Yet wherein any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as like a madman) I more, with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Of the Jews five times I received thirty nines lashes. ²⁵ Three

times I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been adrift at sea. ²⁶ On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, in danger from my own people, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the wilderness, in danger at sea, in danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, in many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, in frequent fastings, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸ Besides those things that are without, there is the daily pressure of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, without me being weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? ³⁰ If it is necessary for me to boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed for always, knows that I do not lie to you. ³² In Damascus, the governor, under Aretas the king, guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to capture me. ³³ And only through a window I was let down in a basket by the wall and escaped his hands.

11:24 Forty lashes were supposed to kill a man. The list of Paul's sufferings here is amazing. They would have physically and psychologically shattered most men; he kept going because he was truly motivated by the cause of Christ.

11:28 Equivalent to all these awful physical sufferings listed in vv. 23-27 was the pressure of anxiety for other brothers and sisters. This, therefore, was quite something.

11:29 There are times when we must appear weak and even be weak, even though ultimately we aren't weak; we show our strength by being weak. Jesus' death was the great example of this (2 Cor. 13:4); Paul is saying that he has taken this example personally. And we must do likewise.

11:33 Paul remembered that escape, squashed small in a garbage basket let down over a wall into the rubbish dump, as one of the most humiliating things that happened to him (v. 30).

CHAPTER 12 Mar. 9 Sep. 8***Paul Speaks of the Great Revelations Given to Him***

I must go on boasting (though there is nothing to be gained by it). I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ² I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know; God knows), such a person was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I do not know; God knows), ⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ⁵ On behalf of such a one will I boast, but on my

own behalf I will not boast, save in my weaknesses. ⁶ For if I wanted to boast, I would not be foolish, for I would be speaking the truth. But I will not boast, lest anyone should account me above that which he saw me to be, or hears from me. ⁷ By reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, that I should not be exalted too much. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my

12:2 Paul speaks of himself as a “man in Christ”; he had the ability to see himself from outside of himself.

12:2 *The third heaven* – ‘Heavens and earth’ is sometimes used in the Bible to mean ‘a system of things’. The first ‘heaven’ was the Mosaic system; we are now in the heavenly places of Christ (Eph. 1:3 2:6); the third heaven may therefore refer to the Kingdom age after Christ has returned. Paul was given a special vision of the Kingdom – “paradise” (v. 4), the Kingdom of God on earth when the original state in the garden of Eden will be restored.

12:6 If people have too high an opinion of us, we should inform them of our weakness, as Paul did.

12:7 *Thorn in the flesh* – This could refer to a physical weakness in Paul, maybe a speech impediment (10:1,10; 11:6). Or the reference to “flesh” could suggest a moral weakness in Paul – worldly women were ‘thorns’ to God’s people in the past (Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13). The ‘satan’ / adversary to Paul’s work which was associated with his “thorn in the flesh” was however clearly the Jewish opposition to him, involving a group of false teachers following him around trying to get his converts to turn against him and return to the Jewish system.

12:8 This recalls the triple prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane that the cup of suffering would pass from Him.

12:9 There are things we too repeatedly ask God for, convinced that our service of Him will be enhanced if He hears our prayer. But the answer is the same for us as it was for Paul – the fact we have His grace and acceptance should mean that we ultimately lack nothing (Ps. 23:1; 34:10). The other part of the answer is that God loves to work through the broken, the small, those who think they aren’t good enough or smart enough.

weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

The Motives for Paul's Planned Visit to Corinth

¹¹ I have become foolish. You compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you. For in nothing was I behind the super apostles, though I am nothing. ¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were done among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works. ¹³ For in what way were you made inferior to the other churches, except that I was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong. ¹⁴ Behold, this is the third time I have been ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you. For I do not seek your things, but you. For the children ought not to save up for the parents, but the parents for the children. ¹⁵ And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less by you because of this? ¹⁶ But granting that I myself did not burden you, you say I was crafty, and got the better of you by deceit. ¹⁷ But did I really take advantage of you by any one

of them whom I have sent to you?

¹⁸ I urged Titus to go and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take any advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? ¹⁹ You think all this time that we are excusing ourselves to you. But in the sight of God we speak in Christ. All things, beloved, are for your upbuilding. ²⁰ For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not as I would wish, and should myself be found by you such as you would not wish. Lest by any means there should be quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹ I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality and sensuality that they have practiced.

CHAPTER 13 Mar. 9 Sep. 8

Paul's Final Appeal

This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. ² I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I

12:14 Paul saw his converts as his spiritual children. We can go through all the same emotions if we bring others to Christ.

12:15 Love that is unresponded to is one of the hardest human experiences. But it is what God and Jesus go through more than any; for the more we love and are prepared to love, the harder is the rejection.

12:21 *I may have to mourn* – He means, he may have to discipline them. But such discipline was motivated by true sadness.

will not spare them-³ seeing you seek proof that Christ speaks in me (who toward you is not weak but is powerful in you).⁴ For he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you.⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you fail to meet the test!⁶ But I hope you shall know that we have not failed the test.⁷ Now we pray to God that you do no evil. Not so we may appear to have met the test, but so you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed.⁸ For

we can do nothing against the truth but only for the truth.⁹ For we rejoice, when we are weak and you are strong. This we also pray for, even your perfecting.¹⁰ For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present with you deal sharply with you, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down.¹¹ Finally, brothers, farewell. Be perfected. Be comforted. Be of the same mind. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss.¹² All the saints greet you.¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

13:4 Christ's death, His willing weakness, was the model followed in handling the difficult Corinthians; and the cross becomes the pattern for us in our side of handling difficult relationships.

13:5 We also should be able to examine ourselves and see whether Christ is in us or not. Serious self-examination is a distinct feature of the Christian life.

13:7 *Seem to have failed* – Paul wasn't concerned with his image, with appearing a failure in the eyes of men [such fear of public failure obsesses many people]. What he wanted was for them to grow in Christ and please Him, even if they temporarily rejected Paul.

13:8 This wonderful principle means that we should not worry unduly if our technique is successful or not; for if we are truly motivated, we cannot damage the Truth by our genuine efforts to serve. It is the one talent man who did nothing, through fear of failure, who was condemned – not those who somehow did at least something (Mt. 25:25).

GALATIANS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 2 Oct. 2

Greetings and Introduction

Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), ² and all the brothers that are with me, to the churches of Galatia. ³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father. ⁵ To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you to the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. ⁷ Not that there is another one; but there are some who trouble you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you any gospel other than that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so I now say again: If anyone preaches to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For

am I now seeking the favour of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

Paul Recounts His Conversion

¹¹ For, brothers, I make known to you, as regards the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not from man. ¹² For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through direct revelation from Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and made havoc of it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of my own age among my fellow countrymen, being even more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles- immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,

1:6,7 A teaching which appears to make mention of Jesus isn't therefore harmless; a 'distortion' of the Gospel (v. 7) is another Gospel (v. 6), which can lead to condemnation (v. 9). Correct understanding of the Gospel is so important (1 Cor. 15:2).

1:8 *An angel* – This is hyperbole; Paul means 'even if even an Angel was to teach something else...'. But Angels in fact do not sin; for our reward is to live eternally like them (Lk. 20:35,36). Sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), and so Angels can't sin, seeing they are eternal.

1:10 Any preaching of Christ will lead to opposition from men, and we have to simply accept this fact.

1:16 Paul emphasizes that he was never one to be "in with the in crowd"; he was a loner, who preached Christ according to his totally personal experience of Him, not because any man had sent him to preach. We should be the same.

¹⁷ nor did I go to Jerusalem to those that were apostles ahead of me; but I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But none of the other apostles did I see, except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! ²¹ Then I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, ²² but I was still unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³ They only heard say: He that once persecuted us now preaches the faith of which he once made havoc! ²⁴ And they glorified God in me.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 2 Oct. 2

Paul's Argument with Peter

Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, also taking Titus with me. ² And I went up there by revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. ³ But not even Titus

who was with me, being a Gentile, was compelled to be circumcised.

⁴ In view of the false brothers unknowingly brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage, ⁵ we did not yield to them in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

⁶ But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God does not accept man's person) they, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me. ⁷ But on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the Gospel to the circumcision ⁸ (for he that worked through Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, worked through me also to the Gentiles); ⁹ and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, then James, Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision. ¹⁰ Only they asked us to remember the poor, which very

1:17 These silent three years of Paul in the Arabian desert may have been his disobedience to the call to preach, after his preaching immediately after conversion was met with rejection and opposition.

2:4 These false brothers appeared to be Christians, but their agenda was to bring Paul's converts back into bondage to the Law of Moses and the Jewish system. This element appear to have been the 'satan' / adversary to Paul's preaching of the Gospel throughout the Roman world.

2:9 If we too perceive that other brethren with whom we differ have been given a gift, a grace, and that they too preach the same Gospel (v. 7), then we should also not reject them – even if we agree to work somewhat separately from them. The agreement that Paul would focus on converting Gentiles rather than Jews was pragmatic, but here we have a precedent for pragmatic decision making in the church.

thing I was also zealous to do. ¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before that certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they did not walk straightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before all: If you, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Justification by Faith not Law

¹⁵ We being Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be jus-

tified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. ¹⁷ But if, while we seek to be made righteous in Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? God forbid! ¹⁸ For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live but Christ living in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. ²¹ I do not make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 3 Oct. 3

The Error of the Galatians

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your own eyes that Jesus Christ was open-

2:11-13 Although there has to be pragmatic decision making at times (v. 9 note), we must be careful not to let God's principles be broken. It must've been hard for Paul to directly confront Peter about his hypocrisy, but he did so because an important principle was at stake. Peter would break bread privately with Gentile believers, but not when some Jewish brothers came to visit. Paul saw this as seriously wrong; we should unashamedly break bread with our brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever political pressure may be exerted; and whatever the consequences. To do otherwise is to not walk according to the Gospel (v. 14). If a spiritual giant like Peter could fail in this matter, we must recognize it will be a temptation for the rest of us.

2:20 *Crucified with Christ* – Maybe a reference to the fact Paul had been baptized into the death of Christ, with the result that the resurrection life of Jesus is now revealed in our lives (Rom. 6:3-5).

2:20 *Loved me and gave Himself up for me* – We can each say and feel these words.

3:1 When Paul had preached the Gospel to the Galatians, he had been an incarnation of Christ crucified. People should see in us, in our sufferings and 'weakness', something of the crucified Christ in His time of dying.

ly displayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing works of the law, or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now perfected in the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain? If it be indeed in vain. ⁵ Does he that supplies to you the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and that faith was imputed to him for righteousness. ⁷ Know that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would make the Gentiles righteous by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, when it says: In you shall all the nations be blessed. ⁹ So then, they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do all things that are written in the book of the law. ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified by the law before God! For, The righteous shall live by faith. ¹² And the law is not of faith, but: He that does the command-

ments shall live in them. ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree. ¹⁴ This was so that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The Promises to Abraham Were the Christian Gospel

¹⁵ Brothers, I speak in human terms. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds thereto. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He did not say: And to seeds, in the plural, but in the singular: And to your seed, who is Christ! ¹⁷ This is what I mean; the law which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise! But God has granted it to Abraham by promise. ¹⁹ For what, then, was the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. The law was

3:6 Imputed – God counted Abraham as totally righteous because Abraham believed in God and in his promised future descendant, Jesus. Abraham lived before the Law of Moses, and so he wasn't counted as righteous because of his obedience to Law but by faith in the [future] Christ who was to come.

3:8 In the promises to Abraham, we see the basic elements of the Gospel. Abraham was promised that he would inherit the land for ever; God would be his personal God; that he would have one special descendant who would bring blessing [forgiveness – Acts 3:27,28] upon people from all nations; and that this one special son [Jesus – v. 16] would become many people who would also eternally inherit the land. This is fulfilled by people being baptized into Christ and being counted as “in” Him (vv. 27-29).

given through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one party, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could give life, truly righteousness would have been of the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So that the law became our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There can be neither Jew nor Gentile, there can be neither slave nor free, there can be no male and female- for you all are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's

seed, and the heirs according to the promise!

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 3 Oct. 3

God's Adopted Children

But I mean so long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a slave, though he is lord of all. ² But the child is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed by the father. ³ So we also! When we were children, we were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ that He might redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. ⁸ However at that time, not knowing God, you were in bondage to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can

3:24 The purpose of the Law of Moses was to convict God's people of sin, and to understand their salvation in terms of the great future offering of God's own Son, which it pointed forward to. Once Christ came, there was no need to keep the Law of Moses.

3:27 *As many of you* – Implying only as many as have been baptized into Christ are “in Christ” and heirs of the things promised to Abraham. These included eternal possession of the earth and the blessing of forgiveness from sin through Christ, Abraham's great descendant. Thus through baptism we become the spiritual children of Abraham, “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), members of the new ‘community of Israel’ (Eph. 2:12).

4:4 If Jesus was “born [Greek: ‘made’] of a woman”, He therefore didn't physically exist before His birth of Mary.

4:6 *Abba* – The Aramaic word for “daddy”. This is how close we can come to God Almighty.

you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years.

¹¹ I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain.

Paul's Personal Appeal

¹² Brothers, I urge you to become as I am, for I also have become as you. You did me no wrong. ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as a messenger of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Where then is that satisfaction you felt? For I testify, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ So then have I become your enemy, by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They zealously seek you for no good purpose. On the other hand, they desire to exclude you- so you might go running after them. ¹⁸ But it is good to be zealous in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹ My little children, of whom I am again in the pains of childbirth

until Christ be formed in you: ²⁰ I so wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am in doubt about you.

The Allegory of Abraham's Two Sons

²¹ Tell me, you that want to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons. One by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman. ²³ However the son by the handmaid was born after the flesh, but the son by the freewoman was born through the promise. ²⁴ Such things contain an allegory. For these women are two covenants. One from mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar. ²⁵ Now this Hagar represents mount Sinai in Arabia, she corresponds to the Jerusalem that now is; for she is in bondage with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother.

²⁷ For it is written: Rejoice, O barren one who did not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who were not in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than those of the one who has a husband. ²⁸ Brothers: We, as Isaac was, are children of

4:10, 11 If we are justified by keeping the Law of Moses, then the work of the Gospel is in vain for us.

4:13 God often uses our weakness as an opportunity for preaching the Gospel – this may be a reference to Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7), which Paul asked three times to be taken from him. But in fact God used this weakness in order for the Gospel to spread.

4:19 *Pains of childbirth* – Paul took such responsibility for the people he preached to. We are "born again" by baptism and response to the Gospel (Jn. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:23); but it can happen as with the Galatians that people go so far away from the Gospel that they have to go through the birth process again.

promise. ²⁹ But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰ However, what does the scripture say? Cast out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. ³¹ Therefore brothers, we are not children of the handmaid but of the freewoman.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 4 Oct. 4

Freedom in Christ

For freedom did Christ set us free. Therefore, stand fast and do not get entangled again in a yoke of bondage. ² Behold, I Paul say to you: If you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing! ³ Yes, I testify again to every man that receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ if you would be justified by the law! You are fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything,

but faith working through love. ⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion came not from him that calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then has the stumbling-block of the cross been done away. ¹² I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision and emasculate themselves.

The Fruits of the Spirit and the Works of the Flesh

¹³ For you, brothers, were called for freedom. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed

4:29 Conflict with the world of unbelievers is inevitable, as predicted in Gen. 3:15.

4:30 *The scripture* – Paul is here quoting the angry words of Sarah as she cast out her slave girl Hagar (Gen. 21:10). Even in flashes of failure and anger like this, God's Spirit may still be working through the whole situation to inspire later generations.

5:1 The warnings against keeping parts of the Jewish law are very clear.

5:9 False teaching and wrong behaviour spreads more easily than right teaching and good behaviour.

5:13 The very fact that we do not have long lists of commandments to obey should of itself inspire us to serve one another practically.

5:14 The Law was also fulfilled by the death of Christ; His death was love unto the end, the ultimate definition of loving our neighbour.

5:15 *Take care that you are not consumed* – Aggressive disagreement and argument with our brethren may cost us eternity.

by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to each other. You may not do the things you would like to! ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these- fornication, uncleanness, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, ²¹ envyings, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of which I forewarn you now, even as I did previously forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts of it. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not

become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 4 Oct. 4

Keep on Keeping on

Brothers, even if a man is caught in any sin, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you also be tempted. ² Carry one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³ For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each man test his own work, and then shall he have his boasting in regard to himself alone, and not of his neighbour. ⁵ For each man shall carry his own burden. ⁶ One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that sows to his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us

5:16 Victory against the flesh will be achieved more by focusing upon the positive than trying to cut off the negative.

5:20 Divisions are placed in the same category as sexual immorality.

5:21 *Practice* – To live in these things as a self-justified way of life and thinking, rather than occasional, repented of failures.

6:1 *Lest you also* – We should always remember our own spiritual weakness whenever we have to deal with the failures of others.

6:7 The reaping is at the harvest, when Christ returns. Then we will receive a reward for how we have lived today. We don't receive "eternal life" (v. 8) when we die, but at the harvest – when Christ returns. Until then we are unconscious in the grave.

6:8 The punishment for the wicked at the last day will be "corruption" in that they will be resurrected mortal, but their bodies won't be changed; they will exist for a while and then die "the second death" and be eternally unconscious (Rev. 2:11).

6:9 The more we believe in the coming of judgment at Christ's return, the more we will be inspired in this life.

not be weary in doing well. For in due season we shall reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward those that are in the family of the faith.

A Final Appeal

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

¹³ For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves fully keep

the law, but they desire to have you circumcised so they can boast about you. ¹⁴ But far be it for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. What counts is being a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me further trouble. For I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus. ¹⁸ Brothers, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

6:11 *What large letters* – Perhaps Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7) was poor eyesight – hence Gal. 4:15.

6:12 Judaism was a legally recognized religion in the Roman world. If the new Christians joined or rejoined the synagogues, they would be spared persecution. This is why Gentile Christians in Galatia were being tempted to join Judaism.

6:14 Are we proud of the cross, as Paul was?

6:17 *The marks* – An allusion to how slaves were branded with the sign of their owners. It should be visible to others that we are slaves of Jesus.

EPHESIANS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 5 Oct. 5

Our Exalted Status in Christ

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ in that He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love. ⁵ Having foreordained us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved. ⁷ In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, ⁸ which He lavished on us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good

pleasure which He purposed in him, ¹⁰ in a plan which runs to the fullness of the times: To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. ¹¹ In whom also we were made His heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who does all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² so that we who had first hoped in Christ should be for the praise of His glory. ¹³ In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ which is a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption of God's own possession, for the praise of His glory.

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁵ For this cause, I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you and the love which you show toward all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. ¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

1:3 We are "in Christ" by baptism into Him (Rom. 6:3-5). He is now in Heaven, and so we are in a spiritual sense 'in the heavens' (Eph. 2:6). This situation has been brought about by Christ, and so we could say that He is the creator of a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), of heavenly places for us. This theme of Paul's has been misunderstood badly by those who mistakenly believe that we go to Heaven on death (rather are we unconscious until Jesus returns and then we will be resurrected); or that Jesus created the literal Heavens (God did, not Jesus).

1:4 We didn't physically exist before the foundation of the world; neither did Jesus. Both He and us existed in God's purpose and plan.

1:16 Paul writes this about many people. For it to be true, he would have spent much of his available time in prayer for various brothers and sisters throughout the Mediterranean world. How long do we spend in prayer for others each day?

Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; so that you may have ¹⁸ the eyes of your mind enlightened, that you may appreciate what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and had him sit at His right hand in heaven, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to us to be head over all things in the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 5 Oct. 5

The Meaning of Conversion

You once were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, according to

the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by our natural condition destined to be children of God's wrath, even as the others. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, for the sake of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved!), ⁶ and raised us up with him; and in Christ Jesus, has made us sit with him in the heavens. ⁷ His intention was that throughout the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that faith is not of yourselves, it is a gift from God. ⁹ It is not of works, that no one should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them.

Unity Created Between Jew and Gentile

¹¹ Wherefore remember, that once

1:20-22 The exalted position of Christ is only because *God* resurrected Him and gave Him such authority and glory; clearly God and Jesus are separate, and God is greater than Jesus.

2:2 *The spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience* – Defined in v. 3 as “the lust of our flesh... the desires of the flesh and of the mind”. This spirit or principle within us is what causes disobedience and sin (James 1:13-15); and it is personified here as the prince of the world. For the mind of the flesh is indeed the effective master and ruler of most people in the world.

2:5 *Alive together with Christ* – A reference to baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). If we make the choice to be baptized, God and Jesus will work powerfully in us.

2:10 God long ago prepared good works for us to do. We need to understand what is His hope for us, His expectation – and seek to fulfil it.

you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by those called Circumcision (which is in the flesh and made with hands),¹² you were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and living without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ having abolished in the flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself of the two one new man, making peace;¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, thereby having slain the enmity.¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were near.¹⁸ For through him we have our joint access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and pilgrims, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God,²⁰ being built upon the foundation

of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone.²¹ In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 6 Oct. 6

The Mystery Now Revealed

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles,² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,³ as I wrote before in few words: How by revelation was the mystery made known to me,⁴ whereby, as you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.⁵ This in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit:⁶ That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,⁷ of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the

2:12 This verse is proof enough there can be no salvation in any religious system that excludes Jesus. To be without Him is to be “without God”, because He is the only way to relationship with God (Jn. 14:6). We also learn here of the vital importance of the covenant or promise which God made with the Jewish fathers – for the Gospel was preached to Abraham in the form of the promises made to Him about Jesus and the future Kingdom of God on earth (Gal. 3:8).

2:15 If Jesus has removed the “law of commandments contained in ordinances”, then we really are free from keeping the Law of Moses. The reference to “commandments... ordinances” may refer to the ten commandments, which included the Sabbath. We are totally under the teaching of Christ.

working of His power. ⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all men see what is the intention of this mystery which for ages has been hid in God who created all things. ¹⁰ The intention was that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Paul's Further Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees to the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that you may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. ¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you would be rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ that you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, ¹⁹ and to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him that is able to do immeasurably above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 5 Oct. 5

The Basis for Christian Unity

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, I urge you to walk worthily of the

3:8 *Less than the least* – Paul preached the Gospel very aware of his own weakness and unworthiness. Hence his witness was in humility and with power. We should preach with the same spirit. Paul's awareness of his sinfulness grew over time. In an earlier letter he felt "least of the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9), now least of all believers, and at the end of his life he felt the worst sinner in the world (1 Tim. 1:15). Yet he was progressively more and more confident in his ultimate salvation, even though he increasingly realized the extent of his unworthiness. We will go through the same pattern in our spiritual growth.

3:10 This refers to how the Gospel was preached before the rulers of the first century Mediterranean world (Lk. 21:12; Acts 9:15). They are described as in "heavenly places", following the Biblical way of speaking of positions of power and authority as the 'heavens'.

3:19 We can "know" what is beyond human knowledge, because God will open our hearts and understanding – if we let Him.

3:20 God delights to do for us more than we could even imagine; we should have the same generous spirit to others.

4:1 Paul was a prisoner of Rome; but he saw himself as a prisoner of Christ. Those things and life situations which appear to limit us and imprison us are all of Him;

calling with which you were called,² with all lowliness and meekness, with patience making allowance for each other in love;³ giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in the one hope of your calling.⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The Gifts of God

⁷ But to each one of us was the grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.⁸ Wherefore He says: When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.⁹ (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things).¹¹ And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and

teachers.¹² For the perfecting of the saints, to the work of holy service, to the building up of the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.¹⁴ That we may no longer be like children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine devised by the trickery, craftiness and deceitful scheming of men.¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head—Christ!¹⁶ By him all the parts of the body fit and are knit together, with every joint supplying something according to its unique purpose, thus making the body grow as it builds up itself in love.

The New Life

¹⁷ Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord: You are to no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, alienated from

and we find spiritual freedom from their burden by perceiving ourselves as slaves of Christ.

4:5 *One faith* – One set of beliefs which comprise the true Gospel.

4:6 The one and only God is clearly distinguished from the one Lord Jesus (v. 5).

4:13 *Until* – It could be argued that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given until the early church had come to maturity and the New Testament had been written.

4:16 *Builds up itself* – The body of Christ edifies itself because of what each member of the body supplies to the whole. This is why pushing off on our own is damaging both to ourselves and to the rest of the body. We need fellowship with others; they do have something to give us, and we have something to give them. This is why division within the body of Christ is such a serious sin.

4:17 Notice the emphasis in this section upon the internal state of our thinking; this is the essence of Christianity. The world has a “vain” mind, spiritually empty. They live a corrupt “manner of life” because they are deceived by their own desires (v. 22); whereas we are to have a new mind (v. 22).

the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart. ¹⁹ Who being past feeling gave themselves up to sensuality, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ! ²¹ Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²² Those things belonged to your former manner of life, which was corrupt through deceitful desires. ²³ But you, being renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, putting away falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour. For we are members one of another. ²⁶ In your anger, do not sin! Do not let the sun set while you remain angry. ²⁷ Give no opportunity to the Devil! ²⁸ Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, so he may have something to give to him that has need. ²⁹ Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but as the need arises, speak that which is good for encouragement, that it expresses

grace to those that hear you. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by which you were sealed until the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and railing be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² And be kind to each other, sensitive, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ also forgave you.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 7 Oct. 7

The Inevitable Judgment for Sin

Therefore, as beloved children, be imitators of God, ² and walk in love— just as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you— as is appropriate among saints; ⁴ nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor crude joking, which are not befitting saints; but rather the giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know for sure, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of

4:26 This is great practical advice; don't let the day end with you angry.

4:32 We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. If we ask God to forgive us our secret sins, things we do wrong without realizing it nor specifically repent of – then we must likewise forgive those who sin against us without repenting. The more we reflect upon our own sins and their forgiveness, the more empowered we will be to forgive others.

5:2 The death of Christ on the cross isn't just something for us to look at from a distance; we should let there be a direct bridge of influence and inspiration between it and our lives today; loving others in practical ways because He, there, so long ago, on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April, on a hill just outside Jerusalem – died for me.

5:3 *Not even be named* – Just as the Jews were not to even mention the names of other gods (Ex. 23:13).

these things comes the anger of God upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not associate with them! ⁸ For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But all things when they are reprov'd are revealed by the light. For everything that is revealed then becomes light. ¹⁴ Therefore it is said: Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall shine upon you. ¹⁵ Therefore, look carefully how you walk, not as the unwise but as the wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all

your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Husbands and Wives

²² Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife and Christ is the head of the church—himself being the saviour of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so the wives should also be to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it, ²⁶ that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and blameless. ²⁸ Thus husbands ought also to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ For this

5:23-32 The husband is the head of the wife in the context of being her saviour. The man isn't simply the head of the woman in any context just because he's a male. A saviour has to be the leader and be accepted as such; Christian marriage is to role play the relationship of Christ to the church. The husband should therefore be willing to die for the wife, to love her as Christ loved the church; and the wife in recognition of this should in this context be acceptive and obedient to that (v. 24). Thus Christian marriage is connected to very high ideals; human dysfunction of course means that neither husband nor wife totally fulfil the roles they are called to, but the height of the challenge, if seriously accepted, will ennoble marriage and lift it to a very high plane. The reasoning of these verses shows that a choice to marry an unbeliever can never be marriage as God intends.

cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

³² This mystery is great, but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 7 Oct. 7

Commands to Children and Slaves

Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right.

² Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), ³ that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but nurture them in the training and instruction of the Lord. ⁵ Servants, be obedient to those that according to the flesh are your masters, with respect and fear, in singleness of your heart, as if to Christ. ⁶ Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers;

but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ giving service with a good will, as if to the Lord and not to man. ⁸ Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, the same shall he receive in return from the Lord, whether he be slave or free. ⁹ And you, masters, do the same things to them, and stop your threatening; knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Spiritual Armour

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle only against flesh and blood, but also against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.

¹³ Therefore put on the full armour

6:4 The Lord is the trainer and instructor of our children; but He chooses to mediate that teaching through the parents.

6:5 Those who feel enslaved by their daily work can do their tasks *as if* they are doing them as service to Christ – and He will accept this as done to Him. This means that the person who has to work long, hard hours in the workplace most of the week can do as much service to Christ as the person who is ‘free’ to serve Christ in things like preaching, teaching and serving His brethren – *if* the work done to our human employer is consciously done by us “as to Christ”.

6:11-13 The world is under God’s control, not that of evil beings in heaven (Dan. 4:32). “All power” in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus (Mt. 28:18) by God (Rev. 3:21; Lk. 22:29), so it cannot also be possessed by wicked beings in literal Heaven. There can be no sinful being in heaven itself (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10). Verse 12 may be translated, “For we wrestle not only against flesh and blood...” i.e., we do not only wrestle against individual men, but against organized systems. The church was facing “the evil day” of persecution at the hands of the Romans (1 Pet. 4:12; 5:8,9). “The rulers of this dark world” at the time were the Romans. Note that the wrestling is spiritual wrestling to keep the faith (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The Greek word

of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to withstand it; and after you have done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded yourself with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the readiness to announce the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ meanwhile taking up the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit; and with this in view, be alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and on my

behalf, that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. That in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. ²¹ But so you may also know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; ²² whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts. ²³ Peace be to the believers and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love.

for “principalities” is translated “magistrate” in Lk. 12:11; human “rule”, in the sense of human government, in 1 Cor. 15:24, and the “power” of the Roman governor in Lk. 20:20. So it does not necessarily have reference to any power or prince in heaven. “Wicked spirituals in high (heavenly) places” doesn’t refer to wicked beings in heaven itself. The exalted position of the true believers in Christ is described as being “in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 2:6). The threat to the church was twofold: from the Roman/Jewish persecution and from the (often Judaist) “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13) within. Remember Ephesians was written to the church at Ephesus. Paul had previously warned them about this threat from within in Acts 20:29-30.

6:17 Salvation is our helmet in that if we firmly believe that we really will be saved when Christ returns, then this will guard our thinking [our head].

PHILIPPIANS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 8 Oct. 8

Paul Updates the Philippians on His Situation in Rome

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine with joy making requests for you all, ⁵ giving thanks for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, so

that you may be sincere and void of offence until the day of Christ; ¹¹ being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ¹² Now I would have you know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have turned out for the progress of the gospel; ¹³ so that my bonds made Christ manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest; ¹⁴ and further, most of the believers in the Lord, being made confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some of good will. ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? In every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and therein I rejoice, yes and will rejoice.

Paul Speaks of His Future

¹⁹ For I know that this shall result in my salvation, through your prayer

1:6 God will never stop working with us once He has started; there will be times when His apparent silence may lead us to question this, but the fact is, even those apparent silences are part of His working with us.

1:12 Even imprisonment for false reasons can be used by God to lead us to meet people to whom we can witness the Gospel; and far lesser traumas and misjudgements will be used by Him likewise.

1:18 We should genuinely rejoice that the real Christ is preached, even if we doubt the credentials and behaviour of those who preach. The progress of Christ's Name and work is far more important than our personal disagreements with other preachers.

and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death.

²¹ For to me to live, is Christ, and to die- is gain. ²² But if by living in the flesh, this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I do not know. ²³ I am torn between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ Yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake. ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and stay with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith; ²⁶ that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again. ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. That, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state- you standing fast in one spirit, with one mind together striving for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, and of your salvation- and that from God.

²⁹ Because to you it has been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer in his behalf; ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 8 Oct. 8

The Mental Attitude of Christ to be Our Example

Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, ² make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself; ⁴ each of you not looking to his own things, but each of you to the things of others. ⁵ Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶ Who, though being in the mental image of God, did not consider grasping at being equal with God, ⁷ but poured himself out, taking the mental attitude of a servant, and was the made just the same as all ordinary men. ⁸ And being perceived as a normal

1:23 Paul would “be with Christ” in the Kingdom, thanks to the resurrection at the return of Christ to earth. Death is no more than an unconscious sleep for the believer; the next waking moment, we will be with Christ.

1:27 The basic teachings of the Gospel are designed to elicit a practical life in response to them.

2:6-11 “God also has highly exalted” Jesus “and given him a name” (v.9) shows that Jesus did not exalt Himself – God did it. It follows that He was not in a state of being exalted before God did this to Him, at His resurrection. The whole process of Christ’s humbling and subsequent exaltation by God was to be “to the glory of God the Father” (v.11). God the Father is not, therefore, co-equal with the Son.

man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Wherefore God highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name—¹⁰ that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ¹² So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work, for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and question-

ings, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain. ¹⁷ Yes, and if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ And in the same manner you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul's Messengers

¹⁹ But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may also be cheered by news of you.

The context of this passage must be considered. Phil. 1:27 speaks of the importance of our state of mind. This is developed in the early verses of chapter 2: "Of one spirit... one *mind*... in lowliness of *mind* ... Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...". Paul is therefore speaking of the importance of having a mind like that of Jesus, which is devoted to the humble service of others. The verses which follow are therefore commenting upon the humility of *mind* which Jesus demonstrated, rather than speaking of any change of *nature*. Just as Jesus was a servant, so earlier Paul had introduced himself with the same word (1:1 cp. 2:7). The attitude of Jesus is set up as our example, and we are urged to join Paul in sharing it. We're not asked to change natures; we're asked to have the mind of Jesus – so that we may know the "fellowship of sharing in His [Christ's] sufferings, becoming like Him in His death and so to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (3:10,11).

Jesus was "in the form [Greek *morphe*] of God". Although Jesus was perfect, He had a totally God-like mind, yet He was willing to take on the demeanour of a servant. Later Paul encourages us to become "conformed unto (Christ's) death" (3:10). We are to share the *morphe*, the form of Christ which He showed in His death. Christ "made himself of no reputation", or "emptied himself" (R.V.), alluding to the prophecy of His crucifixion in Is. 53:12: "He poured out His soul unto death". He "took upon Himself the form (demeanour) of a servant" by His servant-like attitude to His followers (Jn. 13:14), demonstrated supremely by His death on the cross (Mt. 20:28). Is. 52:14 prophesied concerning Christ's sufferings that on the cross: "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men". This progressive humbling of Himself "unto death, even the death of the cross" was something which occurred during His life and death, not at His birth.

²⁰ For I have no one likeminded, who will truly care for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served as an apprentice with me in declaring the gospel. ²³ Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. ²⁴ But I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly. ²⁵ But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick and near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I have sent him more diligently, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and that I may be less sorrowful. ²⁹ Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy and hold such in honour. ³⁰ Because for the work of Christ he came near to death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 9 Oct. 9

Warning Against the Judaizers

Finally my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. For me to repeat the same things to you as I did before is not tedious, indeed it only confirms their certainty. ² As so I say again: Beware

of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilators! ³ For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. ⁴ Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If any other man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more. ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of Israelite stock, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee. ⁶ As touching zeal, persecuting the church. As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. ⁷ However, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yes indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own which is of the law, but which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death. ¹¹ If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul's Aim

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold

3:10, 11 If we share the sufferings of Christ now, we will share in His resurrection. Our baptism committed us to this as a way of life (Rom. 6:3-5).

of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet. But one thing I do, forgetting the past and looking forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus decided; and if in anything you are otherwise decided, this also shall God reveal to you. ¹⁶ For now, according to that understanding unto which we have attained, by that same rule let us walk. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our

lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 9 Oct. 9

Being Spiritually Minded

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, my beloved, stand firm in the Lord. ² I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, I urge you also, true companion, help these women, for they laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle attitude be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶ In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts

3:13 *Forgetting the past* – This is so difficult to do. But if we believe for sure that we will live eternally in God's Kingdom, we have so much to look forward to that the past weighs less heavily. And God can help us – He made Joseph "forget" or [Hebrew] 'neglect' the pain he suffered in his family (Gen. 41:51).

3:20 We are citizens of Heaven, of God and of Jesus, although we live here on earth. This is where our loyalty should be; our earthly citizenship should mean far less to us than the fact we are citizens of God's Kingdom.

3:21 Jesus now exists in a bodily form; and we also will, eternally in God's Kingdom.

4:1 *My brothers... my joy and crown* – The crown of joy will be given us when Jesus returns to earth (1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Pet. 5:4). But that crown will be our brothers and sisters for whom we have laboured in this life. Their presence in God's Kingdom, the fact they get to be saved, will be what gives us eternal joy. The amount we try for others in this life will affect the nature of our eternal salvation.

4:7 The simple fact of having prayed to God about things (v. 6) can give us this peace.

and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. ⁹ The things which you both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Paul's Practical Needs

¹⁰ But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your thought for me. I know you did indeed take thought for me, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak regarding want; for I have learned to be content whatever my situation. ¹² I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound. In everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to have plenty and to be in want. ¹³ I can do all things in him that strengthens me.

¹⁴ However you did well in that you had fellowship with my affliction.

¹⁵ And you yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that accrues to your account.

¹⁸ But I have all things and abound. I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, they were as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches, in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers that are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially they that are of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

4:17 *Accrues* – God keeps a record of every act of generosity which we commit.

COLOSSIANS

CHAPTER 1 May 14 Nov. 13

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God and Timothy our brother, ² to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ that are at Colosse. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Colossians

³ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have toward all the saints. ⁵ We thank God because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. ⁶ That Gospel is come to you, even as it has also come to all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, as it does in you also, since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. ⁷ Even as you learned it of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf; ⁸ who also

declared to us your love in the Spirit. ⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make requests for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ to walk worthily in the Lord fully pleasing him, bearing fruit in every good work; increasing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, to all patience and endurance, with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who made us suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love; ¹⁴ in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins; ¹⁵ who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things have been created on account of him

1:5 The hope we have is the hope of God's Kingdom on earth; Jesus will come from Heaven to earth to raise the dead and give us the reward (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4). In this sense the promised hope is being prepared for us in Heaven.

1:9, 10 Knowledge is related to our practical walk in Christ; not academic knowledge, but the practical knowledge of Christ which comes from His word. Daily reading of His word is therefore so important.

1:15 Jesus isn't God Himself but is the "image" of God, because His character was exactly like God's.

1:16 The idea of a creation "in Him" can be understood with the help of 2 Cor. 5:17, which says that anyone who is "in Christ" becomes a new creation. It's not talking about the literal creation of the world, which the Bible says was done by God Himself.

and for him. ¹⁷ And he is superior to all things, and in him all things consist. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. ¹⁹ For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross- yes, to reconcile all things through him, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.

The Context of Paul's Preaching

²¹ And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, ²² yet now has he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unproveable before him. ²³ If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to all creation under heaven. Of which I Paul was made a servant, ²⁴ who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,

and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. ²⁵ Of which I was made a servant, according to the plan of God which was given me concerning you, to fulfil the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery of which has been hid for ages and generations; but now has it been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles- which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim him, encouraging every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹ For this purpose I labour, striving according to his power, which works in me mightily.

CHAPTER 2 May 15 Nov. 14

Paul Warns the Colossians of False Teaching

For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ² that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love; and

1:22 It's amazing to think that we can stand "without blemish" before God, because we are "in Christ".

1:23 The stabilizing element in our lives is "the hope of the Gospel", that we will live for ever in God's coming Kingdom on earth. We must not only not deviate in understanding, but continue positively believing that we will really be there. This continuing in faith in the certainty of future salvation is what will 'ground and settle' us.

1:24 God arranges circumstances in our lives so that the essence of the sufferings of Jesus are experienced by us – so that we might also share in His resurrection life. Only in this sense can we begin to "rejoice in my sufferings".

2:1 For Paul, prayer was a striving with God – based upon the example of Jacob wrestling with an Angel until his request was heard (Gen. 32:24,25; Hos. 12:4).

to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God as it is in Christ.

³ In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ This I say, so that no one deludes you with persuasive speech. ⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, I am still with you in the spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord- walk in him, ⁷ rooted and up built in him and established in your faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ. ⁹ For in him, in a bodily form, dwells all the fullness of all that God stands for; ¹⁰ and in him you are made complete. He is the head of all principality and power. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.

The Meaning of Baptism

¹² Having been buried with him in baptism, by which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. ¹⁴ Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, Christ did away with it by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

No Need to Keep the Sabbaths

¹⁶ Let no one therefore judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ They were a shadow of the things to come, but the real object is Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one rob you of your prize by a false humility and worshiping of the angels, keeping on about all the things which he has sup-

2:2 Understanding brings assurance; this is the advantage of searching the Bible for the correct understanding of God.

2:9 As the fullness of God dwells in Jesus, so it can also dwell in us (v. 10; Jn. 1:16; Eph. 1:23; 4:13). But this doesn't make us God Himself in person, and neither does it make Jesus that.

2:12 Baptism is an immersion in water, symbolizing death in the grave, and emerging in resurrection. Baptism isn't sprinkling.

2:13 Forgiveness of sins is associated with baptism; which is why baptism is so important.

2:14 *Written in ordinances* – A reference to the ten commandments, which include the Sabbath. Most of the other nine commandments are repeated in the teaching of Jesus; but the Sabbath command isn't.

2:17 The rituals of the Jewish law pointed forward to Jesus (Gal. 3:24). But now that He has come, the Jewish law has been ended (v. 14).

posedly seen in visions, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God.²⁰ If you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances?²¹ Handle not, nor taste, nor touch²² (all things that perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?²³ Which things have indeed a false appearance of wisdom in worship and humility and severity to the body, but are not of any real value against stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

CHAPTER 3 May 16 Nov. 15
The New Focus of our Lives in Christ

If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.² Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.³ For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then with him you shall also be manifested in glory.⁵ Therefore, put to death what is earthly in you:

Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry.⁶ For which things' sake comes the anger of God upon the children of disobedience,⁷ things in which you also once walked, when you lived in these things.⁸ But now you are to also put away: Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to each other, seeing you have put off the old man with his doings,¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator;¹¹ where there cannot be Gentile and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman- but Christ is all and in all.¹² Therefore, as God's elect and beloved, put on sensitivity, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;¹³ forbearing one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as the Lord forgave you, so also forgive.¹⁴ And above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection.¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts- to this you were also called in one body; and be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. In all wisdom teach and encourage one another with Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs-

2:23 It may 'feel good' to obey legalistic rituals, but this will not help us in our battle against self-indulgence.

3:1 Christ resurrected and then ascended to Heaven. We share in His resurrection by baptism (2:12); and the equivalent of His ascension to Heaven is that we should be thinking about spiritual, Heavenly things. These should be our reality, rather than the passing things of this world like wealth, comfort and temporary success. To be spiritually minded is the goal of the Christian life.

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or in action, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Domestic Relationships

¹⁸ Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, in order that they are not discouraged. ²² Servants, obey in all things those that are your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as if to the Lord and not to men. ²⁴ Knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

CHAPTER 4 May 16 Nov. 15

Masters, give to your servants what is just and equal. Knowing you also have a master in heaven. ² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving, ³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for preaching the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for the sake of which I am also in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may speak boldly, as I should. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Greetings and News

⁷ All my affairs shall Tychicus make known to you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord, ⁸ whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts. ⁹ Together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved

3:17 To be thankful in all things is a major feature of the Christian life.

3:23 It's very gracious of Jesus to accept our service to our worldly employer as service to Him. This empowers us to no longer be crushed by the monotony of our daily work – it can now have meaning and be consciously done for Jesus. This must've been especial comfort to slaves in the first century.

3:25 *No partiality* – Masters of slaves were not to think they were unaccountable to anyone (4:1). Even if in some aspects of our lives and thinking we are free from being accountable to people – we are still accountable to God and He will repay us at the day of judgment, when Christ comes.

4:3 We should also ask God to give us opportunities for preaching.

4:4 If even Paul felt he ought to preach more boldly than he did, and asked others to pray that he might do this... we shouldn't be surprised if we feel the same.

4:5 We shouldn't waste our time, but redeem it. The world is full of opportunities to waste our time, to fritter it away on the internet or entertainment. But we should use every moment we can in the Lord's service; for we are His servants.

brother, who is one of you, they shall make known to you all things that are done here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers to the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear witness that

he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and for those in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. ¹⁵ Greet the brothers that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, take steps to have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and you also read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus: Take heed to the service which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it. ¹⁸ I Paul write this salutation with my own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

4:17 God gives us all opportunities, potentials and maybe specific things which He wants us to achieve in His service; we must not flunk out of our calling.

4:18 *Remember my bonds* – In this almost pathetic cry, we sense Paul's frustration at the limitations of his situation (as in Acts 26:29 "except these bonds"). When we feel the same, let's realize that all God's servants have felt similar.

1 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER 1 May 17 Nov. 16

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. ² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³ remembering without ceasing before our God and Father your work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Power of Example

⁴ Knowing, brothers beloved of God, your first calling, ⁵ how that our preaching of the gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. Even as you know what manner of men we have shown ourselves toward you, for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. ⁷ In this way you became an example to all in Macedonia and in Achaia that believe. ⁸ For from you has sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith toward God has gone forth; so that we do not need to say anything about

you. ⁹ For others report about what kind of reception you gave us and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

CHAPTER 2 May 17 Nov. 16

The History of the Gospel in Thessalonica

Brothers, you know our visit with you, that it has not been found vain. ² As you know, previously in Philippi we suffered and were spitefully treated; but even amid much opposition we were bold in our God to tell you about the gospel of God. ³ For our appeal is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deceit. ⁴ But even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; ⁶ nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherishes her own

1:5, 6 Converts tend to imitate the person who converted them. We therefore have to watch who we are, for the sake of others who will hear us preach. This isn't a call to hypocrisy; rather to being aware that who we are really does affect who others become, and so we should watch who we are for others' sakes.

1:10 The return of Christ to the earth is the basic Christian hope.

2:7 The figure is of a wet nurse this time feeding her very own child. This was the tender, special care of Paul for his brethren, and it should be ours.

children. ⁸ So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. ⁹ For, brothers, you remember our labour and distress, working night and day, so that we would not burden any of you while we preached the gospel of God to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe. ¹¹ As you know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, encouraging you and testifying, ¹² to the end you should walk worthily of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. ¹³ And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when you received from us the word of the message of God, you accepted it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also works powerfully in you that believe. ¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea. For you also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews, ¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and

drove us out, and do not please God, and oppose all mankind, ¹⁶ forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved. By doing so they fill up the full measure of their sins. But God's wrath comes upon them at last. ¹⁷ But we, brothers, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence but not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Because we wanted to come to you, I Paul time and again; but Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even you, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and our joy.

CHAPTER 3 May 18 Nov. 17

Paul's Great Love for the Thessalonians

Wherefore when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; ² and sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith. ³ That no one be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that for this we are appointed. ⁴ For truly, when we were with you, we told you before-

2:8 Preaching the Gospel isn't merely a relaying of ideas and teaching; it's a giving of ourselves to others.

2:12 *Who calls you* – As if God is already in the future Kingdom of God, and He is calling out to us from there to come and enter it. The Gospel of the Kingdom is a call, an invitation, to go and walk towards it.

2:17 In the 'virtual' world in which we live, we shouldn't forget the importance of face to face contact and fellowship with each other (3:10).

3:1 This implies Paul found it so hard being alone without his brethren.

3:3 The believer shouldn't be surprised that afflictions come; it has to be in our lives, for only through tribulation can we enter God's Kingdom (Acts 14:22).

hand that we are to suffer affliction. Even as it came to pass and you know. ⁵ For this cause I also, when I could no longer endure it, sent Timothy, that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you and our labour should be in vain. ⁶ But now Timothy has come to us from you and brought us the good news of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also you. ⁷ For this cause, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we were comforted through hearing of your faith. ⁸ For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. ⁹ For what thanksgiving can we render again to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sakes before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and may perfect whatever is lacking in your faith? ¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you. ¹² And the Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even as we also toward you, ¹³ so that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father,

at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

CHAPTER 4 May 18 Nov. 17

The Sanctified Life

Finally, brothers, we urge and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God. ² For you know what instruction we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, that you live sanctified lives. Therefore abstain from fornication; ⁴ let each one of you take a wife for himself in sanctification and honour, ⁵ not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who do not know God. ⁶ Let no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. Because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God called us not to uncleanness but to sanctification. ⁸ Therefore he that rejects this teaching rejects not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you. ⁹ But concerning love of the brothers, you have no need that anyone write to you. For you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. ¹⁰ For indeed you

3:9 Before our God – We are ‘before God’ when we pray to God, and in our lives generally. Yet Paul uses the same phrase in v. 13 to describe how we will come ‘before God’ at the day of judgment. In prayer, and in our lives, we should try to live as if we are before God at judgment. In our daily lives, let’s not isolate ourselves from that ultimate reality. Prayer especially is a foretaste of judgment day.

3:13 As we face Jesus at the day of final judgment, our hearts will be calm if we have lived a life of love to others (v. 12).

4:4, 5 We should take a partner in love, not “in... lust”. Marriage is to be on the basis of love, not lust.

4:10 If our self-examination reveals that we are loving toward others, we shouldn’t be

do it toward all the brothers that are in all Macedonia. But, brothers, we encourage you to abound more and more. ¹¹ May you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, ¹² that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing

Comfort From the Hope of Resurrection

¹³ Brothers, we would not have you ignorant concerning those that fall asleep, lest you grieve like those who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, just as surely those that have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring up *complacent. Love by its nature grows and grows. Are our lives characterized by ever increasing love?*

4:11 *Aspire* – The Greek word means ‘to be ambitious’. In spiritual reality, our ambition should be for spiritual and not material things.

4:17 There is no mention here of the righteous being caught up to *Heaven*. Christ descends from Heaven before the believers meet him. Christ will reign for ever on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and we will be with him, here on earth. It is therefore impossible that we should spend eternity with him suspended in mid-air. ‘The air’ extending only a few kilometres above the earth’s surface means that it cannot refer to Heaven, the dwelling place of God.

The Greek phrase translated “caught up” really means to be snatched away; it does not carry the idea of any specific direction. It also occurs in Acts 8:39: “The Spirit of the Lord *caught away* Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more... But Philip was found at Azotus”. This records how Philip was miraculously transported from one place on earth to another. When Christ comes, the responsible will be gathered together to the place of judgment; they will not be left to make their own way there. It is possible that our means of transportation to that place will be literally through the air.

Jesus said that “in the day when the Son of man is revealed...two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Luke 17:30,36). This gives the same picture of a sudden snatching away. The disciples earnestly asked, “Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together” (Luke 17:37). As the eagles fly instinctively through the air and then land on earth where the carcass is, so the responsible will be brought to the place where they will meet their Lord in judgment.

with him. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are still living at the coming of the Lord, shall in no way precede those that have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷ Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be snatched away in the clouds in the air to meet the Lord, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

CHAPTER 5 May 19 Nov. 18

But concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no

need that something be written to you. ² For yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. ³ When people are saying: Peace and safety, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no way escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness, that this day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ For you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night. ⁸ But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us to suffer His wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, even as you already do.

Closing Thoughts

¹² But brothers, we urge you to rec-

ognize those that labour among you, who are over you in the Lord and who encourage you. ¹³ Esteem these exceedingly high in love, for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we exhort you, brothers, warn the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil with evil, but always follow after that which is good one toward another and toward all. ¹⁶ Rejoice always. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things. Hold fast to what is good. ²² Abstain from evil wherever it appears. ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He that calls you, who will also do it. ²⁵ Brothers, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I solemnly implore you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the brothers. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

5:6 We should not be asleep – but the parable of Mt. 25:1-13 suggests that even the “wise virgins” will be asleep when Christ comes.

2 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER 1 May 20 Nov. 19

Suffering Has an End – At the Return of Christ

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ² Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Brothers, we are obligated to thank God always for you, as is appropriate, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure. ⁵ These are proof that God's judgment is righteous, and you are enduring them to the end you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer. ⁶ It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who afflict you; ⁷ and to give relief to those who are afflicted (and to us too), when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, ⁸ rendering

vengeance to them that do not acknowledge God and to them that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that have believed in that day (because our testimony to you was believed). ¹¹ To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfil every desire of goodness and work of faith, with power. ¹² To the end that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2 May 20 Nov. 19

The Man of Sin

Now brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, we urge you ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter ap-

1:5 The fact we experience tribulation is a sure token that we are in fact going to be accepted into God's Kingdom; for through such tribulation we have to enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22).

1:9 *Eternal destruction* – The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23), not eternal conscious existence in torture. Their death will be permanent, and in this sense their destruction will be eternal.

1:11 If we are desiring good and right things, then God will powerfully fulfil those desires.

2:2 There were and are many false ideas around to the effect that Christ has already come; Preterism says He came in AD70, the Watchtower claimed He came in 1914.

pearing to be from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one beguile you in any way. For first of all must come the falling away and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself up as God. ⁵ Have you forgotten that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining him now, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so, until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the powerful glory of his coming. ⁹ But the coming of the lawless one will be according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deceit of them that perish. Because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved, ¹¹ for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie; ¹² that they all

might be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

An Appeal to Stand Firm

¹³ But, brothers, we are obligated to give thanks to God always for you, beloved of the Lord, for God chose you from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; ¹⁴ unto which He called you through our preaching of the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand fast, and hold to the teachings which you were taught, whether by word, or by our epistle. ¹⁶ Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

CHAPTER 3 May 21 Nov. 20

Paul Asks For Prayer

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, even as also it is with you. ² And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men. For all do not have faith.

But the coming of Christ will be publically obvious to all because the wicked will be destroyed by it (v. 8), and we will be gathered unto Christ in that day (v. 1).

2:11 God isn't passive toward those who don't want to love His truth (v. 10) – He actively encourages them to believe delusions. This is one reason why we find believing such huge nonsenses – because God has in fact deluded them.

2:17 If we desire to speak and do the right things, God will confirm us in this; just as He confirms those who don't love the truth in the way of untruth (vv. 10,11). There is both a downward and upward spiral in spiritual life; we can't just opt out, we are on a journey either to eternal life or eternal death, and God is propelling us on the way we choose.

³ But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and guard you from the evil. ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you both do, and will do, the things which we command; ⁵ and so may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Discipline Those Who Just Want Material Benefit

⁶ Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not after the tradition which they received from us. ⁷ For yourselves know how you ought to imitate us. For we ourselves did not behave disorderly among you, ⁸ neither did we eat bread for nothing at anyone's hand; but we ate our bread as the result of our own labour and toil, working night and day, that we might not financially burden any of you. ⁹ Not because we do not have the right to

do so, but to make ourselves an example to you- that you should imitate us. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: If any will not work, neither let him eat of your food. ¹¹ For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that do not work at all but are busybodies. ¹² Now those that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. ¹³ But you, brothers, be not weary in doing good. ¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word by this letter, note that man, that you have no association with him, so that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ But do not count him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. ¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all. ¹⁷ The salutation of me Paul with my own hand, which is the token in every epistle. So I write. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

3:5 The Lord Jesus is able to directly influence human minds [hearts].

3:6 *Withdraw yourselves* – This verse is in the context of verses 7-12, concerning some who were “disorderly” in that they were involved with the church simply in order to get money, and refused to work when they could do so. Verse 6 doesn’t mean we should withdraw ourselves from anyone who breaks any commandment of Jesus, for we all do this. The verse speaks about the specific situation of those seeking to gain money from being members of the church in Thessalonica.

3:9 Sometimes it’s better not to do something which we could legitimately do, because of the bad example it may set, and because it may be misunderstood and misused by others who are weaker.

3:14 This is to be understood the same way as :6.

1 TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1 May 22 Nov. 21

Paul Encourages Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope. ² To Timothy, my true child in faith. Grace, mercy and peace to you, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ Stay at Ephesus, just as I urged you to do when I was going into Macedonia, so that you might instruct certain men not to teach a different doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than Godly edification which is in faith. ⁵ The intended result of this instruction is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith. ⁶ From which things some having strayed have turned aside to idle talking; ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, though they neither understand what they say, nor what they confidently affirm. ⁸ But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, ⁹ since we know that law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and unruly, for the un-

godly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Paul's Conversion a Pattern for All

¹² I thank him that enabled me, Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service. ¹³ Though I was before a blasphemer, a persecutor and abusive. However, I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance: That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as the chief sinner might Jesus Christ show all his patience as a pat-

1:5 The importance of correct teaching is that it leads to love and faith. This is why having correct doctrine and rejecting wrong teachings is practically important (:3,4).

1:15 Paul, now nearing the end of his life, considers himself the world's worst sinner. Previously he had thought of himself as the least apostle (1 Cor. 15:9), then as the least of all the believers (Eph. 3:8). As Paul grew spiritually, he became more aware of both the extent of his own sinfulness, and of the certainty of his salvation. We should be following this pattern.

1:16 Paul's dramatic conversion is a pattern for each of us. Whether we were raised Christian or not, whether we committed what the world would consider major sins or not, the fact is that our conversion was and is as dramatic as Paul's; and our response to God's grace should be as zealous as his.

tern to those that would later believe in him to gain eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy, in accordance with the prophecies which were made about you, that by them you may war the good warfare. ¹⁹ Holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some having thrust from them, made shipwreck of their faith. ²⁰ Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme.

CHAPTER 2 May 22 Nov. 21

Paul Encourages Prayerfulness

Iurge therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men; ² for kings, and all that are in high place, that we may lead a calm and quiet life in all Godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴ who would wish all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who

gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony made at the due time. ⁷ To this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I do not lie), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. ⁸ I therefore desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without anger and dispute. ⁹ In like manner, I urge that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with bashfulness and sobriety; not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but apparel which becomes women professing reverence towards God through good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection; ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in submission. ¹³ For Adam was first formed, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression. ¹⁵ But she shall be saved through the child-bearing, if they continue in faith, love and sanctification with sobriety.

CHAPTER 3 May 22 Nov. 21

About Bishops and Deacons

Faithful is the saying: If a man seeks the office of a bishop, he

1:20 *Delivered to Satan* – Maybe a reference to the local Roman authorities, the Satan-adversary of the Christians.

2:5 This verse clearly shows the Trinity to be a wrong understanding. Writing even after Jesus ascended to Heaven, Paul calls Him “the man Christ Jesus”. He is a mediator between God and man; not God Himself, for there is only one God.

2:8 *I therefore desire* – Because we have such a powerful mediator for our prayers before God (v. 5), therefore we should make use of this blessing, and pray.

2:13, 14 The basis for Paul’s teaching about the differing roles of men and women is based upon the principles of Adam and Eve in Eden; his teaching is therefore not just a special expedient for his own times, because it is continuing the principles God laid down in creation.

desires a good work. ² The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober, orderly, given to hospitality, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not argumentative, not covetous. ⁴ One who rules his own family well, having his children in submission with all reverence. ⁵ For if a man does not know how to rule his own family, how shall he take care of the church of God? ⁶ Not a new convert, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace or into a snare of the devil. ⁸ Likewise, deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money; ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. ¹⁰ And let them first be tested. If they are found blameless, then let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be men of one woman, ruling their children and their own families well. ¹³ For they

that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ These things I write to you, hoping to come to you shortly. ¹⁵ But if I am delayed, I write so you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy, great is the mystery of reverence towards God: He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

CHAPTER 4 May 23 Nov. 22

A Prediction of Apostasy

But the Spirit says expressly, that in the last times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of the idol worshippers, ² through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron. ³ Forbidding to marry, and to abstain from food- which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know

3:13 Our service of itself develops our faith. This is an example of the upward spiral in spiritual life; years of humble service make faith deeper, which in turn motivates us to more service.

3:15 Even Paul didn't know exactly how his plans would work out; we all long for stability and clear plans for the future. But God doesn't work with us like that; He wants us to go through life with faith in His leading.

3:16 God was manifested in the flesh in His Son, Jesus. Jesus was of human nature but had a perfect character, so that He showed us what God would have been like if He were a human being. This doesn't mean He was God Himself in person.

4:1 This is a prophecy of how the initially pure Christian understanding would be corrupted by false ideas and practices.

4:3 *Forbidding to marry* – As the Catholic church forbid their priests

the truth. ⁴ For every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving. ⁵ For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer. ⁶ If you put the believers in mind of these things, you shall be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself with reverence towards God. ⁸ For bodily exercise is profitable for a little time; but reverence towards God is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come. ⁹ Faithful is this saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. ¹¹ These things command and teach. ¹² Let no one despise your youth. Be an example to those that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, give attention to reading, to preaching, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given to you by prophecy when the council of elders

laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Be diligent in these things. Give yourself wholly to them, that your progress may be manifest to all. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

CHAPTER 5 May 23 Nov. 22

Commands About Widows

Do not rebuke an elder but exhort him as a father. The younger men as brothers. ² The elder women as mothers. The younger women as sisters, in all purity. ³ Honour widows that are indeed widows. ⁴ But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show devotion towards their own family and to repay their parents. For this is acceptable in the sight of God. ⁵ Now she that is indeed a widow and alone has her hope set on God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶ But she that gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷ These things also command, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his own family and specially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse

4:3 *To abstain from food* – As Adventists and others forbid various foods and meats, even though God has given us all animals as a gift, and we can eat them (vv. 4,5).

4:8 A spiritual life not only gives us hope of eternal life, but gives us blessing in this life.

4:15 The things of the Gospel can't be a hobby, something we show occasional enthusiasm for. We are to give ourselves to them "wholly".

4:16 *Your hearers* – Our salvation can to some degree depend upon third parties. If the wrong teaching is taught, the salvation of others may be jeopardized.

5:4 Parents aren't to be forgotten, but to be cared for – a principle seriously overlooked in many parts of the world.

5:8 *Provide for his own family* – The context is talking about looking after elderly

than an unbeliever. ⁹ Let no one be registered as a widow who is under sixty years old. Only register those who have been the woman of one man and ¹⁰ well reported of for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has used hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has helped the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. ¹¹ But refuse to register younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry, ¹² having condemnation, because they have rejected their first pledge. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for slander. ¹⁵ For already some are turned aside after satan. ¹⁶ If any woman that believes has widows in her family, let her help them and let not the church be burdened, so that it may help those that are indeed widows.

Commands About Elders

¹⁷ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching. ¹⁸ For the scripture says: You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his wages. ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those elders that sin, reprove in the sight of all, so that the rest may also be in fear. ²¹ I charge you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. ²² Lay hands hastily on no one, and do not participate in other's sins. Keep yourself pure. ²³ No longer drink only water; instead use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. ²⁴ Some men's sins are evident, preceding them to judgment; but those of others follow them there later. ²⁵ Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

parents (v. 4). God's word here gives an unusually strong condemnation for those who don't do this.

5:14 *Rule the household* – The believing woman is ideally intended to serve in the domestic sphere.

5:18 Paul clearly supported the idea of a paid ministry, even though he himself chose not to take advantage of this in Corinth (1 Cor. 9:4-12) and Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8,9). There are times and places and contexts where it's better not to do some things which we could legitimately do, for the sake of others; the example we set may be misused, or misinterpreted.

5:24, 25 All our sins and good works will be openly revealed at the day of judgment in front of everyone; so we shouldn't be hypocritical in this life, nor should we grieve that our good works aren't noticed or valued. For the day shall come when they will be.

CHAPTER 6 May 24 Nov. 23

Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. ² And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brothers, but rather serve them because those whom they are serving are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

The Danger of Riches

³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and consents not to sound words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which shows reverence towards God, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, who suppose that reverence towards God is a way of gain. ⁶ But reverence towards God with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out. ⁸ But having

food and covering we shall be content. ⁹ But they that are intent on being rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and condemnation. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which some, by seeking for, have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. ¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these material things and instead pursue after righteousness, reverence towards God, faith, love, patience, meekness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the everlasting life, whereunto you were called and did confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses. ¹³ I urge you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate made the good confession: ¹⁴ Keep the commandment without stain, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ In due time He shall reveal him, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who only has immortality,

6:1, 2 Paul didn't advocate the demise of slavery, even though it was an unChristian institution. He accepted some things as they are in this world, and taught us to live within those limitations but in a spiritual manner. This principle applies to many situations and aspects of modern society.

6:10 *Love of money* – As our societies become increasingly money based, this is a temptation for our generation as never before.

6:10 *Pierced themselves through* – This is the language of crucifixion. We must be crucified one way or the other – either with Christ, or in trying to amass wealth. Suffering with Christ therefore becomes the logical choice.

6:16 No human being has ever seen God. Jesus was seen by men, therefore He was not God Himself. When the Old Testament speaks of men like Moses 'seeing God',

dwelling in light unapproachable. Whom no one has seen, nor can see. To whom be honour and power eternal. Amen. ¹⁷ Instruct those that are rich in this present world, that they are not proud, nor have their hope set on the uncertain riches; but instead on God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let the rich do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distrib-

ute, willing to communicate; ¹⁹ laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed. ²⁰ O Timothy, guard that which was committed to you, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of false knowledge, ²¹ which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with you.

the reference is therefore to their having seen Angels, who carry the Name of God (Ex. 23:21).

6:18 The real spiritual wealth is in giving our material wealth away.

2 TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1 May 25 Nov. 24

Paul's Relationship with Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus, ² to Timothy, my beloved child. Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of you in my prayers, night and day ⁴ longing to see you, remembering your tears, wanting to be filled with joy for you. ⁵ I am often reminded of the sincere faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded dwells in you also.

Living up to Potential

⁶ Because of this I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

⁷ For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and a disciplined mind. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony

of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but suffer hardship for the gospel according to the power of God. ⁹ Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal; ¹⁰ but has now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; ¹¹ of which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. ¹² For which cause I suffer also these things. Yet I am not ashamed. For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard what I have committed to him against that day. ¹³ Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ That good thing which was committed to you guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us. ¹⁵ This you know, that all that are in Asia turned away from me. Of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ The Lord grant mercy to the

1:3 Paul writes to so many that he prays for them constantly. This means he must've spent much of his time in prayer for others, both individuals and groups. Do we?

1:10 Immortality has only been revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ. Therefore we have no inherent immortality; there is no such thing as an immortal soul which each human is born with. This is a wrong, pagan idea. The Bible teaches that immortality is conditional.

1:12 We commit things to God, and He commits things to us (v. 14). There is a mutuality between God and man.

1:15 However, it's clear from the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 [which were written later] that there were some in Asia who remained faithful to the Lord. Believers at times misjudge others and reject them, which is very painful for those rejected; but those believ-

house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain. ¹⁷ But, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me ¹⁸ (the Lord grant to him that he find the mercy of the Lord in that day); and in how many things he gave service to me at Ephesus, you know very well.

CHAPTER 2 May 26 Nov. 25

Suffering Hardship for Christ

You therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, you are to commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. ³ Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier in service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, so that he may please whoever enrolled him as

a soldier. ⁵ And if also a man competes in the games, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The husbandman that labours must be the first to partake of the fruits. ⁷ Consider what I say. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to the gospel I preached. ⁹ Because of this I suffer hardship, even to bonds, as a criminal; but the word of God is not bound. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, so that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we shall deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he abides faithful. For he cannot deny himself.

ers may still be acceptable to their Lord. Seeing Paul's work had led to the conversion of most of those in Asia, their being poisoned against him must've been so painful.

2:4, 5 The images of a soldier at war and a training athlete show the intensity expected of us in the Lord's service. It can never be a mere hobby, culture or inherited tradition.

2:7 If we "consider" God's word, He will confirm our efforts by giving us the understanding we seek. But we must reflect upon the Bible and life, rather than being unthinking and superficial.

2:8 Jesus was the "seed of David", a literal descendant of David through His mother Mary. This shows Jesus didn't personally pre-exist before His birth; and that Mary was an ordinary woman, also a direct descendant of David.

2:10 If Paul hadn't kept doing the work of the Gospel, at great personal pain and cost, others wouldn't have been saved. The salvation of others is to some extent dependent upon the efforts of third parties such as ourselves. Whatever the cost, we can't quit the Gospel's work.

2:11 This is the principle of baptism – death with Jesus beneath the water, and then resurrection with Him (Rom. 6:3-5).

2:12 *If we shall deny him* – Paul wrote this knowing that Peter had denied Jesus – but had repented. We too can repent.

Don't Argue About Words

¹⁴ Of these things put them in remembrance, instructing them in the sight of the Lord, that they do not fight about words, to no profit, to the catastrophic destruction of those that hear them. ¹⁵ Exert yourself, to prove you are pleasing to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, handling correctly the word of truth. ¹⁶ But shun profane babblings of false teachers; for they will result in progressive ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their word will eat away like a cancer. An example would be Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ men who concerning the truth have erred, in saying that the resurrection is past already; and they ruin the faith of some. ¹⁹ However the firm foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The Lord knows those that are his. And: Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. ²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. ²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, fulfilling the use intended by the master, prepared to do every good work. ²² Enthuse about righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ But foolish and ignorant questions refuse,

knowing that they only cause strife.

²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not quarrel but be gentle towards all, eager to teach, patient of ills and wrongs, ²⁵ in meekness correcting those that contradict themselves, so that God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, ²⁶ and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

CHAPTER 3 May 27 Nov. 26***A Prophecy About the Last Days***

But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, argumentative, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. ⁵ Holding a form of reverence towards God, but having denied the power of it. From such people- turn away. ⁶ For of these are they that creep into houses and take captive weak minded women laden with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth. Men corrupted in

2:14 Arguments between brethren about small matters can lead to the destruction of others.

2:18 *The resurrection is past already* – The error of extreme Preterism today.

3:1-5 This is an exact description of society as it is in our “last days” before the return of Christ to earth.

mind, reprobate concerning the faith.
⁹ But they shall proceed no further.
 For their folly shall be made evident
 to all men, as theirs also came to be.

Paul's Encouragement to Timothy

¹⁰ But you, follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings. Think of what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹² Yes, and all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and impostors shall grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But you, grow in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them. ¹⁵ And that from a

child you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise to salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, completely empowered to every good work.

CHAPTER 4 May 27 Nov. 26

I charge you in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, ² to preach the word. Preach it urgently, whether the occasion seems appropriate or not. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, as you patiently teach. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching, but hav-

3:10 Paul's life and character are set up for us in the Bible as our pattern – not just something to be historically studied, plotting where he went on a map, viewing him as a mere historical figure.

3:12 Persecution therefore shouldn't surprise us. It may not involve physical suffering, but in some sense, the unbelieving world will persecute us.

3:15 This is the importance of the Bible – if we believe God's word, we find there the wisdom which leads to salvation. Attention to the Bible is therefore vital for every true Christian, and we ought to be reading the Bible daily.

3:16 *Inspired* – God breathed His word into the Bible writers, so that what they wrote wasn't merely the word of men, but was God speaking through them. This is what makes the Bible unique amongst books; God's word is all we need to prepare us to every good work (v. 17). We need no other books or revelations, as the Bible is enough to completely equip us (v. 17).

4:1 When Christ returns, the dead will be raised and judged, and then God's Kingdom fully established on earth.

4:3 This prophesied corruption of pure Biblical teaching has come true in the many confused and incorrect versions of Christianity which there are. People choose to accept whoever teaches what they naturally want to here – rather than realizing that the Bible is the inspired word of God (3:16), and only believing what they read there. We must be teachable in front of God's word, even if it says things we naturally would prefer were not true. We cannot exalt our ideas above those of God.

ing itching ears, will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own lusts; ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables. ⁵ But you, be sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

Paul Speaks of His Impending Death

⁶ For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure comes.

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. ⁸ From this time forward there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me alone, but also to all those that have loved his appearing. ⁹ Make an effort to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you; for his service is profitable to me. ¹² But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come,

bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; may the Lord render to him according to his works. ¹⁵ You also need to be on guard about him, for he greatly withstood our words. ¹⁶ At my first defence no man stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, that through me the message might be fully proclaimed; and so all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸ The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me to his heavenly kingdom; to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. ¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila and the house of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick. ²¹ Try by all means to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, and Pudens and Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren. ²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

4:8 The reward of the faithful will be given when Christ returns – at “that day” (the “day” of v. 1); and all the true believers will receive their reward at that same time (Heb. 11:39,40). It is not true that when we die, we go to Heaven and receive our reward. We are unconscious until Christ returns; all the faithful will then be resurrected, judged, and given eternal life together in His Kingdom on earth (Mt. 25:34).

4:16 *All forsook me* – As all in Asia turned away from Paul (1:15). Paul died a lonely man, unpopular even with his brethren; but therefore he felt the very real presence of Jesus with him (v. 17).

TITUS

CHAPTER 1 May 28 Nov. 27

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth- the truth which is ultimately all about reverence towards God. ² In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; ³ but in His own time manifested His word in the message with which I was entrusted, according to the commandment of God our Saviour; ⁴ to Titus, my true child after a common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Paul's Advice About the Church in Crete

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was so you would set in order the things that were lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I instructed you- ⁶ if anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. ⁷ For the bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless, not arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunk-

ard or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸ but given to hospitality, a lover of good, self controlled, just, holy, disciplined, ⁹ holding to the faithful word which is according to the doctrine, that he may be able to minister comfort using the sound doctrine and also refute those who oppose it. ¹⁰ For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped. Men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they should not, all for money's sake. ¹² One of their prophets said: Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. ¹³ This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not giving heed to Jewish fables and the commandments of mere men who aim to turn away others from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure; but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him. They are

1:2 Immortality is a hope, promised by God to those in Christ – we therefore have no inherent immortality or 'immortal soul'.

1:9 A church leader must be familiar with Scripture – not just a good presenter or charming personality.

1:14 Much false doctrine entered Christianity as a result of Jewish infiltration (v. 10). The ideas of a personally pre-existent Messiah, the need to keep the Sabbath and Jewish food laws, a personal Satan, demons, life after death in Heaven etc. can all be traced to the influence of an apostate Judaism.

1:15 Thus sometimes, in some areas, the same actions can be performed by people, but for some they are sinful and for others they aren't. It depends upon our worldview, motivations and conscience.

detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

CHAPTER 2 May 28 Nov. 27
*Commands to Men and Women,
 Old and Young*

But you must teach what accords with sound doctrine: ² That older men be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, in patience. ³ That older women likewise be reverent in demeanour, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; ⁴ so that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands; that the preaching of the word of God may not be mocked. ⁶ The younger men likewise exhort to be self-controlled. ⁷ In all things show yourself as an example of good works. In your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ sound speech, that cannot be condemned; so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

⁹ Encourage servants to be submissive to their masters, and to be pleasing to them in all things. Not argumentative, ¹⁰ not petty thieves, but showing integrity in everything; that they in all things may make attractive the doctrine of God our Saviour. ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. ¹² It trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives in this present age, ¹³ as we look for the blessed hope: The manifesting of the glory of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works. ¹⁵ These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one despise your teaching.

CHAPTER 3 May 28 Nov. 27
*The Way of Life Elicited by God's
 Grace*

Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities- to

2:3 "Slanderers" here translates the Greek word *diabolos*, elsewhere translated "devil". This word simply means a slanderer; it doesn't of itself mean a cosmic, supernatural evil being. It can be used about ordinary people, as it was about Judas (Jn. 6:70,71).

2:4, 5 Loving a Christian husband and submitting to him are here paralleled. Submission within marriage can never be demanded; it is motivated by love.

2:10 The doctrines of the Gospel are made attractive to others by our examples, as we translate them into practice. Doctrine as theology will not immediately attract secular people.

2:12 We cannot be passive to God's grace (v. 11) – God's free gift of salvation to us trains us, as we experience and reflect upon it, in a life of good works.

2:14 The giving of Jesus in His death makes us "zealous of good works" in that the sensitive, reflective believer cannot be passive to the cross of Christ. We have to respond in practice to such love and grace.

be obedient, to be eagerly ready to do every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, not to be contentious, but to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men. ³ For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when there appeared the kindness of God our Saviour and His love toward man, ⁵ not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit ⁶ which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. ⁷ This was so that being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This teaching is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have

believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ A divisive person, after a first and second warning, reject, ¹¹ knowing that such a one is perverted and sins, being self-condemned. ¹² When I shall send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, give diligence to come to me at Nicopolis, for there I have decided to winter. ¹³ Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. ¹⁴ And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, to help those in urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. ¹⁵ All that are with me greet you. Greet those that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

3:1 Are we ready to good works, whenever the opportunities present themselves, whether the timing is convenient or not?

3:7 Justification by grace is a major New Testament theme. We are counted as righteous, even though we are not of ourselves, by God's pure grace; and thus we are waiting to inherit eternal life – which we will receive when Jesus returns. The fact we are saved as a pure free gift, and not by our works, should actually be a motivation to do good works (v. 8).

3:10 Keep away from those who cause division. Making divisions and factions between brethren can lead to condemnation (v. 11) – even though it is often justified as love for God.

PHILEMON

CHAPTER 1 May 29 Nov. 28

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker, ² and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house. ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, ⁵ hearing of the love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints. ⁶ I pray that our fellowshiping of your faith may result in our coming to acknowledge every good thing which is in you in Christ. ⁷ Already I had much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you our brother. ⁸ Thus although I have all boldness in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet I prefer to appeal to you for love's sake- I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

Paul's Appeal for Onesimus

¹¹ He was once unprofitable to you but now is profitable to you and to me. ¹² He is as my very heart, and it is he whom I have sent back to you. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel. ¹⁴ But I preferred to do nothing without your consent, so that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever- ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, take him into your home as you would me. ¹⁸ But if he has wronged you at all or owes you something, put that on my bill. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay any debt, even though you owe me your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me profit from you in the

1:10 Paul saw those he converted to Christ as his spiritual children. Onesimus was a runaway slave who had ended in prison in Rome; and yet Paul converted his fellow prisoner. It happened that Onesimus's master, Philemon, had also been converted by Paul (v. 19). And so now Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, persuading Philemon to have mercy upon him. We may feel imprisoned by situations, but we can still reach out to others who are also imprisoned within them, and lead them to Christ.

1:15 Paul is very positive. He suggests that such disagreements and interpersonal failures occur so that the fellowship and unity achieved after reconciliation will be that much stronger.

1:19 We owe our eternal lives to those who converted us; this shows the eternal significance of converting another person to Christ.

Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.
²¹ I write to you having confidence in your obedience, knowing you will do what I ask. ²² But meanwhile also prepare for me a lodging; for I hope that through your prayers I shall be restored to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you; ²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow-workers. ²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

1:22 Paul acted as if his prayers for deliverance for prison were going to be answered – so much so that he, a prisoner, asks someone to prepare a room for him to stay in when he next visits. This is the principle of Mk. 11:24 – to act and feel as if we have already received what we are asking for.

HEBREWS

CHAPTER 1 May 30 Nov. 29

The Supremacy of Christ

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last times spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, on account of whom also He structured the ages. ³ Who being the brightness of His glory and the exact image of His person, upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had accomplished the purification of sins, he then sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven. ⁴ He thus became so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Christ Greater than Angels

⁵ For to which of the angels said He at any time: You are my Son, this day have I begotten you? And again: I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son? ⁶ And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world He says: And let all the angels of God worship him. ⁷ And of the angels He says: Who makes His angels winds, and His servants a flame a fire. ⁸ But of the Son He said: Your

throne, O Mighty One, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. ¹⁰ And: You, Lord, in the beginning did lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. ¹¹ They shall perish, but You continue; and they all shall wear out as does a garment, ¹² and like a cloak You shall roll them up as a garment, and they shall be changed; but You are the same and Your years are without end. ¹³ But of which of the angels has He said at any time: Sit on my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of those that shall inherit salvation?

CHAPTER 2 May 30 Nov. 29

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest attention to the things that we heard, lest we drift away from them. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just

1:3 Jesus was the reflection of God's glory, His image – but not God Himself. He is seated now at the right hand of God, begotten by Him (v. 5), and God is called 'his God' (v. 8). All this language is inappropriate if Jesus is God Himself.

1:5 Here and throughout Hebrews 1 and 2 it is emphasized that Jesus wasn't an Angel. The claim by some that He was is simply non-Biblical.

1:14 All of the Angels are serving God, and involved in caring for us whom He is preparing to inherit eternal life in His Kingdom. All the Angels are obedient to God and doing His work – there are no sinful beings in Heaven.

retribution, ³ how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those that heard; ⁴ God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various powers and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. ⁵ For not to angels did He subject the world to come, of which we speak. ⁶ But one has somewhere testified: What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that You visit him? ⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels, You crowned him with glory and honour and did set him over the works of Your hands; ⁸ You did put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He subjected all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not see all things subjected to him.

The Humanity of Christ

⁹ But we behold him who has been made a little lower than the angels- Jesus- crowned with glory and honour because of his suffering of death, whereby, by the grace of God, he tasted death for every per-

son. ¹⁰ For it became Him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of the same nature. For this cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹² saying: I will declare Your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation will I sing Your praise. ¹³ And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again: Behold, I and the children whom God has given me. ¹⁴ Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same nature; so that through his death he might bring to nothing him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; ¹⁵ and might deliver all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For truly not to angels does he take hold in association; but he took hold of the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore in all things he had to be made like his brothers, so that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitia-

2:4 The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to confirm the spoken word; once the New Testament was completed, there was no need for this confirmation.

2:11 This solidarity between Jesus and us is fundamental; and any teaching that Jesus was God Himself is therefore fundamentally wrong.

2:13 The humanity of Jesus is reflected in the way that He had to put His faith in God.

2:14 *He also himself in like manner partook of the same* – This is saying the same thing five times over. It is a colossal emphasis.

2:14 Sin has the power of death (Rom. 6:23) – here “the devil” has this power. Paul often personifies sin, and here he is personifying it as *the* greatest ‘slanderer’ or ‘false accuser’ which there is. For ‘devil’ as a word means just those things; it doesn’t of itself refer to an evil cosmic being.

tion for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself suffered when tempted, he is able to succour those who are being tempted.

CHAPTER 3 May 31 Nov. 30

The Supremacy of Christ Over Moses

Therefore holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, ² who was faithful to Him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. ³ For he has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in that he that built the house has more honour than the house. ⁴ Every house is built by someone; but He that built all things is God. ⁵ And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken. ⁶ But Christ, as a Son over his own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, remaining firm to the end.

Learn the Lesson from Israel

⁷ Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit

said: Today, if you shall hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, like the time of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was displeased with this generation, and said: They do always err in their heart. They did not know My ways. ¹¹ As I swore in My anger: They shall not enter into My rest. ¹² Brothers, take care, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, causing you to depart from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day by day, so long as it is called today, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to our original confidence, remaining firm to the end. ¹⁵ It is said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion. ¹⁶ For who, having heard, still rebelled? Was it not all those who followed Moses out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was He displeased for forty years? Was it not with those that sinned, whose bod-

2:18 God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), He has no possibility of sinning. But Jesus had temptation in a meaningful, legitimate sense – in that He had the real possibility to sin.

3:6 It's therefore not true that 'once saved, always saved'. We must endure to the end to be saved (v. 14; Mt. 10:22).

3:8 Hard heartedness is a spiritual disease we must avoid. Numbness of conscience, of feeling to and for others, indifference to God, existing rather than living life as God intended... this must be replaced by a softness of heart, a sensitive conscience, a gentleness.

3:13 Sin deceives; hence 2:14 personifies sin as a 'devil', a slanderer or false accuser. We deceive ourselves that we can sin; the Bible continually focuses us upon our internal thought processes, for to change them is the essence of Christianity.

3:17 Our baptism is like leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and entering the wilder-

ies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to those that were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter in because of their unbelief.

CHAPTER 4 May 31 Nov. 30

The Possibility of Rejection

Therefore, while the promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any one of you should seem to have failed to attain it. ² For indeed we have had good tidings preached to us, even as also they did; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard it. ³ For we who have believed do enter into that rest, even as He has said: As I swore in my anger: They shall not enter into My rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: And God rested on the seventh day from all His works. ⁵ And in this place again: They shall not enter into My rest. ⁶ Seeing therefore it remains

that some should enter therein, and they to whom the good tidings were earlier preached failed to enter in because of disobedience; ⁷ He again defines a certain day, a today, saying through David a long time afterwards (in the words already quoted): Today, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts. ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day. ⁹ There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. ¹¹ Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no one fall by the same kind of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature that is not revealed to his sight, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to give account.

ness journey with Israel (1 Cor. 10:1). All that happened to them there, especially their failures, becomes a warning to us.

4:1 It's no bad thing to have a sense of the future we may miss if we turn away. For the Hebrews, that meant turning back to reliance upon their own works and legal obedience.

4:2 The Gospel ("good tidings") preached in the Old Testament was in essence the same as that of the New Testament (Gal. 3:8).

4:9 It could be argued that if a day with God is as 1000 years (2 Pet. 3:8), then the day of rest, the Sabbath, the 7th day, will begin 6 days or 6000 years after creation. Rev. 20:2-7 suggests that the first part of God's Kingdom, the Millennium, will last for 1000 years. According to Biblical chronology, Jesus lived about 4000 years after creation. We are now 2000 years later, making 6000 years. This would mean that the coming of Christ to establish the 'sabbath rest' of the Millennium could be at any time now. This suggestion has some problems but it's stimulating to reflect on it.

The Comfort of Christ's Humanity

¹⁴ Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things, yet did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in our time of need.

CHAPTER 5 May 31 Nov. 30

For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness; ³ and because of it, he is required to offer sacrifices both for his sins and also for the sins of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honour to himself, but only when he is called by God, even as was Aaron. ⁵ So Christ also did not glorify himself to become a high priest, but He that spoke to him: You are my Son. This day have I begotten you. ⁶ As

also He said elsewhere: You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. ⁷ Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard for his Godly fear; ⁸ though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. ⁹ And having been made perfect, he became to all those that obey him the author of eternal salvation, ¹⁰ pronounced by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Spiritual Growth

¹¹ Of him we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For when by reason of the time, you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God; and have become as those in need of milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone that partakes of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, those who by experience of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

4:15 Clearly Jesus was of our nature if He was tempted; for God cannot be tempted (James 1:13).

4:16 The practical result of believing that Jesus was of our nature and tempted like us is that we can confidently pray to God, knowing we have a sympathetic mediator in Heaven who once was human and tempted.

5:2 As stressed in 4:15,16, the atonement 'works' because Jesus in His mortal life was "subject to weakness" as we are; therefore He wasn't God.

5:7-9 Jesus prayed to God, and needed saving from death. He was therefore not God. He 'learned' obedience and was 'perfected' by His sufferings. Such language is inappropriate to God Himself.

5:12-14 When we are baptized, we are "born again" (Jn. 3:3-5), and drink milk; but

CHAPTER 6 Jun. 1 Dec. 1

Therefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on to completion. Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, ² the teaching of baptisms and of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. ³ And if God permits, this will we do.

The Need for Endurance

⁴ For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ but then fell away—it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. ⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is rejected and in danger of being cursed, whose end is to be burned. ⁹ But beloved, though we speak in this manner, we are confident of

we should develop over time so that we are able to move on from basic Gospel teachings [“milk”] to deeper things.

6:5 The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit which were experienced in the first century are the same gifts which will be used in “the age to come”, the Kingdom. These gifts will be poured out again when Christ returns to establish the Kingdom on earth. Therefore they are not possessed at this moment.

6:6 This seems to be specifically talking about those in the first century who possessed the miraculous Holy Spirit gifts; in our time, we can always repent and be assured of forgiveness and acceptance by God.

6:18 *Fled for refuge* – An allusion to the way in which under the Law of Moses, if you accidentally killed someone [thereby committing a sin worthy of death, but not

better things for you; things that accompany salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love which you have shown toward His Name, in that you serve the saints and still do. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you may show the same zeal to have the full assurance of hope until the end. ¹² Do not be lazy, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The Certainty of God’s Promise

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying: Surely blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you. ¹⁵ And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men swear by something greater, and in every dispute of theirs, the oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ Therefore God, determined to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His purpose, confirmed with an oath; ¹⁸ so that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to

lay hold on the hope set before us.¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and passing into the presence beyond the veil;²⁰ into which as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

CHAPTER 7 Jun. 1 Dec. 1

Christ and Melchizedek

For this Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, priest of God Most High, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him;² to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all. He was first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also, King of Jerusalem, which is, King of peace.³ He was without recorded father or mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but presented as being like the Son of God, abiding a priest continually.⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils.⁵ And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have the commandment according to the law to take tithes from the people, that is, of their brothers; even

though they are also descendants of Abraham.⁶ Melchizedek was not descended from Levi by genealogy, but he took tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had received the promises.⁷ But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better.⁸ And here mortal men receive tithes; but there one received them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.⁹ And, so to say, when Abraham paid the tithe, Levi, whose descendants receive the tithe, also paid a tithe.¹⁰ For Levi was yet in the loins of his ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met Abraham.¹¹ Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?¹² For the priesthood being changed requires also a change of the law.¹³ For he of whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord originated from the tribe of Judah. Regarding this tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.¹⁵ And what we say is even more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek

willingly], you could flee to a city of refuge, and remain there until the death of the High Priest; you would be safe in that city, and pronounced free when the High Priest died (Num. 35:24-32). We are in such a situation; the city of refuge and High Priest we have is Christ.

7:3 Melchizedek was not Jesus – he was “*like* the Son of God”, and Jesus was a priest *similar* to him (v. 11). The Hebrew Christians were complaining that Jesus was not from the priestly tribe, Levi, but from Judah (v. 14). The point is that Melchizedek, the great Old Testament priest, had no genealogy [“Without father, without mother”], and yet was still a priest.

there arises another priest,¹⁶ who has been appointed, not on the basis of a law about physical descent, but according to the power of an endless life.¹⁷ For it is witnessed: You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.¹⁸ On the other hand, there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

The End of the Old Priesthood

²⁰ And the Melchizedek priesthood was not without the taking of an oath.²¹ The Levitical priests were made priests without an oath, but he with an oath: The Lord swore and will not change His mind; you are a priest for ever.²² By this also has Jesus become the surety of a better covenant.²³ And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing.²⁴ But he, because he abides for ever, has his priesthood unchangeable.²⁵ Therefore he is able to save for ever those that draw near to God through him,

7:16 *Has been appointed* – Jesus was given eternity by God; He therefore isn't God Himself.

7:18, 19 The Law of Moses has been 'annulled' and is therefore not binding upon us today – it is 'unprofitable'. Throughout this section, the Law of Moses is spoken of in very inferior terms compared to the excellency of salvation in Christ.

7:27 *Offered up Himself* – Jesus was both priest and sacrifice. This indicates how in control He was of the situation as He died, despite the evident pain and distress He was under.

7:28 *Been perfected* – Hardly the language one would expect if Jesus is God Himself.

8:3 Jesus is actively at work in Heaven for us. He offers up our works, our thoughts, our prayers, to God.

seeing he lives forever to make intercession for them.²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us – holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has been exalted higher than the heavens.²⁷ Who needs not to offer up sacrifices daily, like those high priests, first for his own sins and then for those of the people. For this he did once for all, when he offered up himself.²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

CHAPTER 8 Jun. 2 Dec. 2

The Old Covenant Replaced by the New Covenant

Now in the things of which we are talking, the chief point is this. We have such a high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,² a servant of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.³ For every high priest being appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, it is therefore necessary that this high priest also have these to offer.⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at

all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law, ⁵ who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned when he is about to make the tabernacle. For He said: See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

⁶ But now has he obtained a more excellent service, as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ For finding fault with them, He said: Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, so I paid no attention to them. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and in their heart also will I write them, and I will be to them a God and they

shall be to Me a people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying: Know the Lord. For all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will not remember against them. ¹³ In that He said: A new covenant, He has made the first redundant. Now what is becoming redundant and growing old is ready to vanish away.

CHAPTER 9 Jun. 2 Dec. 2

The Mosaic Rituals Pointed Forward to Christ

Now even the first covenant had regulations for Divine service and an earthly sanctuary. ² For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first section, wherein was the candlestick, the table and the bread of the Presence, which is called the Holy Place. ³ And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies. ⁴ This had the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna and Aaron's rod that budded,

8:7 There was 'fault' (v. 8) with the Old Covenant [the Law of Moses]; the New Covenant is "better" (v. 6). We therefore don't need to keep the Law of Moses.

8:9 *Took them by the hand* – This is a picture of a loving Father taking the hand of a child to lead them. This is how gentle God was in leading His people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea – events which represent our exit from this world's ways and passing through the water of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1).

8:13 *Ready to vanish away* – Suggesting that Hebrews was written shortly before the destruction of the temple worship system in AD70.

9:3 When Jesus died, the veil was torn (Mt. 27:51). This symbolized that through His death, not just the High Priest but all in Christ can enter the Most Holy Place and have direct fellowship with God (v. 8); not just once a year on the day of Atonement, but continually.

and the tables of the covenant. ⁵ And above it were cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, of which things we cannot now speak in detail. ⁶ Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests went in continually into the first tabernacle, performing the services. ⁷ But into the second only the high priest went, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people; ⁸ the Holy Spirit indicating that the way into the Holy Place was not yet made manifest whilst the first tabernacle remained ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this system, both gifts and sacrifices were offered which could not make the worshiper perfect as relates to the conscience, ¹⁰ being merely foods, drinks and various washings, earthly ordinances imposed until a time of reformation. ¹¹ But Christ having become a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, ¹² nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, he entered in once for all into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, could sanctify to the cleansing of the flesh- ¹⁴ how much more

shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And because of this, he is the mediator of a new covenant; that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where a will is of power, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. ¹⁷ For a will is of force where there has been death; it does not have power while he that made it lives. ¹⁸ Therefore even the first covenant has not been dedicated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying: This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded for you. ²¹ Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. ²² And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood; and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. ²³ It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed

9:19 Water, scarlet and hyssop all feature in the events of Christ's crucifixion, which the Old Testament rituals pointed forward to.

9:22 *Almost* – Blood was required for the forgiveness of sins, so animals had to be offered. But there were cases where the Law of Moses stipulated that if someone was too poor to offer an animal, they could offer grain or flour. This shows how although

with these things, but the heavenly things themselves had better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are only copies of the true ones; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the actual presence of God for us. ²⁵ Nor must he offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the Holy Place year by year with blood not his own. ²⁶ Or else he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end of the ages has he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed to men once to die and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having once been offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him.

CHAPTER 10 Jun. 3 Dec. 3
The Weakness of the Mosaic System

For the law having only a shadow of the good things to come, not the reality of the things, can never

with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those that draw near. ² Else would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshipers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in that sacrificial system there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. ⁴ For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. ⁵ Therefore when he came into the world, he said: Sacrifice and offering You did not want, but a body did You prepare for me. ⁶ In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷ Then said I: Behold, I come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do Your will, O God. ⁸ First he said: Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor did You have pleasure in them (all of which are offered according to the law). ⁹ Then he said: Behold, I come to do Your will. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰ By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ

God respects His own principles, He is so eager to grant forgiveness and have fellowship with people, even if their personal circumstances preclude them from serving Him in the way He ideally requires.

9:27 After death we die and are unconscious until Christ comes, but this period of death is like a sleep; after we die, our next conscious moment will be the return of Christ and standing before Him at judgment.

9:28 *To bring salvation* – We will only be fully ‘saved’ when Christ returns and gives us an immortal body and inheritance in His Kingdom on earth.

10:4 However, God does state in the Old Testament that He forgave people their sins when they offered sacrifice. They were forgiven not because God was pleased with the blood as red liquid; but on account of the fact that it pointed forward to the future sacrifice of Christ, and because it showed they recognized that sin brings death. By placing their hand on the head of the sacrifice, they accepted it as their representative.

once for all. ¹¹ And every priest indeed stands day by day serving, and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; ¹³ from that time forward expectantly waiting until his enemies be made the footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering he has perfected for ever those that are sanctified. ¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us. For after saying: ¹⁶ This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and on their minds I will write them; ¹⁷ then is added: And their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. ¹⁸ Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin required.

The Practical Result of Christ's Sacrifice

¹⁹ Therefore brothers, having bold-

ness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹ and having a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water; ²³ let us hold fast the confession of our hope so that it does not waver. For He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the habit of some is; but rather encouraging one another, and so much the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Do Not Go Back

²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after what we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more

10:12 The point is frequently made that Jesus now *sits* at the right hand of God, whereas the Mosaic priests *stood* as they did their work (v. 11). However, in Acts 7:55, Stephen saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God, interceding for him. This shows that even now in His Heavenly glory, Jesus has passion and emotion; He so feels for us as we suffer on earth that at times He *stands up* in order to plead more powerfully for us.

10:15 The Bible is written by the inspiration process, whereby God's Holy Spirit was in the Bible writers, and what they wrote was therefore God's word. In this sense we can read the Old Testament passage which is here quoted (v. 16) and feel the Holy Spirit testifying to us personally in this age.

10:22 *Our bodies washed* – A reference to baptism into Christ which enables us to acceptably approach God.

10:24 We must take time to “consider” how we may encourage others to do good. This requires reflection, thinking about who others are, their contexts, their possibilities, and provoking them to do good rather than evil. Christianity cannot be lived alone with no reference to others.

10:26 Wilful sin involves a conscious blasphemy against the blood of Christ (v. 29); it

a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸ A man that set at nothing Moses' law died without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, shall be considered those who have trodden underfoot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant (with which they were sanctified) an unholy thing, and have insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him that said: Vengeance belongs to Me, I will reward. And again: The Lord shall judge His people. ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. ³² But call to remembrance the former days, when you were first enlightened. You endured a hard struggle, with sufferings; ³³ partly in that you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly in that you became companions of those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you had both compassion on them that were in bonds, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your own property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and

an enduring one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. ³⁷ For yet a very little while, and he that comes shall come and shall not delay further. ³⁸ But My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul will have no pleasure in him. ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

CHAPTER 11 Jun. 4 Dec. 4

The Definition of Faith

Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction about invisible things. ² For on account of their faith, the elders had witness borne to them. ³ By faith we understand that the ages have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which appear.

Abel, Enoch and Noah

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God

doesn't refer to the temporary failures which we all commit. For we confess continually that we still commit sin (1 Jn. 1:8).

10:33 *Companions* – Our sufferings aren't only what we ourselves experience, but if we are truly connected with others, then we suffer also in their sufferings.

10:39 *Shrink back* – The rejected will shrink away from Christ when He comes, being ashamed from before His presence (1 Jn. 2:28). Those who love Him will in faith go towards Him, confident in His love despite being aware of their sins.

11:3 Matter was created – and all the science in the world cannot explain the ultimate question of origins. There had to be a point of ultimate creation, which implies God.

11:4 Abel offered animal blood to God, whereas Cain ignored the principle of 9:22 and offered just vegetables. Abel's faith was therefore in that God would forgive sin

bearing witness in respect to his gifts; and through it he, though being dead, still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was snatched away so that he should not be killed; and he was not found, because God had taken him away. He had witness borne to him, that before his being snatched away he had been well pleasing to God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him. For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those that seek after Him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned concerning things not seen as yet, moved with Godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Abraham and Sarah

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed, and left for a place which he was to receive for an inheritance afterwards. And he left not knowing where he was going to. ⁹ By

faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as yet not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹ By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude- innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them, and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things make it obvious that they are seeking after a country of their own. ¹⁵ And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a bet-

because of what that blood represented – maybe he understood something of the future sacrifice of Christ, and showed his faith in this.

11:5 It seems Enoch was snatched away from death by persecution, and was not found by his enemies. But the first person to be given eternal life was Christ (1 Cor. 15:23). So Enoch wasn't given eternal life in Heaven; he too must've died after his deliverance.

11:7 Noah so believed God's word that he could imagine the future flood (v. 1), although at the time he had never seen rain. His faith and related imagination was so vivid that he feared greatly and therefore built the ark.

11:11 When Sarah first heard that she would have a child, she laughed in disbelief (Gen. 18:12). So the "faith" of which we read in this chapter wasn't simple nor automatic, it had to be developed.

11:13 The promises were of the eternal possession of the earth in God's Kingdom. These people died without having received that; therefore, because God keeps His promises, they will be resurrected when Christ returns and given what God promised. Therefore they didn't go to Heaven when they died to receive the promised salvation.

ter country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed of them- to be called their God. For He has prepared for them a city. ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac. Yes, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. ¹⁸ Even he to whom it was said: In Isaac shall your seed be called. ¹⁹ Abraham accounted that God is able to raise up, even from the dead. From where he did, figuratively, receive him back.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, when his end was near, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Moses

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. ²⁴ By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing instead to share ill treatment with the people of God, rather than enjoy

the pleasures of sin for a short time; ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. For he looked to the greater reward. ²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king. For he endured, because he saw Him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborns should not touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as if on dry land, which the Egyptians in trying to do were swallowed up.

Joshua, Rahab and Many Others

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace. ³² And what more shall I say? For time will run out if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets. ³³ Those who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead by a resurrection; and others were tortured, not ac-

11:27 *Not fearing* – But Ex. 2:14,15 says: “Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh”. We can conclude that Moses did have fear, and yet his faith overcame that fear. Faith wasn't automatic nor easy for him, but involved much struggle (v. 11 note).

cepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ And others were tested by mockings and whippings, yes, also by bonds and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tested, they were killed with the sword. They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸ (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth. ³⁹ And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, did not receive the fulfilment of the promise; ⁴⁰ God having provided some better thing involving us, that without us they should not be made perfect.

CHAPTER 12 Jun. 5 Dec. 3

Think About Jesus

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud

of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the author and completer of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has been sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Think on him that endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴ In your striving against sin you have yet to resist to the point of shedding your blood.

The Reason for Suffering

⁵ You have forgotten the word of encouragement which reasons with you as with sons: My son, do not regard lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor become faint when you are reproved by Him. ⁶ For the Lord

11:40 God's plan is that all the faithful receive the promises (eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth) at the same time – at the return of Christ, when the dead will be resurrected, judged and given immortality here on earth. It's therefore not true that one believer dies, goes to Heaven and gets rewarded, 100 years later another one does, etc. The true Christian hope is that of bodily resurrection from the dead when Christ returns to establish His Kingdom.

12:1 The faithful listed in chapter 11 are as it were a great crowd who are cheering us on as we run our race towards the Kingdom.

12:3 *Think on Him* – We are to live life always “looking to Jesus” (v. 2). But how many times each day do we think of Him? We should be reading something of Him each day, reflecting on Him and His words, so that His example is the constant guide for our lives.

12:4 An allusion to Jesus sweating as it were drops of blood as He battled temptation in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:44).

12:5-11 Suffering comes from God, and in the context of Christian life it is given in order to develop us spiritually. The idea that good things come from God and bad things from Satan is therefore wrong. Nothing is chance or bad luck in our lives. God is in control and all negative things occur for our ultimate good as believers. This takes some faith to accept.

disciplines those whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.⁷ Endure your sufferings as a father's chastening; it shows how God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not chastise?⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have been made partakers, then aren't you illegitimate children and not real sons?⁹ Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them respect; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but He for our profit, so that we may be partakers of His holiness.¹¹ All chastening seems for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yields peaceable fruit to those that have been exercised thereby- the fruit of righteousness.¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees,¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be disabled further, but rather be healed.¹⁴ Follow after peace with all men, and the holiness without which no one shall see the Lord.¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by

it many are defiled.¹⁶ Ensure that no one is an immoral or Godless person like Esau, who for one meal sold his own birthright.¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no conditions for a change of mind, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Zion Rather Than Sinai

¹⁸ For you have not come to a mountain that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words which they that heard them begged that no more words should be spoken to them.²⁰ For they could not endure that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned.²¹ And so fearful was the appearance that Moses said: I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.²² But you have come to association with mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels,²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,²⁴ and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks

12:14 Our ultimate hope is to "see the Lord". Job in the Old Testament rejoiced in this same hope – that in the very end, he would see God face to face (Job 19:26).

12:17 It would seem from this that last minute repentance before the judgment seat, even with tears, will not change our destiny – now are our great days of opportunity.

12:24 The blood of Christ speaks to us; we cannot be passive to the fact Christ died for us. It is an imperative and call to action – and we should not refuse that voice of the cross (v. 25).

better things than that of Abel. ²⁵ See you do not reject him that speaks. For if they did not escape when they rejected Him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that warns from heaven. ²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth, but now He has promised, saying: Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also heaven. ²⁷ And further: Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.

CHAPTER 13 Jun. 6 Dec. 6

Love in Practice

Let love of the believers continue. ² Do not forget to show love to strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ³ Remember those that are in bonds, as if you were bound with them; those that are ill treated, as being yourselves also

in the body. ⁴ Let marriage be held in respect among all, and let the marital bed be undefiled. For fornicators and adulterers God will judge. ⁵ Be free from the love of money, content with such things as you have. For God Himself has said: I will in no way fail you, neither will I in any way forsake you. ⁶ So that with good courage we can say: The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What shall man do to me? ⁷ Remember those that had the rule over you, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. ⁹ Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings. For it is good that the heart be established by grace- not with food laws, which have not profited those who have been so occupied with them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the Holy Place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside of the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through

12:28 If we are motivated by grace, in response to the fact God has graciously given us the Kingdom, then our works of response on this basis are pleasing to God.

13:2 Abraham was unaware that the strangers he entertained were Angels (Gen. 18:1-16). It's possible that we may meet Angels today in the form of people who appear as ordinary humans.

13:3 This is a high challenge – to be so closely connected with our brethren that we feel their sufferings as if they are happening to us.

13:8 It isn't true that Jesus was loving and mild when on earth, but will return in angry judgment. The Jesus who loved children, with whom fallen men and women felt at ease, the sinners' friend, who delighted in grace and forgiveness... is the same Jesus who now looks down upon us, and whom we shall meet at the day of judgment.

his own blood, suffered outside of the gate. ¹³ Let us therefore go to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. ¹⁴ For we do not have here a permanent city, but we seek after one which is yet to come. ¹⁵ Through him, therefore, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God; that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. ¹⁷ Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive; for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Final Requests and Greetings

¹⁸ Pray for us. For we are persuaded that we have a good conscience,

desiring to live honourably in all things. ¹⁹ And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. ²⁰ Now the God of peace, who brought from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, through the blood of an eternal covenant, ²¹ perfect you in every good thing to do His will; working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²² But I urge you, brothers, bear with this word of encouragement; for I have written to you in few words. ²³ Be informed that our brother Timothy has been set at liberty; along with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. ²⁴ Greet all those that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy greet you. ²⁵ Grace be with you all. Amen.

13:15 We should be praising God all the time. This might be through singing or humming Christian music to ourselves, or simply having a thankful heart for everything, even the very [apparently] smallest things.

13:19 *The sooner* – The more they prayed (v. 18), the more quickly he would be released. Prayer really does change things, and therefore we should be in the habit of asking others to pray for us, and praying for them too.

JAMES

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 7 Dec. 7

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the dispersion, greeting. ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations, ³ knowing that the proving of your faith works patience. ⁴ And let patience have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproaching, and it shall be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, never doubting. For he that doubts is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. ⁷ Do not let that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ He is a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways. ⁹ Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, ¹⁰ but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with the scorching wind and withers the grass, and the flower of it falls and the beauty of its appearance perishes. So also shall the rich man fade away in his business.

Temptation and God's Word

¹² Blessed is the man that endures temptation. For when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted: I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and He tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each man is tempted, when he is dragged away by his own lust and enticed. ¹⁵ Then the lust, when it has conceived, carries sin; and the sin, when it is fully grown, brings death. ¹⁶ Be not deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation nor shifting shadow. ¹⁸ Of His own will He gave us birth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creations. ¹⁹ You know this, my beloved brothers! But let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. ²⁰ For the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. ²¹ Wherefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.

1:5 The allusion here is to Solomon, who when given the choice of whatever he wanted, chose wisdom – and therefore so much else was added to him.

1:13 Jesus was tempted (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15); yet God cannot be. Therefore, Jesus cannot be God in person.

1:14, 15 Sin and temptation come from within; we are tempted by our own desires, not by any cosmic being called Satan. We are therefore totally responsible for our sin, and the result of sin is therefore quite rightly death.

1:18 The word of God is likened to seed in Lk. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23. This is what has the power to birth the spiritual man within us. We should therefore be quick to hear it (:19).

Self-examination

²² But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your selves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like to a man seeing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he sees himself and goes away and immediately forgets what manner of man he was. ²⁵ But he that looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues, being not a hearer that forgets, but a doer that works, this man shall be blessed in what he does. ²⁶ If anyone thinks himself to be religious while he does not hold his tongue but rather just deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: To visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 8 Dec. 8***Surface Level Judgment***

My brothers, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ² For

if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; ³ and you have regard to him that wears the fine clothing, and say: Sit here in a good place; and you say to the poor man: Stand there, or, Sit under my footstool; ⁴ do you not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those that are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those that love him? ⁶ But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the courts? ⁷ Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name by which you are called? ⁸ However, if you fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture: You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well! ⁹ But if you show favouritism, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one

1:22 We who read the Bible can delude ourselves that this very process will save us; but unless there is a direct connection between our Bible reading and concrete action, it will not help us at all. True Bible reading as God intends will elicit self-examination and an abiding awareness of our true spiritual state (:24). If it doesn't, then we are actually deceiving ourselves by the process of Bible reading into thinking we are religious when actually we are vain (:26).

2:5 If we are "heirs of the Kingdom", then God has promised it to us. We haven't yet fully received it. Gal. 3:27-29 says that we are heirs of the promises made to Abraham if we are baptized into Christ.

2:6 The Christians whom James was writing to were being abused by those richer than them; and they were taking out their hurt on those who were poorer than them. This is a psychological classic; but in Christ we are to break the cycle of abuse by *not* taking out our hurt on those over whom we in our turn have some advantage and human superiority.

2:7 The Name of God and Jesus is called upon us by our baptism into the Name.

point, he is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For He that said: Do not commit adultery, also said: Do not kill. So if you do not commit adultery but if you kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and act as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to whomsoever has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Faith and Works

¹⁴ My brothers, what good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them: Go in peace, be warmed and filled! And yet you do not give them the things needful to the body—what does it profit? ¹⁷ Even so, faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself. ¹⁸ Yes, a man will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works and I, by my works, will show you my faith. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one! You do well. The demons also believe and shudder. ²⁰ But, O vain man, do you need evidence that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² You saw that

faith worked together with his works, and so by works was faith perfected. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled which said: And Abraham believed God and it was accredited to him as righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith. ²⁵ And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 9 Dec. 9

The Tongue

Be not many teachers. My brothers, realize that we teachers shall receive heavier judgment. ² For in many things we all make others stumble. If any does not cause stumbling by his words, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. ³ Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. ⁴ Behold the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, they are all the same turned about by a very small rudder, wherever the impulse of the steersman wills. ⁵ So the tongue also is a little member,

2:10 This is the fallacy of keeping just part of the Mosaic Law, e.g. the feasts or Sabbaths.

2:25 In this unusual case, telling a lie was actually an act of faith.

2:26 There is no contradiction here with Paul's teaching of justification by faith without works. If we really believe that by God's grace we shall surely be saved, on the basis of His grace alone, then we cannot be passive to this; if we really believe this, we will concretely *do* something in response to such total grace.

and boasts great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by Gehenna. ⁷ For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But the tongue no one can tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. ⁹ With this we bless the Lord and the Father, and with this we curse men, even though they are made after the likeness of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does the fountain send forth from the same spout both fresh and bitter water? ¹² My brothers, can a fig tree yield olives or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh.

True Wisdom

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show his works in his good life, in meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your heart, do not boast about it and deny the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not a wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and division are, there is confusion and every vile deed. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is most importantly pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those that make peace.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 9 Dec. 9

A Call to Repentance

What causes the wars and fights among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasures that

3:6 Our words really can lead us to eternal condemnation; for by our words we will be either condemned or saved (Mt. 12:37). The control of our thinking and words is so utterly vital; and it is these things which are the essence of Christianity.

3:13 Good works aren't so much the occasional dramatic act, but a life lived in wisdom and humility.

3:16 Division between believers comes ultimately from jealousy and rivalry (:14; 4:1) which begins within the mind. Personal spiritual mindedness is therefore so important. Only because this isn't achieved do we end up with divisions. And division results in "vile deeds". Yet such division was being justified by the immature Christians as "wisdom" (:15). Hence James has to say that this isn't wisdom at all, as true wisdom leads to unity and gentle behaviour between believers (:17).

4:1 Sin comes from within the human heart, not from some external cosmic being. James draws a connection between the 'wars' within the mind of the individual weak believer, and the 'wars' between groups of believers within the church. Divisions start because individuals aren't single-heartedly devoted to spiritual things. He repeatedly criticizes double mindedness (:8). James constantly highlights the human mind, processes deep within the heart of the individual, as the real arena of spiritual conflict – not in Heaven or 'out there' in the supposed 'spirit world'.

war within you? ² You want what you don't have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive because you ask with the wrong motivation, you want only what will give you pleasure.

⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

⁵ Or do you think that the scripture says in vain: The Spirit that dwells in us yearns jealously. ⁶ But He gives more grace. Wherefore the scripture said: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁷ Therefore, be subject to God and resist the Devil,

and the Devil will flee from you.

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you doubleminded sinners, and purify your hearts. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you.

¹¹ Brothers, do not speak evil against each other. He that speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not

a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² One only is the lawgiver and judge. He who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge your neighbour? ¹³ Come now, you that say that today or the next day we will go into this city and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. ¹⁴ Whereas you do not know what shall be the next day. What is your life? For you are as a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ For you ought to say: If the Lord wills it, we shall both live and do this or that. ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 10 Dec. 10

A Call for Justice

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten. ³ Your gold and your silver are rusted, and their rust shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. You have laid up your treasure in the last days. ⁴ Indeed, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the

4:4 We are as it were married to Christ; any unfaithfulness to Christ is therefore as adultery.

4:15 We should therefore unashamedly say "God willing" when talking about our plans, no matter if others look at us strangely.

4:16 Here we have the principle of knowledge bringing responsibility to Divine judgment.

5:3 If we claim to live as if we expect Christ to return at any moment, it's inappropriate to be saving up wealth for future enjoyment.

ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts only for a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned, you have killed the righteous, even though he does not oppose you.

A Call for Patience

⁷ Therefore brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. ⁸ Be you also patient. Establish your hearts. For the coming of the Lord is at hand! ⁹ Brothers, do not complain about each other, so that you are not judged. Behold! The judge stands at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers, take for an example the suffering and patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we call them blessed that endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the Lord is full of pity and is merciful.

Prayer and Healing

¹² But above all things, my brothers, do not make oaths. Neither by

the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yes, mean yes, and your no, mean no, so that you will not fall under judgment. ¹³ Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. ¹⁹ My brothers. If anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back: ²⁰ let him know, that he who turns back a sinner from the error of his way, he shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

5:9 If we believe that any moment now Christ will return and judge us, we will not be critical and condemnatory of our brethren.

5:11 Even when it seemed God wasn't answering Job's prayers nor helping him, He was in fact very pitiful of Job.

5:17 The context suggests that Elijah's prayers for a drought were because he believed this would lead Israel to repentance and forgiveness; and he himself suffered terribly as a result of that drought, coming near to starvation.

5:20 The prayers and spiritual efforts of a third party really can lead to a believer's forgiveness and salvation – although see 1 Jn. 5:16,17. If our prayers and efforts for others can have such eternal consequence – we should, like Paul, be praying for our brethren all the time (:15).

1 PETER

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 11 Dec. 11

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen ones who are temporary dwellers of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, to be obedient and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

The Purpose of Trials

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you; ⁵ you who by the power of God are guarded through faith to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ Wherein you greatly rejoice; though now, for a little while, if need be, you have suffered many trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith (more precious than gold that perishes though it is proved

by fire) may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ whom you love though you have not seen him. On whom you believe, though now you do not see him, and rejoice greatly with joy inexpressible and full of glory; ⁹ receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰ Concerning this salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you; ¹¹ searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point to, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow them. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. Which things the Angels desire to look into. ¹³ Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope completely on the grace that is to be brought to you at

1:4 God and Jesus are in Heaven, preparing for us a wonderful, eternal future. But we will only receive this at the last day when Jesus returns (:5). We therefore don't go to Heaven on death to receive that future, but Christ brings it to us on earth when He returns.

1:7 The hard experiences of life are like fire applied to us, purging out the dross, and making our dirty piece of rock turn into pure gold. It's hard to imagine, but we will be "praised" by Jesus at the last day – just as He enthusiastically commends the faithful for the good things they did which they had forgotten (Mt. 25:36,37). This is how positively Jesus views us.

1:13 Our faith isn't to be a hobby, but our complete focus in life should be upon the grace which will result in us being given eternity when Christ returns.

the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As children of obedience, do not be conformed to the lusts you had in your former ignorance. ¹⁵ But like He who called you is holy, be you yourselves holy in all manner of living. ¹⁶ Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.

Our Response to the Gospel

¹⁷ And if you call on Him as Father, who without partiality judges according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear. ¹⁸ Knowing you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake, ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. So that your faith and hope might be in God. ²² Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth to sincere love of the brothers, fervently love one another from the

heart. ²³ Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and endures. ²⁴ For, All flesh is as grass and all the glory of it as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word of good news which was preached to you.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 12 Dec. 12

Therefore, put away all wickedness, deceit, hypocrisies, envies and all evil speaking. ² Be as newborn babes, longing for the spiritual milk which is without deceit, so that you may grow thereby to salvation, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The New Temple

⁴ Come to him as to a living stone, indeed rejected by men but chosen by God and precious. ⁵ You as living stones are being built up into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Because it is contained in scripture: Look, I lay in Zion a chief corner

1:20 Jesus didn't physically exist before He was born, but He was known by God within God's plan, just as we were also (Eph. 1:4).

1:22 The result of believing "the truth" will be sincere love of our fellow believers; we can't discern and believe "the truth" and remain disengaged from others, otherwise we haven't really understood "the truth".

2:2 We are born again in baptism (Jn. 3:3-5) and afterwards we should desperately desire the milk of God's word; we need to get in the habit of daily Bible reading as soon as possible.

2:5 God's intention is that we should be a priesthood (:9). Priests serve others and empower them to give to God; this should be the focus of our lives. Most religions teach that just some religious leaders are the priests; but we are all to be priests.

stone, chosen, precious. And he that believes in him shall not stumble. ⁷ Therefore, for you that believe he is precious. But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, ⁸ a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. For being disobedient, they stumble at the word; to which they also were appointed. ⁹ But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may show forth the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Who in times past were no people but now are the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as temporary residents and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Our Attitude to Those in Authority

¹³ Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Whether to the king, as supreme leader, ¹⁴ or to governors as those sent by him to punish evil-doers and for the praise

of those that do well. ¹⁵ For so is the will of God, that by well-doing you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ As free and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. ¹⁸ Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if because of conscience toward God one endures grief - suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when you sin and are beaten, you shall take it patiently? But if when you do well, and suffer, you shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹ For this were you called. Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps. ²² He did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ Who, when he was insulted, did not retaliate with insults, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to Him that judges righteously. ²⁴ Who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died to sin, might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵ For you were going astray like sheep, but are now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

2:9 These are the very terms used about the Old Testament people of Israel (Ex. 19:6). By baptism into Christ we become the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29) and are thus a new, spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16). We should therefore feel our national identity as "spiritual Israel" rather than whatever nation we were physically born into.

2:21 The cross and sufferings of Christ are therefore not just something to be admired from a distance as we may admire a picture or be intrigued by distant history. He there is our very real pattern and inspiration in daily life.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 13 Dec. 13***Husbands and Wives***

In like manner, you wives be in subjection to your husbands. That, even if any do not obey the word, they may without the word be gained by the behaviour of their wives, ² seeing your chaste behaviour coupled with fear. ³ Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; ⁴ but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great value. ⁵ For after this manner, in the past, the holy women who trusted in God also made themselves beautiful by submitting to their husbands. ⁶ As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. Whose children you now are, if you do well and are not put in fear by any terror. ⁷ You husbands, in like manner live with your wife with understanding, giving honour to the woman as to the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers are not impeded.

A Gracious Life

⁸ Finally, all of you, be likeminded, compassionate, loving as brothers, sensitive, humble. ⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but instead give blessing. For this were you called, that you should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For he that would love life and see good days, let him restrain his tongue from evil and restrain his lips so they speak no lies. ¹¹ And let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Coping with Persecution

¹³ And who is he that will harm you, if you be zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord, always ready to give answer to every man that asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear. ¹⁶ Having a good con-

3:1 Peter writes here speaking about Christian marriage, in which both parties are heirs and therefore hope for eternal life (v. 7). He tacitly recognizes that no marriage will be perfect and that the man will at times fail the huge challenge of loving his wife as Christ loved and died for the church (Eph. 5:25).

3:6 Sarah is only recorded as calling Abraham her "Lord" when we are told that she thought this about him in her heart (Gen. 18:12). In fact she said this in disbelief in the promises of God – in her heart she initially thought God's promises of her and Abraham having a child couldn't come true because "my Lord" was so old and impotent (Rom. 4:19). However we see how both spirituality and unspirituality can exist within the heart of believers at the same time; and God here chose to focus upon the positive. His positivity about His children is an example to us, as well as a comfort.

3:7 Peter here assumes that believing husbands and wives will be regularly praying together; although those prayers will lose power if there is marital strife.

science, that, when you are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ. ¹⁷ For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. ¹⁸ Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. ¹⁹ In which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ that previously were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was prepared. Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ Which is also a true likeness of how baptism does now save you: not the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ²² Who is the one at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, Angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 13 Dec. 13

Living to God

Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also

with the same mind. For he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. ² You should no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. ³ For we have spent enough of our past lifetime doing the will of the Gentiles- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. ⁴ In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, and so speak evil of you- you ⁵ who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead! ⁶ For to this end was the gospel preached to those now dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. ⁷ But the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be of sound mind and sober in prayer, ⁸ above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves. For love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to each other without complaining; ¹⁰ according as each has received a gift, minister it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, let him speak as if it were oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as

3:21 Baptism is therefore related to salvation; by being in Christ we have a clear conscience before God because all our sins really are forgiven and we are counted by Him as being His own Son, the perfect Lord Jesus.

4:4 We shouldn't be surprised if the world views us as strange and even gets aggressive with us because of our refusal to do the sinful things which they do. What they don't appreciate is that we have to give account to God for our lives, whereas they simply live and die for ever (:5).

4:10 Whatever gifts we receive from God, we are given them only to give them as gifts to others. These gifts may not be financial; but the poor need not think they have been given no gifts. We have each been given gifts by God.

with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To whom belongs the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Encouragement for the Last Days

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. ¹³ But inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice! That at the revelation of his glory you also may rejoice with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters. ¹⁶ But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in this name. ¹⁷ For the time of judgment begins at the house of God, and if we are judged first, what shall be the outcome of those that do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? ¹⁹ Therefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God,

commit their souls in doing well to a faithful Creator.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 13 Dec. 13

Elders in the Church

The elders among you I urge (I who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who is also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed), ² tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not reservedly but willingly, according to the will of God; not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. ³ Neither lord it over those entrusted to you, but make yourselves examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, you shall receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. ⁵ Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder men. Yes, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another. For God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; ⁷ casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

Stand Firm

⁸ Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the Devil, like a roaring lion,

4:19 Whilst we should be confident of our final salvation by God's grace, we should always be aware that we are totally unworthy of this; thus we will only be barely saved as it were, scraping in by grace alone – in one sense. This should give us an appropriate humility and grace in how we relate to others.

5:2 Shepherding the flock should never ever be motivated by a desire for money or material benefit.

5:4 The reward is given when Christ returns, at the resurrection; going to Heaven at death isn't taught in the Bible.

5:8 The "devil" or "false accuser" here seems to refer to the power which was causing

walks about seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Stand firm in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brothers who are in the world. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. ¹¹ To Him be the dominion for ever

and ever. Amen. ¹² By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it! ¹³ She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you, and so does Marcus my son. ¹⁴ Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all that are in Christ.

the “sufferings” of the Christians to whom Peter was writing (:9); and this was clearly the Roman empire, rather than any cosmic being.

5:9 We are strengthened in our sufferings by realizing that in fact they aren’t unique to us, but somewhere, another believer is going through the same in essence. This is how Christian fellowship and engaging meaningfully with other believers on a spiritual rather than a merely human level can give such strength.

2 PETER

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 14 Dec. 14

Spiritual Growth

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those that have obtained the same precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ. ² Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. ³ Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the precise and correct knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue. ⁴ Whereby He has granted to us His precious and exceedingly great promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust. ⁵ Yes and for this very cause you on your part should show all diligence; to your faith add virtue, and to virtue, knowledge. ⁶ And to your knowledge self-control, and to your self-control patience, and to your patience, reverence toward God. ⁷ And to your reverence toward God, brotherly kindness, and to your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the precise and correct knowledge of our Lord Je-

sus Christ. ⁹ For he that lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. ¹⁰ Wherefore brothers, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you shall never stumble. ¹¹ For thus shall be richly supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Certainty of Truth

¹² Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth which is with you. ¹³ And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. ¹⁴ Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle comes swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ indicated to me. ¹⁵ Yes, I will give diligence that at every time you may be able after my death to call these things to remembrance. ¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received from God the Father honour and glory, delivered to him by such a

1:3 “Precise and correct knowledge” is important; it therefore does matter what and how we believe and understand God and His word. It’s not that academic purity of understanding is important in itself; but this “correct knowledge” is useful for practical Godliness. This knowledge produces fruit in practice (:8).

1:5, 6 There is an upward spiral in spiritual life, just as there is a downward spiral. One spiritual strength is connected with and leads to others.

voice from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ¹⁸ And this voice we heard, delivered out of heaven, when we were with him on the holy mount. ¹⁹ And we have the word of prophecy made yet more sure; to which you do well that you take heed, as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day-star arises in your hearts. ²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 14 Dec. 14

False Teachers

But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall follow their destructive ways, by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be blasphemed. ³ And

in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you. Their sentence now from of old does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber.

Old Testament Examples of Judgment

⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved until judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, having made them an example to those that should live ungodly lives; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, distressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, tormented his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds): ⁹ therefore the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out

1:21 The Bible was written by inspiration of God – the writers were moved by God’s Spirit so that the words they wrote weren’t merely their private views, but the word of God. This is why the Bible is so unique and needs to be read and meditated upon daily. The word of God is to be the light for us in the darkness of this world, until the “day” of Christ’s return dawns (:19).

2:1 *Among the people* – The people of Israel. The following examples in this chapter are therefore taken from the history of Israel in the Old Testament. The ‘angels’ or messengers that sinned and were thrown down into the earth refer to the men led by the false prophet Korah who were swallowed up into the earth (Num. 16:32).

2:7 We get the impression from the Old Testament that Lot was spiritually weak; but we must be careful how we judge Bible characters because here we read that Lot was in fact righteous and although he was well involved in the life of Sodom, he was deeply grieved for their wickedness. He is a type of the faithful living in the world of the very last days (Lk. 17:28-32).

of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment to the day of judgment.

Characteristics of False Teachers

¹⁰ Chief among these are those that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement and despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries. ¹¹ Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not dare bring before the Lord an injurious accusation against them. ¹² But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, speak reproachfully in matters of which they are ignorant; they shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wages of wrong-doing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, spots and blemishes, reveling in their deceivings while they feast with you. ¹⁴ Having eyes full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness, children of cursing. ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wrongdoing. ¹⁶ But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spoke with a man's voice

and hindered the madness of the prophet. ¹⁷ These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error; ¹⁹ promising them liberty, while they are in fact slaves to corruption. For of whom a person is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹ For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit and a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 15 Dec. 15

Prophecy of the Last Days

This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write to you; and

2:14 *A heart exercised* – The Bible uses “the heart” to refer to the mind. Our mind thinks in regular patterns; we are to exercise it, but not with unspiritual thoughts.

2:21 This proves there is no such thing as universal salvation, nor ‘once saved always saved’. We who have believed have a very real possibility of failure, and we should always be aware of this.

3:1 Remembering is a major theme of Peter’s letters. It seems that his initial audience had heard the Gospel but were forgetting it; this problem is seen in the way Paul writes too. We need to regularly remind ourselves of the basic Gospel.

in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance: ² that you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles. ³ Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying: Where is the promise of his coming? For from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Judgment to Come

⁵ For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; ⁶ by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. ⁷ But the heavens that now are and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸ But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand

years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. Then the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ¹¹ Seeing that these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be- in all holy living and reverence toward God. ¹² Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. ¹³ But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. ¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight. ¹⁵ And consider, that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according

3:6, 7 The physical planet wasn't destroyed by the flood, but the wicked human system upon earth was. 'Heaven and earth' is a phrase used in the Bible to refer to a system of things – the rulers are likened to the heavens, e.g. the sun, moon and stars refer to the fathers of Israel; and the earth refers to the ordinary people. The literal heaven and earth won't be destroyed (Ecc. 1:4), but the system of human evil which is currently here will be. The new heavens and earth will therefore be "righteous" (v. 13).

3:15 This along with v. 9 could imply that God is delaying the return of Christ because He is so passionate for human repentance, so that as many as possible may live eternally in His Kingdom. We should therefore not only repent ourselves, so that our spiritual development hastens the return of Christ (:11,12); but also seek to spread the Gospel to others and thereby hasten the second coming (Mt. 24:14).

to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you; ¹⁶ as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things. In his letters there are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the other scriptures. ¹⁷ Therefore beloved, you, knowing these things beforehand, beware; lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, you lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.

1 JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 16 Dec. 16

Prologue

That which existed from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we saw and our hands handled, concerning the word of life. ² The life was manifested and we have seen and testify and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which existed with the Father and was manifested to us. ³ What we have seen and heard, we declare to you also, so that you may also have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write, that your joy may be made full.

Life in the Light

⁵ And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce to you: That God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and not do the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He

is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 16 Dec. 16

My little children, these things I write I to you, so you may not sin. And if anyone sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. ³ And hereby we truly know that we truly know him: If we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that says: I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But who keeps his word, in him truly has the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him.

Walking in the Light

⁶ He that says he abides in him, ought also walk even as he walked. ⁷ Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard. ⁸ But now, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you. Be-

1:3 True Christian fellowship is based around a common belief in the same basic Gospel message which both Jesus and John preached, and living according to it (v. 7). Christian fellowship as John speaks of it isn't the same as social friendship, although it may include this.

1:10 The more God's word abides in us, the more we are convicted of both our sinfulness and yet also the grace and certain salvation of God.

cause the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines. ⁹ He that says he is in the light and hates his brother, he remains in the darkness. ¹⁰ He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he that hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Something for Everyone of Every Age

¹² I write to you little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake. ¹³ I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you little children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴ I have written to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I have written to you young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. ¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust

of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passes away and the lust of it, but he that does the will of God abides for ever.

Antichrists

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you heard that antichrist comes, even now have there arisen many antichrists. Whereby we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be revealed, that all these are not of us. ²⁰ And you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all these things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it! And because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist: he that denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father. He that confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also shall abide in the

2:10 Bitterness against our fellow believers creates a stumblingblock in our spiritual path which can cost us our place in God's Kingdom. We must urgently let go of all bitterness (Eph. 4:31).

2:12 Forgiveness is available through baptism into the Name of Jesus because His Name is His character, and this is counted to us if we are in Him. Our sins are not therefore visible, as it were, to God's judgment.

2:19 We should never be the ones who "go out from" our fellow believers. They may go out from us or exclude us, but this is their sin; we shouldn't be the ones who create the divisions.

Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise which he promised us—everlasting life. ²⁶ These things have I written to you concerning those that would lead you astray. ²⁷ And as for you, the anointing which you received of him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you all things and is true and is no lie and even as it taught you, so you are to abide in him. ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him. That, when he shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also that does righteousness is begotten of him.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 17 Dec. 17

Children of God

Look what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. And we are! For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now are we children of God; and it is not yet revealed what we shall be. We know that, when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. ³ And

everyone that has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure. ⁴ Everyone that keeps on committing sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that he was manifested to take away sins; because in him is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in him does not keep on in sin. Whoever keeps on in sin has not seen him, nor truly knows him.

Overcoming Sin

⁷ My little children, let no one lead you astray. He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸ He that keeps on in sin is of the Devil. For the Devil sins from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. ⁹ Whoever is begotten of God does not keep on in sin, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on in sin, because he is begotten of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he that does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² Not as Cain, who was of the evil one, who killed

2:28 “Boldness” is the same Greek word we find elsewhere about how we can be “bold” or confident, open, as we stand in the presence of God in prayer (Eph. 3:19; Heb. 4:16). Thus our attitude to the Father and Son in prayer today is the attitude we shall have to them when we stand before them at judgment day. This gives cause for much self-examination.

3:2 It is not just the eternity of the Kingdom life which we should look forward to; the greatest thing is that we shall be like Jesus, perfect, 24/7.

3:3 If we really believe we will be in the Kingdom, this hope will lead us to practical changes and purity in this life – quite naturally.

his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³ Marvel not brothers if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He that does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brothers is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But whosoever has the world's goods and sees his brothers in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word, nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth. ¹⁹ Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him. ²⁰ Because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have boldness toward God. ²² And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³ And this is His commandment: that we should believe in the name

of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment. ²⁴ And he that keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He gave us.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 17 Dec. 17

Warning Against False Teachers

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² Hereby do you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is of God. ³ And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh is not of God, and they are proved to be of the antichrist; of whom you have heard that it comes, and now is already in the world. ⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them. Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. ⁵ They are of the world. Therefore speak they of the world and the world hears them. ⁶ We are of God. He that knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

3:16 Jesus' life wasn't taken from Him, but He "laid it down" (Jn. 10:17). He gave His last breath as an act of the will, a consciously controlled outgiving of life rather than dying because men took His life from Him by murder. This intense level of self-giving is applied to us. When Jesus died for us in this way, we were far away in understanding, appreciation and spirituality. And so it will be with our fellow believers for whom we are to likewise die.

3:21 Although our conscience isn't always reliable (1 Cor. 4:4), we should aim like Paul to live every moment in good conscience before Him (Acts 23:1).

4:2, 3 See on 2 Jn. 7-9. Our understanding of the nature of Jesus is therefore very important.

Love One Another

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God, and everyone that loves is begotten of God and knows God. ⁸ He that does not love, does not know God. For God is love. ⁹ Herein was the love of God manifested to us, in that God has sent His only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³ Hereby we know that we abide in him and He in us, because He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And we know and have believed the love which God has toward us. God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ In this way is love made perfect with us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is, even so

are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; because fear has punishment, and he that fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If a man says, I love God, and hates his fellow believers, he is a liar. For he that does not love his fellow believers whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God, loves his fellow believers also.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 18 Dec. 18***God's Children***

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; and whoever loves Him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of Him. ² Hereby we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and do His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous. ⁴ For whatever is begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. ⁵ And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of

4:10 God took the initiative in loving, and we are asked to love others in this same way. We should be thinking how we can initiate loving acts towards others, rather than simply responding to others' love to us by loving them back.

4:20 It's therefore impossible – although very tempting – to claim to be a Christian if we continually find excuses why we can't have contact with other believers. Love is to be something active, concrete and meaningful in practice; we therefore can't be 'out of church believers', we need active engagement with our brethren in order to reflect God's love to them as we are commanded here. Private Bible reading in our room, understanding doctrine correctly, praying to God alone, may sound all very good; but we can't actually love God unless we love His children, for He is manifested in them.

God. ⁶ This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. ⁷ And it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁸ For there are three who testify, the spirit and the water and the blood; and the three agree in one. ⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For the witness of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰ He that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. He that does not believe God has made Him a liar; because he has not believed in the witness that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹ And the witness is this: that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Assurance and Encouragement

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have

eternal life. ¹⁴ And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we obtain the requests we have asked of him. ¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life for them that sin not to death. There is a sin unto death. Not concerning this do I say that he should make requests. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death. ¹⁸ We know that whoever is begotten of God does not keep on in sin; but he that was begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one touches him not. ¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God came, and has given us an understanding so that we truly know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

5:13 The Bible teaches that we are mortal and don't consciously survive death. We "have eternal life" in the sense that from God's perspective He remembers us after our death and knows we will be immortalized at Christ's return. Further, insofar as we live the kind of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom, we have and can live the eternal life right now.

5:14 Answered prayer is therefore a great encouragement to us that we are of God.

5:16 God is prepared to forgive some sins for the sake of others' prayers to Him about them. If third party prayers are this powerful, we should like Paul be praying for our fellow believers all the time.

5:21 Anything that detracts our focus from the simple fact that we shall live eternally in God's Kingdom is an idol, and we should shun it.

2 JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 19 Dec. 19

The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth. ² For the truth's sake which abides in us, and shall be with us for ever. ³ Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴ I rejoice greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵ And now lady, I urge you not as though I write a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Antichrist Defined

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world, especially those that do not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸ Look to yourselves, that we do not lose the things which we have done but that we receive a full reward. ⁹ Whoever goes ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. He that continues in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome him into your house and give him no greeting. ¹¹ For he that gives him greeting partakes in his evil works. ¹² Having many things to write to you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full. ¹³ The children of your elect sister salute you.

:6 Love isn't the passing emotion which the world calls love. Love for God and each other involves keeping His commandments; it's not enough to just be vaguely attracted to the ethos of Christianity in a casual manner.

:7 It could be argued that those who believe in the Trinity have denied that Jesus was in the flesh. Whilst we can leave all judgment to God, the question of the nature of Jesus is therefore crucial – because according to our understanding of Him, so will we live our lives.

:10 The early preachers travelled from home to home, and were supported by Christian families who welcomed them into their homes (3 Jn. 6). John is saying that missionaries who don't teach the right thing about Jesus shouldn't be given this support.

3 JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 19 Dec. 19

The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. ² Beloved, I pray that in all things you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers. ³ For I rejoiced greatly, when brothers came and testified to the truth which is in you, even as you walk in truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. ⁵ Beloved, you do a faithful work in whatever you do toward those that are brothers and especially to strangers, ⁶ who testify of your love before the church. You will do well to set them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God; ⁷ because for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth. ⁹ I wrote somewhat to the church, but

Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not welcome us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, prating against us with wicked words, and not content therewith, neither does he welcome the brothers; and those that would, he forbids and throws them out of the church. ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate such evil, but imitate that which is good. He that does good is of God. He that does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has the witness of all and of the truth itself. Yes, we also testify, and you know that our witness is true. ¹³ I had many things to write to you, but I am unwilling to write them to you with ink and pen. ¹⁴ But I hope shortly to see you, and we shall speak face to face. ¹⁵ Peace be to you. The friends salute you. Salute the friends by name.

:3,4 If our idea of joy is purely self-centred, we won't find it. The writings of John and Paul show they felt joy because of the spiritual health of their brethren.

:7 The early preachers were motivated in their work by God's Name – they wished to share with others the personality and character of the Father and His Son. As this was their focus, they weren't so interested in taking money from their audience.

:10 This is exactly the kind of 3rd party 'guilt by association' which has destroyed so many churches today – believers are excluded because of their inclusive attitude to other believers, and John condemns this very clearly.

JUDE

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 20 Dec. 20

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those that are called; beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ. ² Mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied. ³ Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, urging you to contend earnestly for the faith which was delivered once and for all to his saints. ⁴ For there are certain people who have crept in secretly, who long ago were designated for condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into a license for immorality, and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Old Testament Warnings

⁵ Now I desire to have you remember (as you know all things already) that the Lord having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that did not believe. ⁶ And the angels which did not keep to their own domain, who left their proper abode, He has kept in everlasting bonds, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day. ⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, these gave themselves

over to fornication and went after strange flesh. Such are given as an example. All of them suffered the punishment of eternal fire. ⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil in dispute about the body of Moses, does not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said: The Lord rebuke you. ¹⁰ But these revile whatever things they do not see with their eyes or cannot examine naturally. They are like the beasts without reason. In these things are they destroyed. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

Characteristics of the Rejected

¹² These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves. Clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of

:6 The Greek word translated “angels” is also translated ‘messengers’ or ‘followers’ (e.g. Mt. 11:10). It doesn’t always refer to cosmic beings. Jude is building an argument based upon the example of Israel in the Old Testament, and so he is referring to historical incidents found there rather than to any myths of Angels sinning in Eden. The allusion here is to the earth opening to swallow Korah and his rebels (Num. 16:32).

:12 Love-feasts – A reference to the breaking of bread service, which is intended to celebrate the love of Christ in dying for us.

darkness has been reserved forever.

¹⁴ And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying: Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

¹⁶ These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaks great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of personal advantage.

¹⁷ But you, beloved, remember the words which have been spoken previously by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸ how they said to you: In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own

ungodly lusts. ¹⁹ These are they who make divisions, sensual, having not the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, build up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

²² On those who are in doubt have mercy. ²³ And others save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some, have mercy with fear, hating even the underclothing stained by the flesh. ²⁴ Now to him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now and for always in the future. Amen.

:15 People are condemned because of their words – how we think and speak is of huge importance to Jesus (Mt. 12:37).

:23 *The fire* – Fire is used here symbolically, as often in the Bible, for condemnation. People aren't literally on fire as we see them fall away from the faith; they are however effectively falling into condemnation and losing their hope of eternal life. We should urgently do all we can to pull them out of this rather than saying nothing or pretending not to notice.

:24 We will be seen by Jesus at the last day as “without blemish” in His eyes, because His righteousness has been imputed to us.

REVELATION

CHAPTER 1 Jun.21 Dec. 21

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass; which he sent and put into sign by his Angel to his servant John; ² who testified of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. ³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein; for the time is near. ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne. ⁵ And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him that loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and who made us kings and priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn

over him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. ⁹ I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and the kingdom and patience of Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying: ¹¹ What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches. To Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

A Vision of the Glorified Jesus

¹² And I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks. ¹³ And in the midst of the candlesticks- one like a Son of Man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire. ¹⁵ And his feet were like bronze refined in

1:1 Revelation speaks of things future to the time of John in the first century. Therefore the later references to events concerning Satan, the adversary, aren't descriptive of anything which happened in earlier history, e.g. in the garden of Eden.

1:6 We will be King-priests in the future Kingdom of God on earth (5:10), but by status we have been given this position now in that we are even now redeemed in Christ.

1:7 The return of Christ will be literal and visible to all (Acts 1:9-11). Those who crucified Jesus will see Him again – because they will be resurrected to judgment at His coming.

1:12 The candlesticks represent the churches; yet the voice and person of Jesus came from them. This shows how closely Jesus is associated with His people.

a furnace, and his voice was like the voice of many waters. ¹⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shines in its strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not. I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ the living one; and I was dead, but behold, I am alive for always, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. ¹⁹ Therefore write the things which you see, and the things which are, and the things which shall hereafter come to pass. ²⁰ This is the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 21 Dec. 21

The Letter to Ephesus

TO the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: ² I know your works and your toil and patience, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and did test them that call themselves apostles, and yet are

not, and found them false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do the first works. Or else, unless you repent, I will come to you and move your candlestick out of its place. ⁶ But this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The Letter to Smyrna

⁸ And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write these things: The first and the last, who was dead and lived again, says: ⁹ I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich!) and the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear the things which you are about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison, you may be tried have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹ He

1:20 Not only do we as individuals have guardian Angels, but groups of believers, churches, have a specific guardian Angel also.

2:4 *First love* – Greek ‘agape’. Their defence against false teachers and hard works (v. 2) had been done without *agape* love. If we lose love as our motivation, all defence of the faith and labour for Christ becomes meaningless and places Jesus “against” us (see 1 Cor. 13); we have “fallen” from the true faith.

2:10 The Greek word translated ‘devil’ is *diabolos* and means ‘a false accuser’. The ‘devil’ here is clearly the anti-Christian local authorities, and not any cosmic being.

that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

The Letter to Pergamum

¹² And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says he that has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ I know where you live, where Satan's throne is, yet you remained loyal to my name and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. ¹⁵ So have you also some that hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent, or else I will come to you quickly, and I will make war against those with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the

churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.

The Letter to Thyatira

¹⁸ And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like to burnished bronze: ¹⁹ I know your works and your love, faith, ministry and patience; and that your last works are more than the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you: you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time that she should repent, and she does not want to repent of her fornication. ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, into great tribulation, and those that commit adultery with her— unless they repent of their works. ²³ And I will strike her children dead. And all

2:11 When Christ returns, the responsible dead will be raised and judged, and the unworthy amongst them will die again. This will therefore be for them their “second death”.

2:13 The ‘satan’ [‘adversary’] here refers to the local Roman authorities who were against the Christians.

2:17 In Semitic thought, a name refers to a personality or character. There will be something very intimate between Jesus and us throughout eternity, which only He and us can enter into; we will enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus for eternity.

2:21 Jesus doesn't react against sin immediately, He gives time for people to repent and respond. We should be the same in dealing with people.

2:23 Jesus searches our minds, what we are thinking, and repays us for our works. Thus our thoughts are paralleled with our actions. Constantly, even as we sleep, Jesus is searching our hearts. To be spiritually minded is therefore of utmost importance in our Christian life.

the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will repay each of you as your works deserve. ²⁴ But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who do not know the so-called deep things of Satan: I will not impose any other burden ²⁵ apart from that which you have: To hold fast until I come. ²⁶ And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works to the end, to him will I give authority over the nations. ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces; as I also have received from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

CHAPTER 3 Jun.22 Dec. 22

The Letter to Sardis

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful and establish the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³ Therefore remember how you have received,

and did once hear and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what time I will come upon you. ⁴ But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their clothes, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. ⁵ He that overcomes shall thus be dressed in white garments, and I will in no way blot his name out of the book of life; and I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels. ⁶ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Letter to Philadelphia

⁷ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens. ⁸ I know your works (behold, I have set before you an open door, which none can shut), you have a little power and did keep my word and did not deny my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie—behold, I will make these come to you and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Be-

3:4 The faithful in the church in Sardis are recognized by Jesus as such; He doesn't rebuke them for not having separated from the others who were obviously weak.

3:5 Our names are written in the book when we are baptized, but we can turn away and thus have our names blotted out. When Moses asked for his name to be blotted out of the book so that Israel could enter the Kingdom, he was therefore offering to lose his place in eternity (Ex. 32:32). Whilst God doesn't operate on the basis of substitution, this incident shows the selfless extent of spiritual love for others to which it is possible for a man to rise.

cause you did keep the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the time of trial which is to come upon the whole world, to test them that dwell upon the earth. ¹¹ I come suddenly. Hold fast to what you have, that no one takes your crown. ¹² He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall leave there no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my own new name. ¹³ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Letter to Laodicea

¹⁴ And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. ¹⁵ I know your works, how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. ¹⁶ As you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich; and to clothe yourselves with white

garments, that the shame of your nakedness be not revealed; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve so you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him and he with me. ²¹ He that overcomes, I will allow him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne. ²² He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 22 Dec. 22

The Heavenly Throne Room

After these things I looked, and beheld a door opened in heaven; and the first voice that I heard, as if a trumpet was speaking to me, was as one saying: Come up here, and I will show you the things which hereafter must come to pass. ² Immediately I was in the Spirit, and beheld a throne set in heaven; and one sitting upon the throne. ³ And he that sat on it was to look upon like a jasper stone, and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. ⁴ And round about the throne were twenty four thrones; and upon the

3:12 Jesus even after His resurrection and glorification still speaks of God as “my God”. Yet He parallels “my new name” with the Name of God. Jesus was given the Name of God after His resurrection – hence He calls it a “new name”, which He had only recently been given at the time He gave the Revelation. As God’s Son He operates in the Name of God, but this doesn’t mean He is God Himself in person.

3:15 Jesus like any lover hates indifference and passivity on our part; an appearance of commitment to Him which is only external (3:1).

thrones I saw twenty four elders sitting, dressed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. ⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶ And in front of the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. ⁷ And the first creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had the face of a man and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures each had six wings, full of eyes round about and within; and they have no rest day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. ⁹ And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty four elders shall fall down before him that sits on the throne and shall worship him

that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ Worthy are you, our Lord, to receive the glory and the honour and the power. For you did create all things, and for your sake they existed and were created.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 23 Dec. 23

Opening the Scroll

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to undo the seals of it? ³ And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll, or to look thereon. ⁴ And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll, or to look thereon. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me: Do not weep. Behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered; he can open the scroll and the seven seals of it. ⁶ And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the

4:8 *Full of eyes* – Through the cherubim Angels, God knows all that is happening on earth and in our lives. They were full of eyes “within” – perhaps indicating their total self-knowledge. One of the greatest joys of being immortalized with God’s nature is that we shall know ourselves fully.

4:8 *Day and night* – In the Kingdom, we will praise God and serve Him every single moment. Our service of Him in this life cannot be a mere occasional hobby; if we are seeking to eternally serve Him every moment, then this will be our desire in this life; and our life decisions relating to education, career and use of our personal time will reflect this.

5:1 This scroll is the book of life; the opening of the possibility of eternity for those written in it was made possible by the death of Christ (v. 9).

5:4 John’s weeping suggests our frustration at not being able to enter eternity by our own merits. Hence his and our extreme gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ.

midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had just been slain. The lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. ⁷ And he came and he took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sing a new song, saying: Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open the seals of it. For you once were slain, and did purchase for God a people with your blood, people of every tribe, tongue and nation, ¹⁰ and made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they shall reign upon the earth.

Praise to the Lamb

¹¹ And I looked, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. ¹² They were saying with a great voice: Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain

to receive the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing. ¹³ And I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying: To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing, honour, glory and might, for ever and ever. ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said: Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

CHAPTER 6 Jun. 23 Dec. 23

Six Seals

And I looked when the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder: Come! ² And I looked and beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow, and there was given to him a crown, and he came forth conquering and to conquer. ³ And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying: Come! ⁴ And another horse came forth, a red horse, and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, that they should slay one another. And there was given to him a great sword. ⁵ And when he opened the third seal,

5:10 Our hope is to be the future King-priests in God's Kingdom upon earth – no mention is made of eternity in Heaven after death.

5:11 This may be a vision of the Angels welcoming the resurrected Jesus into Heaven after His ascension.

6:1 If the scroll is the book of life, the seals represent what stood in the way of the book being opened. The book will be opened at Christ's return (20:12). They refer to various periods of history between the time John was given the vision and the return of Christ, and the events within them all have special relevance to God's people. They were opened on account of Christ's death. Thus He became the Lord of history; all history and world political events occur under His control and all play a part in bringing on the day when He shall return and open the book of life.

I heard the third living creature saying: Come! And I looked and beheld a black horse, and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. ⁶ And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying: A measure of wheat for a denarius and three measures of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine. ⁷ And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying: Come! ⁸ And I looked and beheld a pale horse, and he that sat upon him. His name was Death, and Hades followed behind him. And there was given to them authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with death and by the wild beasts of the earth. ⁹ And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a great voice, saying: How long, O Master, the holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood? ¹¹ And each one was given a white robe, and they were told that they should wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been, was completed. ¹² And I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There

was a great earthquake, the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon turned the colour of blood. ¹³ And the stars of the heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts her unripe figs when she is shaken by a great wind. ¹⁴ And the sky was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the princes, the chief captains, the rich, the strong and every slave and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ And they said to the mountains and to the rocks: Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him that sits on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb. ¹⁷ For the great day of their anger comes, and who is able to stand?

CHAPTER 7 Jun. 24 Dec. 24

Sealing God's Servants

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. ² And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³ saying: Do not

6:9 Although the Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious, God remembers the dead and is in a sense outside of time as we know it; therefore "all live unto Him" (Lk. 20:38). So here the Bible speaks about the unconscious dead as if their blood, their lives, demand from God a response in judging their murderers.

7:3 The seal is on the forehead, representing the mind. God identifies who is really His by their attitude of mind. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity.

hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

⁴ And I heard the number of those that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.

⁵ Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand.

⁶ Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand.

⁷ Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand.

⁸ Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

⁹ After these things I saw and beheld a great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation, comprised of all tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and with palms

in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cry with a great voice, saying: Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! ¹¹ And all the angels were standing round about the throne and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God, ¹² saying: Amen. Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might to our God for ever and ever. Amen. ¹³ And one of the elders asked me: These that are dressed in white robes, who are they and from where did they come? ¹⁴ And I replied: My lord, do you know? And he explained to me: These are they that came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. Neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor

7:4 Most numbers in Revelation are symbolic; 144 is 12 x 12, perhaps suggesting that the community of the redeemed will be based upon the twelve tribes of Israel in that the Christian hope is "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20), "salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22) in that the promises which comprise the Gospel of the Kingdom were made to Abraham and his children (Gal. 3:8).

7:9 People from every language and ethnic grouping will be redeemed in Christ when He returns. This means that the Gospel must go to every ethnic group on earth before Christ returns. The internet has hastened this possibility; for since the time of Christ the majority of those groups were ignorant of Christianity. In this context we must understand the Lord's teaching that once the Gospel goes into all the world, then He will return (Mt. 24:14). In this sense our world-wide preaching can hasten His return.

7:14 This could imply that during the great tribulation just before Christ returns, the persecution will result in the Gospel going out to every ethnic group and gaining converts (see v. 9 note); just as persecution led to the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentiles in the first century (Acts 11:19,20).

any heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of living water, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

CHAPTER 8 Jun. 24 Dec. 24

The Seventh Seal

And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² And I saw the seven angels that stood before God; and there were given to them seven trumpets. ³ And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. ⁵ And the angel took the censer, filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it upon the earth. There followed thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake.

The First Four Angels Sound

⁶ And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. ⁷ And the first sounded,

and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood; and they were cast upon the earth. The third part of the earth was burnt up, as was the third part of the trees; and all green grass was burnt up. ⁸ And the second angel blew his trumpet and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood. ⁹ And there died the third part of the creatures (even they that had life) which were in the sea, and the third part of the ships were destroyed. ¹⁰ And the third angel blew his trumpet, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of the waters. ¹¹ And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and one third of the waters became bitter-tasting; and many men died because the waters were made so bitter. ¹² And the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon and a third of the stars. This meant that the third part of them were darkened; and the day would not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner. ¹³ And I saw and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice: Woe, woe, woe, for those who dwell on the earth,

8:5 The visual image of incense smoke ascending to Heaven and then fire and Angelic activity ensuing shows the power of prayer – the silent words of a man praying at a bus stop really reach Heaven itself, and call forth Angels running hither and thither, causing dramatic events on earth.

8:13 Terrible things are to come upon earth in the very last days, but those who have kept the Lord's word will be kept from them (3:10). The Hebrew and Greek words translated "earth" can just as well refer to 'the land' – of Israel. Perhaps these Angelic judgments are specifically to occur in the land of Israel.

by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

CHAPTER 9 Jun. 24 Dec. 24

The Fifth Trumpet

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star from heaven fall to the earth; and there was given to him the key to the pit of the abyss. ² And he opened the pit of the abyss and smoke went out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. ³ And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ And it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only such men as do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were told that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented for five months; their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. ⁶ And in those days men shall seek death and shall in no way find it, and they shall desire to die and death will flee from them. ⁷ And the shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for war, and upon their heads as if crowns of gold, and their

faces were as men's faces. ⁸ And they had hair as the hair of women and their teeth were like that of lions. ⁹ And they had breastplates, like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. ¹⁰ And they have tails like scorpions and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. ¹¹ They have over them as king the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he has the name Apollyon. ¹² The first Woe is past. Behold, hereafter there come two other woes.

The Sixth Trumpet

¹³ And the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ one saying to the sixth angel that had one trumpet: Release the four angels that are chained at the great river Euphrates. ¹⁵ And the four angels were released, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill a third of all mankind. ¹⁶ And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of

9:4 The seal is on the forehead, representing the mind. God identifies who is really His by their attitude of mind. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity.

9:11 Not only does each believer have a guardian Angel, but groups of people on earth, including armies of unbelievers, have a representative Angel in the court of Heaven. We can take comfort from this that man is not alone, but the exact situations we are in on earth are represented accurately before God in Heaven through means of His Angels.

hyacinth and of sulphur, and heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire, smoke and sulphur.¹⁸ By these three illnesses was one third of all mankind killed, by the fire and the smoke and the sulphur, which proceeded out of their mouths.¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails. For their tails are like those of serpents and have heads, and by means of them they wound.²⁰ And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these illnesses, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and the idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood—which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk.²¹ And they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

CHAPTER 10 Jun.25 Dec. 25

An Angel with Seven Thunders

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, his face was as the sun and his feet as pillars of fire.² And he had in his hand a little scroll that was opened, and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left

upon the earth.³ And he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices.⁴ And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying: Keep secret the things which the seven thunders uttered and do not write them down.⁵ And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven,⁶ and swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be no more delay.⁷ But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good news which He declared to His servants the prophets.⁸ And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying: Go, take the book which is opened in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth.⁹ And I went to the angel, saying to him that he should give me the little book. And he said to me: Take it and eat it up; it shall make your belly bitter

9:20 Demons therefore refer simply to idols, not to any actual cosmic beings.

9:21 These awful judgments aren't simply the wrath of an offended Deity; their intention is to lead even the wicked people of the last days to repentance. God's passion is for human repentance; when we repent we therefore so thrill Him.

10:6 *No more delay* – In one sense the coming of Christ is delayed, just as the bridegroom delays in Mt. 25:5, because God is so passionate for as many people as possible to come to repentance and salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). In another sense we can hasten the coming of Christ by our spiritual development (2 Pet. 3:11,12) and spreading the Gospel worldwide (Mt. 24:14). But the apparent delay in Christ's return can lead His people to selfish behaviour (Mt. 24:48); and we must beware of this danger.

but in your mouth it shall be as sweet as honey. ¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey. But when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. ¹¹ And they said to me: You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

CHAPTER 11 Jun. 25 Dec. 25

The Two Witnesses

And there was given to me a reed like a measuring rod, and I was told: Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those that worship therein. ² But the court which is outside the temple, do not measure it. For it has been given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty two months ³ And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies, and if anyone shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. ⁶ These have

the power to shut the heaven so that it does not rain during the days of their prophecy, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. ⁷ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them and overcome them and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ And from among the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies for three and a half days, and they will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. ¹⁰ And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them and make merry, and they shall send gifts to each other, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. ¹¹ And after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon those that saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up here! And they went into heaven in the cloud,

10:10 God's word is indeed sweet, but it can have bitter consequences if we seriously accept His demands of carrying the cross of Christ and upholding His standards in this wicked world.

11:2 42 months is the same as 1260 days or three and a half years, all time periods which occur in the various prophecies of the last days. It could be that there will be a literal three and a half years of tribulation immediately before Christ's return; and it's possible that if this tribulation is largely spiritual, that this period has already begun.

11:6 Closing the skies through prayer is an allusion to the work of Elijah, who prayed and stopped rain coming for three and a half years (James 5:17). The same period of 42 months is in view here too (v. 2). This suggests that there will be an Elijah ministry in the last days, seeking to prepare Israel to accept their Messiah (Mk. 9:12; Malachi 4:5).

and their enemies saw them. ¹³ And in that hour there was a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly.

The Seventh Angel

¹⁵ And the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the twenty four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying: ¹⁷ We give You thanks O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was; because You have taken Your great power and have reigned. ¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and Your anger came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give reward to Your servants the prophets and to the saints, and to those that fear Your Name, the small and the great, and to destroy those that destroy the earth. ¹⁹ And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, and there

was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant, and there followed lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail.

CHAPTER 12 Jun.26 Dec. 26

The Woman and the Dragon

And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was with child, and was crying out with labour pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And there was seen another sign in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and he did throw them to the earth; and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to give birth, so that when she gives birth he may devour her child. ⁵ And she gave birth to a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. ⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ⁷ And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought

11:15 The Kingdom of God will subsume the kingdoms of men; therefore, the Kingdom of God shall come literally on this earth at Christ's return.

12:7-9 Bible teaching about Satan is explained in the doctrinal summary at the end of this Bible.

Note:

- The language of "cast down" and "cast out" does not require literal downwards movement – Babylon is "thrown down" in Rev. 18:21. 'Cast out of Heaven' means a loss of power

with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels retaliated. ⁸ But he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying: Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him be-

cause of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they did not love their life even to death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea! Because the Devil has gone down to you, having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time. ¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that had brought forth the man child. ¹⁴ And there was given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times

- After the drama of :7-9, v. 10 says that *now* is the Kingdom of our God. These verses speak of the future rather than telling us what happened in Eden (1:1). There is rejoicing that the devil has been cast to earth. Why should there be rejoicing if his coming to earth was the start of sin and disaster for man?

- The dragon had "seven heads and ten horns" (:3), therefore it was not literally the serpent. It being called "that old serpent" shows that it had the characteristics of that serpent in Eden, in the sense of being a deceiver, as the serpent was. Thus the devil is not literally the serpent, it is a political power, manifesting sin. Pharaoh is likened to a great dragon (Ez. 32:2).

- The dragon drew a third of the stars of heaven to the earth with his tail (:4). If this is read literally, the sheer size of the dragon is immense – a third of the whole universe could be contained just on his tail. There is no way planet earth would be big enough to contain such a huge creature sprawling over it. And remember that all this happened, or will happen, after the first century A.D., when this prophecy was given.

- "Heaven" can figuratively refer to a place of power. Revelation being such a symbolic book, we would expect this to be the case here. The woman in "heaven" then delivered her child, who was "caught up unto God and to his throne" (:5). God's throne is in heaven. If the woman was already in heaven, why would her child have to be "caught up" to heaven? She must have been a symbol of something on earth, although in a figurative "heaven". She then flees "into the wilderness" (:6). If she was in literal heaven, this means there is a wilderness in heaven. It is far more fitting for her to be in a figurative heavenly place, and then fleeing to a figurative wilderness on the earth. As all other references to "heaven" in Revelation 12 are figurative, it seems only consistent that the "war" was in a figurative heaven. There can be no rebellion or sin in literal heaven (Mt. 6:10; Ps. 5:4-5; Hab. 1:13).

The conflict in figurative heaven – i.e. a place of authority – was therefore between two power groups, each with their followers, or angels.

and half a time from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. ¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman; the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon grew angry with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

CHAPTER 13 Jun. 26 Dec. 26

The Sea Beast

And I stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads were names of blasphemy. ² And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were as the feet of a bear, his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as though it had a mortal wound; but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying: Who is like to the beast? And who is able to war with

him? ⁵ And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and there was given to him authority to continue for forty two months. ⁶ And he opened his mouth to blaspheme against God, to blaspheme His Name and His tabernacle, even those that dwell in the heaven. ⁷ And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. ⁸ And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

The Earth Beast

¹¹ And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. ¹² He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. He makes the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose wound had been healed. ¹³ And he does great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.

13:10 This alludes to Christ's teaching that whoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword (Mt. 26:52). Those who follow Christ do not use violence to anyone but seek to love their enemies.

13:11 *Like a lamb* – There will be a power system in the last days which is a false imitation of Jesus, the true lamb. He 'plays God' by appearing to be able to do the work of creation which God alone can do, giving life to a dead body as He did to Adam (:14).

¹⁴ And he deceives those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which were given to him to do in the sight of the beast, saying to those that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword but lived. ¹⁵ And he was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should speak, and cause to have killed as many as would not worship the image of the beast. ¹⁶ And he causes all, the small and the great and the rich and the poor and the free and the bondservant, to be given a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; ¹⁷ so that no one should be able to buy or to sell, unless he has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty six.

CHAPTER 14 Jun. 27 Dec. 27

The Lamb on Mount Zion

And I looked, and beheld the Lamb standing on mount Zion,

and with him one hundred and forty four thousand, each having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers playing their harps. ³ And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song save the hundred and forty four thousand, they that had been purchased out of the earth. ⁴ These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from among men to be the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no lie. They are without blemish. ⁶ And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good news to proclaim to those that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. ⁷ He said with a great voice: Fear God and give Him glory! For the hour

13:14 Even if a person appears to be able to do miracles, we should not follow them if they are not teaching according to God's word (Dt. 13:2).

13:16 The forehead represents the mind. The mark may not be anything literal, but rather an attitude of mind. God's people are likewise sealed on their foreheads (7:3; 9:4). The difference between the believer and the world comes down to where our inner heart is.

14:1 144,00 – see on 7:4.

14:4 The true believers are engaged to be married to Christ; to unite ourselves with the world is to be unfaithful to Him and lose our virginity.

14:5 *Was found* – The believers have of course been sinful and blemished. But they are seen by Jesus as perfect; for love imputes perfection to the beloved, and the love of Christ is the ultimate love. He will see us as if we are perfect. We can rightly rejoice in His love.

of His judgment comes, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters. ⁸ And another, a second angel, followed, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication. ⁹ And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice: If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives the mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, ¹⁰ he also shall drink of the wine of the anger of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name. ¹² Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³ And I heard the voice from heaven saying: Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from this time forward. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours. For their works follow them.

The Harvest of the Earth

¹⁴ And I looked and beheld a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw one sitting like a Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵ And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud: Send forth your sickle and reap. For the hour to reap comes. For the harvest of the earth is ripe. ¹⁶ And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth and the earth was reaped. ¹⁷ Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, he that has power over fire, and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Send forth your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. For her grapes are fully ripe. ¹⁹ And the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress of the anger of God. ²⁰ And the winepress was trodden outside of the city; and there came out blood from the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as a sixteen hundred stadia.

14:7 *Him that made* – The silent reality of creation ought to be an imperative to both us and the world to repent and turn to our maker.

14:10 Fire destroys; it doesn't burn anything for eternity. The allusion is to the destruction of Sodom with fire and sulphur; this is described as "eternal fire" in Jude 7. But Sodom isn't literally burning today; eternal fire refers to total destruction which has eternal consequences. In this manner Jerusalem is described as having been destroyed with eternal fire (Jer. 17:27). The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

14:15 When human sin has reached a certain point, Christ will come and judge it. That day cannot surely be far off.

CHAPTER 15 Jun. 28 Dec. 28***The Seven Last Plagues***

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous. Seven angels having seven illnesses which are the last woe, for in them is finished the anger of God. ² And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those that had conquered the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³ And they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, singing: Great and marvellous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are Your ways, You King of the ages. ⁴ Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You only are holy. For all the nations shall come and worship before You. For Your righteous acts have been revealed. ⁵ And after these things I saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened. ⁶ And there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven illnesses, dressed with precious linen, pure and bright and golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the anger of God, who lives for ever and ever. ⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His

power, and no one was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

CHAPTER 16 Jun. 28 Dec. 28***The Seven Bowls***

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels: Go and pour out the seven bowls of the anger of God into the earth. ² Harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ³ And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died, even the things that were in the sea. ⁴ And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying: Righteous are You, who is and who was, You Holy One, because You did thus judge. ⁶ For they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have You given them to drink. They are worthy. ⁷ And I heard another angel out of the altar saying: Yes, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments. ⁸ And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. ⁹ And men were scorched with great heat, and

15:3 We shall sing this song, by God's grace! As Moses rejoiced that God's people had escaped from Egypt, so we shall rejoice that we have finally and irreversibly left behind the flesh and this world.

16:9, 11 Again, even the very final judgments of God upon sinners are intended to bring them to repentance rather than simply express the wrath of an offended deity. God is so passionate for human repentance; including our own, today.

they cursed the Name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give Him glory. ¹⁰ And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain because of the pain. ¹¹ They cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds. ¹² And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates, and the water of it dried up, so that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the east. ¹³ And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, that looked like frogs. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, who work signs. These go to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ (Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!) ¹⁶ And they gathered them together into the

place which is called in Hebrew Har-magedon. ¹⁷ And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying: It is done! ¹⁸ And there were lightnings and voices and thunders, and there was a great earthquake, such as has never occurred since men came upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. ¹⁹ And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His anger. ²⁰ And every island fled away and the mountains were not found. ²¹ And great hailstones, each about the weight of a talent, came down out of heaven upon men, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail. For the plague was so severe.

CHAPTER 17 Jun. 29 Dec. 29

The Judgment of Babylon

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls and spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the judgment

16:15 The allusion is to the virgins who were tempted to fall asleep because it seemed that Christ, the bridegroom, delayed His return (Mt. 25:5). The garments refer to the white clothing of Christ's righteousness which we were given at baptism (19:8). We keep these garments on by continuing to believe that this is truly how we stand before God, and thereby keeping awake in our watching joyfully for Christ's return. Our eagerness for His coming can only be maintained if we are humbly confident of our acceptance by Him then.

16:19 So many cities are built on fault lines, this may have a literal fulfillment.

17:1 Babylon appears to refer to a political or religious system which the rulers of the earth [or, 'the land', the area promised to Abraham] give material support to in return for benefit and temporary pleasure. This system will persecute God's people, both natural and spiritual Israel.

of the great prostitute that sits upon many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, ⁵ and upon her forehead a name written of a mystery: Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations. ⁶ And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. ⁷ But the angel said to me: Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸ The beast you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into destruction. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation

of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was and is not, and shall come. ⁹ Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are the seven mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ And they are seven kings. The five are fallen, the one is, the other is yet to come; and when he comes, he must continue a little while. ¹¹ And the beast that was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes into destruction. ¹² And the ten horns you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings with the beast, for one hour. ¹³ These are of one mind; and they give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful, these also shall overcome. ¹⁵ And he said to me: The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which you saw: they and the beast, these shall hate the prostitute and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her completely with fire. ¹⁷ For God did put it in their hearts to do his mind and to be of one mind, and to

17:16 The victory of Jesus against this system (:14) will be through the various members of the coalition turning on themselves; internal division was how God so often destroyed His enemies in the Old Testament. If we choose to be divided, we are choosing and living out Divine condemnation for ourselves.

17:17 *Put it in their hearts* – God confirms sinful people in the desires of their mind. If we wish to be fleshly in our thinking, God will psychologically confirm us in this; and He will do the same in response to our endeavours to be spiritually minded.

give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. ¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

CHAPTER 18 Jun. 29 Dec. 29

The Fall of Babylon

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lit with his glory. ² And he cried with a mighty voice, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, and has become a habitation of demons, a refuge of every unclean spirit, and a refuge of every unclean and hateful bird. ³ For by the wine of the anger of her fornication all the nations are fallen; for the kings of the earth had committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich by the power of her greed. ⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her My people, lest you take part in her sins, and partake of her plagues. ⁵ For her sins have reached even to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Give to her even as she gave, and repay her double according to her deeds. In the cup in

which she mixed, mix for her a double portion. ⁷ As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says: I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see. ⁸ Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be completely burned with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judges her. ⁹ And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour does your judgment come. ¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more. ¹² Merchandise of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet and all kinds of scented wood, and every vessel of ivory and every vessel made of most precious wood and of brass and iron and marble, ¹³ and cinnamon and spice and incense and ointment and frankin-

18:4 To leave the system of the world in the last days will be difficult and painful, just as it was for the Jews to respond to the initial historical call to leave Babylon and return to rebuild the ruins of Judah. Many of them were doing well in Babylon and preferred to remain there; the same temptation will occur for the believers in latter day, symbolic Babylon.

18:6 To be given a cup of wine to drink from God is a double symbol – both of condemnation and of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16). This is why when we take the cup of wine at the breaking of bread meeting, we must examine ourselves – for we drink either blessing or condemnation to ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28,29). This makes the breaking of bread an intense experience, as we face up to the only two possible destinies which we face.

cense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep and horses and chariots and slaves and the souls of men. ¹⁴ And the fruits which your soul lusted after are gone from you, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are lost to you, never to be found again! ¹⁵ The merchants of these things who were made rich by her shall stand far away, for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, ¹⁶ saying: Woe, woe, the great city! She that was dressed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! ¹⁷ For in an hour so many great riches are laid waste. And every shipmaster and everyone that sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living at sea, stood far away, ¹⁸ and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying: What city is like the great city? ¹⁹ And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and mourning, saying: Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her expense! For in one hour she is made desolate. ²⁰ Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you saints, and you apostles, and you prophets. For God has judged your judgment on her. ²¹ And a strong angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone,

and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall never be found again. ²² And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute players and trumpeters shall never be heard again in you, and no craftsman of whatever craft shall ever be found again in you, and the voice of a mill shall never be heard again in you. ²³ The light of a lamp shall never shine again in you, and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall never be heard again in you. For your merchants were the princes of the earth; and with your sorcery were all the nations deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

CHAPTER 19 Jun. 30 Dec. 30

Praise to God!

After these things I heard what seemed to be a great voice of a great crowd in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power, belong to our God. ² For true and righteous are His judgments. For He has judged the great prostitute, she that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged the blood of His servants shed by her. ³ And a second

18:21 This figure of a millstone being cast into the sea is used by Jesus to describe the fate of those who cause His little ones to stumble (Mt. 18:6). To do this means that we are just as bad as Babylon with all her apparently more gross sins. Those who do this will be “condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32), i.e. they will be resurrected, judged, and sent back into ‘Babylon’ to share her judgment.

19:3 *For ever and ever* – Babylon herself will be totally destroyed by fire, not eternally subject to conscious torture (18:8). But the smoke, the reminder of the eternal

time they said: Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up for ever and ever. ⁴ And the twenty four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sits on the throne, saying: Amen. Hallelujah! ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying: Give praise to our God all you His servants, you that fear Him, the small and the great. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great crowd, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb comes, and his wife has made herself ready. ⁸ And it was given to her that she should dress herself in fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ And he said to me: Write, Blessed are they that are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me: These are the true words of God. ¹⁰ And I fell down before his feet to worship him, and he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers that hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The Victorious Jesus

¹¹ And I saw the heaven open; and beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems, and he has a name written which no one knows but him. ¹³ And he is dressed in a garment sprinkled with blood, and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. ¹⁵ And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should strike down the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine-press of the fierceness of the anger of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying: To all the birds that fly in mid heaven, come, be gathered together to the great supper of God. ¹⁸ Eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bondservant and small and great. ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth

consequence of her destruction and the eternal future she missed, will be with God's people for ever throughout the ages of eternity.

19:7 We are the betrothed wife of Christ, the lamb. We should be preparing ourselves in this life for the great day of marriage. There's no uncertainty about it – He loves us and is eager to marry us!

19:19 When Christ returns there will be organized mass opposition to Him – because people simply prefer their lives and world to carry on as it is, for all their complaints

and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet, who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

CHAPTER 20 Jun. 30 Dec. 30

The Last Judgment and the Thousand Years

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a

thousand years; ³ and threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished. After this he must be released for a little time. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand

about it and apparent desire for something better. The same mentality is at work today when people refuse the Lordship of Jesus in their lives.

19:21 The word of Jesus is so powerful. Yet we read that same word in the New Testament today, and should allow it to have its power in our lives.

20:2, 3 It seems that the first part of the Kingdom of God on earth will last for a “thousand years”, during which time the “devil” – power of sin and all opposition to Christ – will be greatly restrained. We will reign on earth as King-priests (5:10), ruling over the ordinary mortal people who are alive on earth at the time of Christ’s return. In this sense we will be given towns to rule over (Lk. 19:17). There will then be a rebellion at the end of the thousand years (‘the Millennium’) which will be put down. The mortal people who die during the Millennium will be resurrected at the end of it and judged; the wicked amongst them will die a “second death” and the faithful will receive eternal life. Sin and death will then finally be no more.

20:5 *The rest of the dead* – This is from the perspective of the end of the Millennium, looking at “the dead” as the sum total of all humans who have ever died. The dead who died “in Christ” during this age will be resurrected at His return. The mortal people alive at the time of His return who live and die during the Millennium will be resurrected at the end of it.

years. ⁷ And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be released from his prison, ⁸ and shall come to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war. The number of them is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the Devil that deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where are also the beast and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and every man was judged according to

their works. ¹⁴ And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

CHAPTER 21 Jul. 1 Dec. 31

The New Jerusalem

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride, adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. ⁴ And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things are passed away. ⁵ And he that sits on the throne said: Behold! I make all things new. And he said: Write! For these words are faithful and true. ⁶ And he said to me: They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning

20:14 The lake of fire is therefore symbolic of death – which the Bible defines as total unconsciousness.

21:1 Heaven and earth are often used in the Bible to describe a system of things on earth; the ‘heaven’ can refer to those in power, and the ‘earth’ to the ordinary people. There is no need for God to destroy and replace literal Heaven where He dwells.

21:3 This is the hope which Job had – to actually see God in person (Job 19:27). God therefore exists in a personal form; and ultimately we shall see Him. Heaven will be transferred to earth – hence the Kingdom of God on earth is sometimes spoken of as “the Kingdom of Heaven”. Not the Kingdom *in* Heaven, but Heaven’s Kingdom coming onto earth.

and the end. I will freely give to him who is thirsty from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He that overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.

⁸ But for the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their share shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur; which is the second death.

⁹ And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

¹² She had a wall great and high, having twelve gates; and at the gates were twelve angels, and the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written thereon. ¹³ On the east were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he that spoke with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city

and the gates of it, and the wall of it.

¹⁶ And the city is laid out as a square, its length is as great as its breadth, and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand stadia. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured the wall of it, one hundred and forty four cubits according to the measurement of a man, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸ And the building of the wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like pure glass.

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper. The second, sapphire. The third, chalcedony. The fourth, emerald. ²⁰ The fifth, sardonyx. The sixth, sardius. The seventh, chrysolite. The eighth, beryl. The ninth, topaz. The tenth, chrysoprase. The eleventh, jacinth. The twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each of the separate gates was of one pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as if it were transparent glass. ²² And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it. For the glory of God did light it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb. ²⁴ And the nations shall walk by the light of it, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. ²⁵ The gates of it shall in

21:17 *A man... an Angel* – In the Kingdom of God, we shall be made equal to the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36), who cannot sin any more and who share God's eternal nature.

21:24 When Christ returns, we shall be resurrected, judged, and made the rulers in His Kingdom which He will establish upon earth (5:10). We will rule over the ordinary mortal people who are alive on earth at the time of His return. The rulers of this world

no way be shut by day (for there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it. ²⁷ There shall in no way enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

CHAPTER 22 Jul. 1 Dec. 31

Eden Restored

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, ² in the midst of the street thereof. And on both sides of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no curse any more, and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein, and his servants shall serve him. ⁴ They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be night no more, so they do not need the light of a lamp, nor the light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Final Charges

⁶ And he said to me: These words are faithful and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place. ⁷ And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. ⁸ And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. ⁹ And he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers the prophets, and with those that keep the words of this book. Worship God! ¹⁰ And he said to me: Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. For the time is at hand. ¹¹ He that is unrighteous, let him continue to do unrighteousness, and he that is filthy, let him remain filthy, and he that is righteous, let him continue to do righteousness, and he that is holy, let him remain holy. ¹² Behold, I come suddenly; and my reward is with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the

will bow before us and give all their glory to us – we who in this life are as nothing. We shall be the light of the world in that we shall teach the nations the light of Christ, who is the light of the world. But we must be and want to be the light of the world now if we are to be it in the future age.

22:3 Eden will be restored. The curse that came upon the earth and all creation as a result of Adam's sin will be removed. Again we see that God's plan is to establish His Kingdom here on earth – hence the language of paradise restored.

22:12 The coming of Christ will be “sudden” and we must therefore remind ourselves throughout each day that Christ really might come any time – and be prepared for Him. Christ brings the reward to us, from Heaven to earth (1 Pet. 5:4); we don't get the reward on death by going to Heaven.

beginning and the end. ¹⁴ Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to eat of the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside it are the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and lovers and practisers of falsehood. ¹⁶ I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say: Come! And he that hears, let him say: Come! And he that is thirsty, let him come.

Let him that desires take the water of life freely. ¹⁸ I testify to every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, that if anyone shall add to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written of in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies these things says: Yes. I come quickly. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

22:15 *Lovers and practisers* – People can love sin without personally practicing it by loving to watch and read of these things, participating in them from a distance.

22:17 If we grasp the wonder of the eternal future made possible, our natural reaction will be to invite the person next to us to come and share in it too. Good news about something doesn't remain silently within anyone.

BIBLE BASICS: REDUCED VERSION

A free hard copy of Duncan Heaster's book *Bible Basics* is available from biblebasicsonline.com or bible-basics.info ; or email info@carelinks.net .

The following is a highly reduced version.

*All quotations are from the New King James Version
unless otherwise stated.*

Part 1: THE BIBLE

The Bible we hold in our hands today has an amazing history and is nothing short of a miracle. It claims to be the Word of God and presents us with a challenge to search out the Truth of its message and to confirm for ourselves that this is indeed the only revelation available from our Creator.

God's Spirit

The Bible is an expression of God's spirit. His spirit was seen at work in the creation: "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens" (Job 26:13). The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters to bring about the present creation (Genesis 1:2). Yet we also read that "by the word of the Lord" the world was made (Psalm 33:6); Genesis records how "God said" and things were created. God's spirit, therefore, is very much reflected in His Word. Likewise our words express our inner thoughts and desires – the real 'us' – very accurately. David spoke of how God's Word and His heart are parallel: "For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things." (2 Samuel 7:21). So God's mind / spirit is expressed in His Word. God achieved the miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of **inspiration**. This term is based around the word "spirit":

In-spirit-ation.

"Spirit" means "breath" or breathing. "Inspiration" means "in-breathing". This means that the words which men wrote while under "inspiration" from God were the words of God's spirit.

Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget the wonder of the fact that it is the words of God's spirit, and therefore provides all that we need in order for a true knowledge of God: "*From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

The Bible Fully Inspired

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God's Word has led many Christians to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God. They have suggested that much of what we read in the Bible was just the personal opinions of the writers. But Peter effectively disposes of such erroneous reasoning: *"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it ... above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:19-21 NIV).

We must "above all" believe that the Bible is inspired. The doctrine of inspiration is so often emphasised in the Bible text:

- *"For God commanded, saying ..."* (Matthew 15:4)
- *"For David himself said by the Holy Spirit ..."* (Mark 12:36;)
- *"... which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David ..."* (Acts 1:16);
- *"The Holy spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet ..."* (Acts 1:16);
- *As the Holy Spirit says ..."* (Hebrews 3:7; see also 9:8; 10:15).

If these men were only partly inspired, we do not have access to the true Word or spirit of God. If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then it follows that they had to be completely taken over by God's spirit, during the period of inspiration – otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in purity.

Inspired Words Can Motivate

An acceptance that God's Word is completely His, provides us with more motivation to read and obey it: *"Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it"* (Psalm 119:140). A comparison of 2 Timothy 3:16 with 4:2,3 shows how an appreciation of an inspired Bible can motivate action from us:

Because the inspired word is profitable ...

for doctrine *therefore*

preach the word; be ready in season and out of season (i.e.; whether you naturally feel in the preaching mood or not).

for reproof *therefore*

convince (reprove)

for correction *therefore*

rebuke

for instruction in righteousness *therefore*

exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.

What it can Mean to Us

If we believe that the Bible is inspired, we will feel the passion and power of it the more, and thereby its impact upon us will be the greater. Take for example the quote from the Old Testament: *“You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven (therefore) you shall not make anything to be with Me – gods of silver ...”* (Exodus 20:22,23).

Because of the wonder of having heard God’s voice, therefore idolatry of any form will be meaningless for us.

The Apostle Paul felt the passion of God’s word. It wasn’t just black print on white paper to him. Thus he speaks of how *“Isaiah is very bold and says ... Isaiah also cried out concerning Israel ...”* (Romans 9:27; 10:20). Paul had meditated deeply upon Isaiah’s words, even to the point of considering the tone of voice in which he first spoke them.

It was because the rulers of Israel *“did not know ... the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath”* (Acts 13:27) that they crucified the Lord. Paul speaks of the prophets’ *“voices”* rather than merely their words. The men who crucified Jesus didn’t feel the wonder of inspiration in their attitude to the Bible – even though they would have devoutly upheld the position that the Bible texts were inspired. Here we have a lesson for ourselves. Although we might agree that the Bible is the inspired word of God, it is quite possible that we might fail to feel this as we should when we read it.

Part 2: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The focus of the true Christian hope is the coming Kingdom of God on earth. The Lord’s prayer shows this: *“Your kingdom come (that) your will be done on earth, as it is (now) in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). At Christ’s return, *“the kingdoms of this world (will) become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”* (Revelation 11:15). Then God’s will and desires will be completely and openly performed in this earth.

The Kingdom on Earth

The *“kingdom of God”* is a phrase interchangeable with *“the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 13:11 cp. Mark 4:11). The Bible never speaks of *‘the kingdom in heaven’*; it is the kingdom *of* heaven which will be established by Christ on earth at His return. As God’s will is completely obeyed by the angels in heaven (Psalms 103:19-21) so it will be in the future kingdom of God. Entering the kingdom of God at Christ’s return is the end result of all Christian endeavour in this life (Matthew 25:34; Acts 14:22); as such, it is important to have a correct understanding of it. The doctrine of the Kingdom of God forms a vital part of the Gospel message (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23,31). *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22),

it is the light at the end of the tunnel of this life, and therefore the motivation to make the sacrifices which the true Christian life involves.

Old Testament Prophecy of the Kingdom of God

Daniel 2 is one of many prophecies in the Old Testament which speak of the Kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, wanted to know the world's future. He was given a vision of a great statue, composed of different metals. Daniel interpreted the head of gold as representing the king of Babylon (Daniel 2:38). After him there was to come a succession of major empires in the area around Israel, until there would be a situation in which "as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly fragile" (Daniel 2:42). This speaks of the present balance of power in the world split between many nations, some strong and some weak. Daniel then saw a little stone hit the image on the feet, destroying it. The stone grew into a great mountain which filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34,35). This stone represents Jesus (Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8). The "mountain" which will fill the earth represents the everlasting kingdom of God, which will be established at His return to the earth. Thus the kingdom will be on earth, not in heaven: *"And in the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ... it shall stand forever"* (Daniel 2:44).

Christ the King

Christ will be the king and His personal return to earth will mark the start of the Kingdom of God. He will reign as supreme ruler over all the earth.

- *"He will reign ... forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end"*
(Luke 1:32,33).
- *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* (Revelation 11:15).
- *"He (Christ) shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth"* (Psalm 72:8).

Co-rulers

Christ will share His rulership over the earth with His followers: "[Christ has] made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). "A king (Jesus) will reign in righteousness, and princes (the believers) will rule with justice" (Isaiah 32:1; Luke 19:17; 2 Timothy 2:12).

The Capital

Christ will reign from Jerusalem, the capital of the future Kingdom. Whilst people will be praising God at various places worldwide (Malachi 1:11), Jerusalem will be the focal point of the world's worship (Jer. 3:17). Nations "shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts" around the temple in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16). This annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem is also prophesied in Isaiah 2:2,3: *"In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains ... and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways ... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"*.

There will be worldwide enthusiasm to learn the ways of God. People will be so motivated by this desire that they will travel from all ends of the earth to Jerusalem in order to gain more knowledge of God.

One Universal Legal System

Instead of the confusion and unfairness created by man's legal systems there will be one universal legal code – "the law, and the word of the Lord", which will be pronounced by Christ from Jerusalem. "All nations shall flow unto" these teaching sessions. The true knowledge of God will lessen the friction between nations. Respect will be paid to those who reflect God's characteristics of love, mercy, justice etc. in contrast with the present exaltation of the proud and self-assertive: "In His days the righteous shall flourish" (Psalm 72:7).

Agricultural and Environmental Change

The absolute authority of Christ and total justice of His arbitration in disputes will result in the nations willingly changing their military hardware into agricultural machinery: "Nations ... shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). The Bible describes the dramatic solution to the current environmental crises the earth currently faces. We will see a fertile, fruitful earth in God's kingdom: "There shall be an abundance of grain in the earth on the top of the (once barren) mountains; its fruit shall wave like (the crops of) Lebanon" (Psalm 72:16). "The wilderness ... shall be glad ... the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall ... rejoice even with joy and singing ... for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool" (Isaiah 35:1-7). Even the natural aggression between the animals will be removed: "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together", and children will be able to play with snakes (Isaiah 65:25; 11:6-8). Life

spans will be increased (Isaiah 65:20). Women will experience less sorrow in childbirth (Isaiah 65:23). “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5,6). This will be due to the miraculous Spirit gifts again being possessed (cp. Hebrews 6:5).

The Ultimate Purpose of the Kingdom

The ultimate purpose of the Kingdom of God is to give glory to God. “Truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Numbers 14:21; Habakkuk 2:14). Glory to God means that the inhabitants of the earth will appreciate, praise and copy His righteous attributes. “The meek shall inherit the earth (in the Kingdom), and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalms 37:11). Possessing eternal life will almost be incidental to the real reason for our being in the Kingdom – which is to glorify God. Just a few years of living in the joy of absolute perfection and good conscience with God would be worth all the trauma of this life. That this glorious state will last forever takes us beyond the limits of human comprehension!

An Outline of Events at Christ’s Return

1. The responsible dead (those who know God’s ways) will be raised and taken, together with the responsible living, to the judgment seat.
2. Those who knew of God’s ways but refused to obey will be punished with death, and the righteous given eternal life. Judgment will also be given to the nations who resist Christ.
3. The righteous will then rule over those people who are then alive, but who are not responsible to God; they will teach them the Gospel as “kings and priests” (Revelation 5:10).
4. This will last for 1,000 years. During this time all the mortal people will hear the Gospel and therefore be responsible to God. These people will live much longer and happier lives.
5. At the end of the Millennium there will be a rebellion against Christ and the saints, which God will put down. (Revelation 20:8,9).
6. At the end of the 1,000 years, all those who have died during that time will be resurrected and judged (Revelation 20:5,11-15).
7. The wicked amongst them will be destroyed, and the righteous will join Christ and His saints in having eternal life.

The Meaning of the Kingdom for us Today

Being in the Kingdom of God should be a believer’s supreme motivation to despise worldly advantage and materialism. Everything which we can now imagine and strive for is incomparable to the ultimate fulfilment of being in God’s Kingdom. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:30-34). A believer needs to seek “(God’s) righteousness”, i.e. try to develop a love of God’s character. We want to be in God’s Kingdom because righteousness will be glorified there, because we want to be completely morally perfect; rather than just because we, personally, want to escape death and live an easy life for eternity.

If we are “seeking first the Kingdom of God” our perspective about this life will change. We will shun materialism and the effort which it demands. If we selfishly build up our own possessions through ignoring the needs of others, we have denied God’s ways – even if we understand all the doctrines of God (1 Timothy 5:8; 6:10).

The fact that the Kingdom will be on *earth* not in heaven, means that we will not strive for present possession of it, neither will we be swayed by the pressure groups and political parties who only look at the state of the world as it now is (1 John 3:13).

By having this hope, we “draw nigh to God” (Hebrews 7:19). The Hope we have compels us to God’s service. And that same Hope inspires us to repentance, too. For if Christ is soon to return, what manner of persons ought we to be? We will want to tell others of this hope (Matthew 10:7; Mark 6:12).

If we will eternally walk in God’s ways in the Kingdom, we should strive to do so now: “We labour and strive because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men” (1 Timothy 4:10 RV). The Kingdom of God is not just a time of personal, physical benefit. Jesus Christ spoke of it as a time of peace, a time when God’s principles would triumph over men’s selfish desires. This can begin right now in a quiet way, in the hearts of those who will be in the future Kingdom. If we believe we really will be there, then we will look more earnestly for the day to come. We can never be truly enthusiastic about the Lord’s return if we are unsure He will accept us into God’s Kingdom. The Apostle Paul encourages those who take on the hope of the Kingdom: “When Christ ... appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth; fornication ...” etc. (Colossians 3:4,5). The salvation God offers is by grace. This enables us to look forward with eagerness rather than uncertainty to Christ’s coming and our lives are thereby changed: “The grace of God ... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts ... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” Titus 2:11-13).

Part 3: GOD'S PURPOSE REVEALED IN PROMISES

The Bible gives a consistent message of the purpose of God. His plan is to fill the earth with men and women who show His character and give Him glory. He has given great promises which show the way this will be accomplished when His kingdom will be established in the earth.

In order for God's purpose to be achieved, He provided His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's life, death and resurrection, men and women have a way of being part of God's great kingdom if they respond and believe in Him.

The Promise in Eden

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Both they and the serpent were punished. Men and women would die, and would be unable to save themselves from this. But a ray of hope for man comes into this dark picture when God says to the serpent: *"I will put enmity (hatred, opposition) between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He (the woman's seed) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"* (Genesis 3:15).

A "seed" means a descendant or child, but it can also refer to the people associated with the particular "seed", e.g. we become the seed of Abraham if we are "in" Jesus by baptism (Galatians 3:27,29).

The Seed of the Serpent

The serpent, because of his lie, came to represent a sinful way of thinking. The seed of the serpent refers to those with the family likeness of the serpent, those who distort God's Word, lying and leading others into sin. They allow these characteristics to rule their life. In the time of Christ the corrupt religious rulers were referred to as a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7).

The Seed of the Woman

The seed of the woman refers to one who would bruise or crush the serpent's head, i.e. sin, dealing it with a death-blow. This was a prophecy of Jesus Christ and his work: *Jesus Christ, who has (by the cross) abolished death (and therefore the power of sin – Romans 6:23), and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Tim. 1:10). *"God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh"* (Romans 8:3; see also 1 John 3:5; Matthew 1:21).

Christ was 'wounded in the heel' through his death for three days. Yet His resurrection proved that this was only a temporary wound, compared to the death-blow that He gave sin.

What does this mean to us?

On the cross Jesus destroyed the power of sin in Himself. He has invited us to share in His victory. If we are “baptized into Christ” we can share in the promises about Jesus, like that in Genesis 3:15. No longer are they just interesting parts of the Bible, they are prophecies and promises which are made directly to us! Although sin and death are still experienced by true believers, by being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27-29), they can have forgiveness of their sins now and eventually be saved from death. God has promised a time when the righteous will be raised from the dead and given eternal life: *“The dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:52-54).*

Jesus was the true ‘seed of the woman’, but we can be part of that seed of the woman too by being baptized into Christ. Our lives will then reflect the words of Genesis 3:15 – there will be a constant sense of conflict (“enmity”) within us, between right and wrong. The great apostle Paul described a conflict between sinful thoughts and the love of God’s ways that raged within him (Romans 7:14-25). But he concludes this by saying: *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24-25).*

So right from the beginning God promised Christ as a Saviour. This incredible promise given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has been fulfilled in Christ, and we too can benefit from it.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM**The Gospel preached to Abraham**

The Gospel taught by Jesus and the apostles was also given in a series of promises to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. God, through the promises, “Preached the gospel to Abraham” (Galatians 3:8). If we can understand what was taught to Abraham, we will then have a very basic picture of the Christian Gospel. There are other indications that the Gospel is not something which began at the time of Jesus: *“We declare to you glad tidings (the Gospel) – that promise which was made to the (Jewish) fathers, God has fulfilled” (Acts 13:32,33; see also Romans 1:1,2; Hebrews 4:2).*

Two Themes

The promises to Abraham have two basic themes:

1. Things about Abraham’s seed (special descendant)
2. Things about the land which was promised to Abraham.

The New Testament comments on these promises. By letting the Bible explain itself, we can combine the teachings of both Testaments to give us a complete picture of the promises made to Abraham.

Abraham – a Man of Faith

Abraham originally lived in Ur, a prosperous city in what is now Iraq. An extraordinary call of God came to him – to leave that sophisticated life and embark on a journey to a promised land. This required faith because exactly where he was to journey was not made completely clear. It turned out to be a 1,500 mile journey. The land was Canaan – modern Israel.

During his life, God appeared to Abraham and repeated and expanded His promises to him. Those promises are the basis of Christ's Gospel. so that same call comes to true Christians as it did to Abraham, to leave the transient things of this life, and go forward in a life of faith, taking God's promises at face value and living by His Word. *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out (from Ur) to the place (Canaan) which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).*

By showing a similar faith and acting upon it, we can have the same honour as Abraham – to be called the friends of God (Isaiah 41:8), to find the knowledge of God (Genesis 18:17) and to have the sure hope of eternal life in the Kingdom. To truly believe in the Christian message we, too, must firmly believe what God promised to Abraham. With eager eyes we should therefore read and re-read the dialogues between God and Abraham.

The Land

1. "Get out of your country. To a land that I will shew you" (Genesis 12:1).
2. Abraham "went on his journey...as far as Bethel (in Central Israel). And the Lord said to Abram. Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward and westward: for all the land which you see I give to you, and your descendants forever...walk in the land....for I give it to you" (Genesis 13:3,14-17).
3. "The Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18).

4. "I will give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8).
5. "The promise that he (Abraham) would be the heir of the world" (Romans 4:13).

We see here a progressive revelation to Abraham:

1. 'There is a land which I would like you to go to'.
2. 'You have now arrived in the area. You and your children will live here for ever.'
3. The area of the promised land was more specifically defined.
4. Abraham was not to expect to receive the promise in this life – he was to be a "stranger" in the land, although he would later live there for ever. The implication of this is that he would die and then later be resurrected to enable him to receive this promise.
5. Paul, under inspiration, saw the promises to Abraham as meaning his inheritance of the whole earth.

Abraham did not receive the fulfilment of the promises in his lifetime: "*By faith he sojourned (implying a temporary way of life) in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents*" (Hebrews 11:9). Abraham "*died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" (Hebrews 11:13).

Notice the four stages:

1. Knowing the promises;
2. Being "assured of them";
3. Embracing them – by being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27-29);
4. Confessing to the world by our way of life that this world is not our real home, but we are living in hope of that future age to come upon the earth.

God "gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But ...He promised to give it to him for a possession" (Acts 7:5). God keeps His promises. There will come a day when Abraham and all who have those

promises made to them will be rewarded. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises. God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrews 11:13,39,40).*

All true believers will therefore be rewarded at the same point in time, i.e. at the judgment seat at the last day (2 Timothy 4:1,8; Matthew 25:31-34). In order to be judged, Abraham and others who knew those promises must be resurrected just before the judgment.

The Seed

As with the promise of a seed in Genesis 3:15, this seed of Abraham applies primarily to Jesus and, secondarily, to those who are “in Christ” and therefore are also counted as the seed of Abraham:

1. “I will make you a great nation, I will bless you...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2,3).
2. “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered ... all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever” (Genesis 13:15,16).
3. “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be. To your descendants I have given this land” (Genesis 15:5,18).
4. “I give to you and your descendants after you, the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:8).
5. “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:17-18 KJV).

Again, Abraham’s understanding of the “seed” was increased as God gave him further promises.

1. Firstly he was just told that somehow he would have an extraordinary number of descendants, and that through his “seed” the whole earth would be blessed.
2. He was later told that he would have a seed who would come to include many people. These people would spend eternal life, along with himself, in the land at which he had arrived, i.e. Canaan.
3. He was told that his seed would become as many as the stars in the sky. This may have suggested to him that he would have many spiritual descendants (stars in heaven) as well as many natural ones (as “the dust of the earth”).

4. The previous promises were underlined with the additional assurance that the many people who would become part of the seed could have a personal relationship with God.

5. The seed would have victory against his enemies.

Notice that the seed was to bring “blessings” to be available to people from all over the earth. In the Bible the idea of blessing is often connected with forgiveness of sins. After all, this is the greatest blessing a lover of God could ever want. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven” (Psalm 32:1).

The only descendant of Abraham who has brought forgiveness of sins to the world is Jesus, and the New Testament commentary on the promises to Abraham provides solid support. *“He (God) does not say, ‘And to seeds’, as of many (i.e. in the plural), but as of one (in the singular), ‘And to your seed’, who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). “...the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus (i.e. the seed), sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities” (Acts 3:25,26.*

Notice here how Peter quotes and interprets Genesis 22:18:

The seed = Jesus

The blessing = forgiveness of sins.

Joining the Seed

The basic elements of the Gospel were understood by Abraham. But these vital promises were to Abraham and his seed, Jesus. Can anyone else be involved? Even physical descent from Abraham would not automatically make someone part of that one specific seed (John 8:39). To share these promises we have to become intimately part of Jesus. This is by baptism into Jesus (Romans 6:3-5); frequently we read of baptism into His name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). *“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s (by baptism into him) then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:27-29).*

The promise of eternal life on earth, through receiving the “blessing” of forgiveness through Jesus, is by being baptized into Christ, the seed, so that we can share the promises made to him. Romans 8:17 calls us “joint heirs with Christ”. The blessing was to come on people from all parts of the earth, through Christ’s work. The seed was to become a world-wide group of people, like the sand of the sea shores and the stars of the sky.

In Summary

We can summarise the two strands of the promises given to Abraham:

1. The Land

Abraham and his seed, Jesus, and those in Him will inherit the land of Canaan and by extension the whole earth, and live there for ever. In this life they would not receive it, but would do so when Jesus returns.

2. The Seed

This was primarily Jesus. Through Him the sins (“enemies”) of mankind would be overcome, so that the blessings of forgiveness would be made available world-wide.

By baptism into the name of Jesus we become part of the seed and share in the promises to Abraham.

The Hope of Israel

Paul could define his hope as “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). The true Christian hope is the original Jewish hope, the promises made to Abraham the father of the Jewish people (see also John 4:22).

The Early Christians preached:

1. “The things concerning the Kingdom of God and
2. The name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).

These were the very two things explained to Abraham under slightly different headings:

1. Promises about the land and
2. Promises about the seed.

The good news about this Kingdom which was preached to Abraham played a big part in the early preaching of the Gospel (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31).

A Life of Faith

Just technically being Abraham’s seed through baptism does not mean that we are acceptable with God. The Jews are Abraham’s seed naturally speaking, but this does not mean that they can be saved without being baptized and conforming their lives to Christ and the example of Abraham (Romans 9:7,8; 4:13,14).

The “seed” must have the characteristics of its ancestor. If we are to be the true seed of Abraham we must therefore not only be baptized but also have a very real faith in God’s promises, just as he had. Abraham was *“the father of all those who believe, who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had”* (Romans 4:11,12; see also Galatians 3:7).

Real faith must then show itself in action, otherwise, in God’s eyes, it isn’t faith (James 2:17).

THE PROMISE TO DAVID

David, like Abraham and many other recipients of God’s promises, did not have an easy life. After many trials of faith he eventually became king of Israel. To show his appreciation of God’s love toward him during his life, he decided to build God a temple. The reply from God was that David’s son, Solomon, would build the temple and that God wanted to build David a house (2 Samuel 7:4-13). Then followed a detailed promise which repeats much of what was told Abraham, and which also filled in some other details:

- *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the blows of the sons of men: But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established for ever”* (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The promise in Eden (Genesis 3:15) and the promises to Abraham (Genesis 26:4; 28:14) talk of a promised “seed” coming. Having seen that the “seed” in those promises pointed forward to Jesus, it would be logical to assume that the seed promised to David is none other but the Lord Jesus Christ also. The Bible presents a consistent message and the promises of Christ are a key theme of the Old Testament. His description as the son of God (2 Samuel 7:14) confirms this, as do many other references in other parts of the Bible:-

- *“(Jesus), born of the seed of David according to the flesh* (Romans 1:3).
- *“From this man’s seed (David’s), according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a saviour – Jesus”* (Acts 13:23; see also Revelation 22:16).

- The angel told the virgin Mary concerning her son, Jesus: *“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and of his Kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32,33)*. This is applying the promise of David’s seed, in 2 Samuel 7:13 to Jesus.

With the seed firmly identified as Jesus, a number of details now become significant:-

1. The seed

“Your seed, who will come from your body. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.” “I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body” (2 Samuel 7:12,14; Psalm 132:10,11).

Jesus, the seed, was to be a literal, bodily descendant of David, and yet have God as his Father. This could only be achieved by the virgin birth as described in the New Testament. Jesus’ mother was Mary, a descendant of David (Luke 1:32), but he had no human father. God acted miraculously upon Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit in order to make her conceive Jesus, and so the Angel commented, “therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the son of God” (Luke 1:35).

2. The house

“He shall build a house for My name” (2 Samuel 7:13).

This shows that Jesus will build a temple for God. God’s “house” is where He is willing to live, and Isaiah 66:1,2 tells us that He will come to live in the hearts of men who are humble to His word. Jesus is therefore building a spiritual temple for God to dwell in, made up of the true believers. Descriptions of Jesus as the foundation stone of God’s spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:4-8) and of Christians as the temple stones (1 Peter 2:5) now slot into place.

3. The throne

“I will establish the throne of his (Christ’s) kingdom forever...your (David’s) house and your kingdom. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:13,16; see also Isaiah 9:6,7).

Christ’s kingdom will therefore be a re-establishment of David’s kingdom of Israel. To fulfil this promise, Christ must reign on David’s “throne” which was literally in Jerusalem. The kingdom must be established here on earth in order to fulfil these promises.

4. The kingdom

“Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you” (2 Samuel 7:16).

David would witness the establishment of Christ’s eternal kingdom. He must therefore be resurrected at Christ’s return so that he could see with his

own eyes the kingdom being set up world-wide, with Jesus reigning from Jerusalem.

Salvation promised

These things which were promised to David are absolutely vital to understand. David joyfully spoke of these things as “an everlasting covenant...this is all my salvation and all my desire” (2 Samuel 23:5). These things relate to our salvation too; rejoicing in them should likewise be all our desire.

These doctrines are important and it is a tragedy that Christendom teaches doctrines which contradict these marvellous truths:

- If Jesus physically ‘pre-existed’, i.e. he existed as a person before he was born, then this makes nonsense of these promises that Jesus would be David’s ‘seed’ or descendant.
- If the kingdom of God will be in heaven, then Jesus cannot re-establish David’s kingdom of Israel, nor can he reign from David’s “throne”. These things were literally on the earth, and so their re-establishment must be in the same place.

The Implications of the Promises

Through baptism, the promises to David and also the other great promises of the Bible can apply to us – we too can have the hope of salvation in God’s Kingdom. We can become spiritual Israel, and therefore the people of God, separated from this world. Abraham, the natural father of the Jewish race, can become our spiritual father.

Separation

Having looked at this promise, and also the promise to Abraham, implications emerge in relation to the way we live if we accept them through baptism. For example, we become a separate people. We become spiritual Jews. What God spoke to men like Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, He therefore spoke to us (Hosea 12:5; Genesis 28:15; compare Hebrews 12:5,6). We therefore will seek all our associations only among the people of God, with whom we will share the kingdom of God.

Abraham’s example of consciously shunning the things of this world will be matched in his ‘children’. If we truly believe the promises, we too will separate ourselves “from the corruption that is in the world” (2 Peter 1:4). We should be happy to have a light hold on possession of property, knowing that this earth is ours. For now, we are just passing through it, surveying it, like Abraham did.

Commitment

All those in true covenant relationship with God will realize the fullness of commitment which He has entered, and will make a whole-hearted response

and sacrifice (Malachi 2:4,5). Psalm 103:18 parallels “such as keep his covenant” with “those that remember his commandments to do them”. The extent of the implication of being in covenant with God ought to preclude the possibility of worshipping any other god. The covenant we can enter into demands loyalty.

If we take part in the promises of God, it should enable us to live godly lives now in this evil world. We can be sure of God’s mercy and truth towards us, so that whatever happens to us in this life we can have confidence that God will bring us to His kingdom.

Unity

Galatians 3:27-29 explains that through baptism into the covenant made with Abraham, there is a special unity between all in that covenant. Slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile are all thereby united, as they were in the early church. Through the power of the most basic facts of the Gospel preached to Abraham, this incredible unity is possible amongst believers. Believers are all united in Christ as ‘Abraham’s seed’, therefore they must show kindness, patience, etc.

Present and Future Blessings

By being baptised we can have the blessings of forgiveness now (Acts 3:25,26), and also look forward to the blessings of the future Kingdom of God. In Galatians 3:15-20 Paul is pointing out that the promises to Abraham offer eternal inheritance in the Kingdom on the basis of faith and grace, and neither the Law of Moses nor any other form of legalism can change that basis. An appreciation of the promises will enable us to see the wonder of salvation by grace, to the point that we will reject all forms of legalism and seeking to justify ourselves by works achieved.

The Promise to Abraham can be ours

Abraham was promised that his seed would have the Almighty God as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. If we acknowledge Abraham’s God as our God and can see in faith that God has promised the true believer the world, we will live now in the confidence that one day these promises will be completely fulfilled and by God’s grace and mercy we can share in them. The time is coming when God’s purpose from the beginning will be complete, and the “earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Part 4: THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE

Immortality Conditional

Immortality is conditional, and is not something which we naturally possess, as the following passages prove:

- “Christ has....brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 1:2).
- “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life (inherent) in you. Whoever eats My flesh....has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:52-54) – to give him this “eternal life”. Christ’s reasoning throughout John chapter 6 is that He is the “bread of life”, and that only through correct response to him, is there immortality (John 6:47, 50, 51, 57, 58).
- “God has given to us (believers) eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11). There can be no hope of immortality for those not “in Christ”. Only through Christ has immortality been made possible; He is “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:9; Acts 3:15 A.V. margin). Therefore immortality for men came through the work of Christ.
- The true believer seeks for immortality, and will be rewarded by the gift of eternal life – something he does not naturally possess (Romans 2:7; 6:23; John 10:28). Our mortal body “must put on immortality” at the return of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:53); thus immortality is something promised, not now possessed (1 John 2:25).
- God alone has inherent immortality (1 Timothy 6:16).

What is the Soul?

In the light of the foregoing it ought to be inconceivable that man has an ‘immortal soul’. The Hebrew ‘Nephesh’ and Greek ‘Psuche’, which are translated ‘soul’ in the Bible are also translated as: *body, breath, creature, heart, mind, person, himself*. The ‘soul’ therefore refers to the person, body or self.

There is no difference between people and animals in our fundamental nature and death:

- *“For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts: one thing befalls them (note the double emphasis): as one dies, so dies the other....man has no advantage over beasts....All (i.e. man and animals) go to one place (the grave): all are from the dust, and all return to dust.” (Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20)*

Death of the Soul

A very basic fact is that all “living creatures” eventually die. About a third of the words translated ‘soul’, are associated with the death and destruction of the soul. This shows that the soul cannot be something which is immortal. For example: *“The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4)*. God can destroy the soul: *“fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body” (Matthew 10:28)*. See also Ezekiel 22:27; Proverbs 6:32; Leviticus 23:30; Numbers 15:27-31; Isaiah 53:10).

That the ‘soul’ refers to the person or body rather than some immortal spark within us is shown by the majority of verses where the word occurs. Some examples: “The blood of the souls” (Jeremiah 2:34). “If a soul sin...if a soul touch any unclean thing...if a soul swear” (Leviticus 5:1-4 A.V. See also Psalm 103:1, 2, 5; Mark 8:35).

This is proof that the soul does not refer to any spiritual element within man; here, ‘soul’ just means one’s physical life.

The Spirit of Man

The Hebrew (‘Ruach’) and Greek (‘Pneuma’) words for ‘spirit’ are also translated in the following ways: life, spirit, mind, wind, breath.

God uses His spirit to preserve the natural creation. The spirit of God within man is therefore the life force within him, as these verses demonstrate:

- “The body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26).
- God “breathed into his (Adam’s) nostrils the breath (spirit) of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

The spirit of life is given to us at birth, and remains as long as our body is alive.

The Removal of God’s Spirit

When God’s spirit is withdrawn from anything, it immediately perishes. If God “should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34:14-15). When God takes away His spirit from us at death, not only does our body die, but our entire consciousness ceases. “Do not put your trust in princes.... His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish” (Psalm 146:3-4).

At death, “the dust will return to the earth as it was; and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When we die we ‘breathe our last’ in the sense that God’s spirit within us departs from us. That spirit is absorbed

into God's spirit which is all around us; so at death "the spirit will return to God".

Death is Unconsciousness

The Bible makes it clear that we have no consciousness during the death state: "(Man's) spirit departs, he return to his earth; in that very day his plans perish" (Psalm 146:4). "The dead know nothing....their love, their hatred, and their envy, have now perished" (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; see also verse 10).

Death is repeatedly referred to as a **sleep** or **rest**, both for the righteous and the wicked: "And many of those who **sleep in the dust** of the earth shall awake"; "But you, go your way till the end; for **you shall rest**, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:2, 13. See also Job 3:11, 13, 17). Sufficient evidence has been produced for us to bluntly state that the notion of the righteous going to a state of bliss in heaven at death, is simply not found in the Bible.

Resurrection

The Bible emphasizes that the reward of the righteous will be at the resurrection, at the coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Paul said that if there is no resurrection, then all effort to be obedient to God is pointless (1 Corinthians 15:32). Surely he would not have reasoned like this if he believed that he would also be rewarded with his 'soul' going to heaven at death? The implication is that he believed the resurrection of the body to be the only form of reward.

Christ encouraged us with the words "you shall be repaid at **the resurrection** of the just" (Luke 14:14). At his return, Christ "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21). As he now has a literal bodily form, energized purely by Spirit rather than blood, so we will share a similar reward.

Our Hope – Life with an Immortal Body

At the judgment we will be rewarded for how we have lived this life in a bodily form (2 Corinthians 5:10). The ungodly retain their present mortal body, which will then rot back to dust. Those who have tried to overcome the mind of the flesh with that of the Spirit "will of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8) in the form of a Spirit-filled body.

There is ample evidence that the reward of the righteous will be in a bodily form. Once this is accepted, the vital importance of the resurrection should be apparent. Our present body clearly ceases to exist at death; if we can only experience eternal life and immortality in a bodily form, it follows that death

must be a state of unconsciousness, until such time as our body is re-created and then given God's nature. Our present body will then be changed to an immortal one (Philippians 3:21).

Through baptism we associate with Christ's death and resurrection, showing we believe we too will share the reward which He received through His resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Through sharing His sufferings now, we will also share His reward (2 Corinthians 4:10; Romans 8:23). This hope of a literal bodily reward has been understood by God's people from earliest times (Isaiah 26:19). Job knew that although his body would be eaten by worms, he would, in a bodily form, receive his reward: "my redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last **on the earth**: and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in **my flesh** I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26).

The Place of Reward: Heaven or Earth?

The following passages show that **earth**, not heaven will be the location of God's Kingdom.

- The 'Lord's Prayer' asks for God's Kingdom **to come**, whereby God's desires will be done **on earth** as they are now done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). We are therefore praying for God's Kingdom to come **on the earth**.
- "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit **the earth**" (Matthew 5:5. See also Psalm 37, especially verses 11, 22, 34, 35) – **not** '..... for their souls shall go to heaven'. Living in the earth forever means that eternal life in heaven is an impossibility.
- "David....is both dead and buried.... David **did not ascend into the heavens**" (Acts 2:29, 34). Peter explained that David's hope was the resurrection from the dead at Christ's return (Acts 2:22-36).
- The righteous will say at the judgment: Christ has "made us kings and priests to our God: and we shall reign **on the earth**" (Revelation 5:9, 10).

Hell

The Bible teaches that hell is the grave, where all men go at death. The Hebrew word 'sheol', translated 'hell', means 'a covered place'. A good translation of this word is 'grave'. The following examples of 'sheol', should torpedo the popular conception of hell as a place of fire and torment for the wicked:

- "Let the wicked.....be silent in the grave" (Psalm 31:17); they will not be screaming in agony.
- "God will redeem my soul from the power of the **grave**" (Psalm 49:15) – i.e. David's soul or body would be resurrected from the grave, or 'hell'.

Seeing that ‘hell’ is the grave, the righteous will be saved from it through their resurrection to eternal life. The supreme example is that of Jesus, whose “soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:31 KJV) because he was resurrected. That Christ went to ‘hell’ should be proof enough that it is not just a place where the wicked go.

What happens to unrepentant sinners?

God does not impute sin to those ignorant of His word (Romans 5:13). Those in this position will remain dead. Those who have known God’s requirements will be resurrected and judged at Christ’s return. If wicked, they will be punished with death and stay dead for ever (Revelation 2:11; 20:6). It is in this sense that the punishment for sin is ‘everlasting’, in that there will be no end to their death. It is one of God’s principles that the punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23; 8:13; James 1:15). Death is a state of complete unconsciousness. Sin results in total destruction, not eternal torment. (Matthew 21:41; 22:7; Mark 12:9; James 4:12).

Unconsciousness – the Practical meaning of Death

There can be no activity in the grave.... Therefore **now** is the time to live a life active to the absolute maximum in the Lord’s service (Ecclesiastes 9:10-13). Moses pleaded with God to make time-frittering Israel see the implications of their mortality; having eloquently spoken of the tragedy of our mortality, he concludes: “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). The tragic brevity of life means that we should quit time wasting follies. The fact we are going to die relatively soon, and lie unconscious, drives the man who seriously believes it, to faith in the God of resurrection. Death being like a sleep, it follows that judgment day is our next conscious experience after death. Because death is an ever more likely possibility for us, our judgment is effectively almost upon us. And we must live with and in that knowledge.

Part 5: WHO IS GOD?

There is Only One God

Deuteronomy 6:4,5 states: “The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength”. So the LORD’s unity is strongly linked with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It was the unity of God, and the imperative from it to love Him with all the heart, which was programmatic for the Jews’ daily living. This is why it was Jewish practice to recite these words several times a day, and also on their deathbed.

If there is only “one” God, as this passage clearly maintains, where does this leave the popular doctrine of the trinity? The trinity is one of the greatest false doctrines of all time, in its claim that there are three “persons” in the Godhead. The word trinity is never even found in the Bible. The Bible teaches that God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is His special power. Three separate entities – not “three in one” – as the confusing doctrine of the trinity would have us believe.

MORE ABOUT GOD...

God is from Everlasting to Everlasting

See what Habakkuk 1:12 builds upon the fact of God’s everlasting nature: “Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die”. If we truly believe that we are His people, not those of this world, and that we are truly part of His eternal family, then His eternity becomes a guarantee of our eternal salvation.

God is the Creator

Because of God’s awesome creation and the power of the Word that formed it all, we should likewise stand in awe of Him and recognize the power of His word (Psalm 33:6-9). Because we are created in God’s image; the structure of our very bodies is an imperative to give ourselves totally to His cause (Matthew 22:19-21). Whatever bears God’s image – i.e. our very bodies – must be given to Him. “It is He who made us, and (therefore) we are His (Psalm 100:3 NIV). We must be His in practice because He is our Creator. So it is not that we merely believe in creation rather than evolution; more than this, such belief in creation must elicit a life given over to that creator.

God Sees and Knows All Things, Through His Spirit

The Old Testament character of Job knew this, and therefore he commented, it was impossible that he would lust after a woman, if he really believed (as he claimed he did) that God was omniscient: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?... (for) does He (God) not see my ways, and count all my steps?” (Job 31:1-4).

Likewise God had to remind Israel: “Can any hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?” (Jeremiah 23:24). The context is appealing to the people to quit their sins. We should labour to enter the Kingdom, because God knows absolutely our every thought and action of ours and will ultimately judge them (Hebrews 4:11-13).

God is a Real, Personal Being

God is a real person, as the following points prove:

- It is a fundamental tenet of Christianity that Jesus is the Son of God. If God is not a real being, then it is impossible for Him to have a Son who was the ‘image of His person’ (Hebrews 1:3)
- Further, it becomes difficult to develop a personal, living relationship with ‘God’, if ‘God’ is just a concept in our mind. It is tragic that the majority of religions have this unreal, intangible conception of God.
- As God is so infinitely greater than we are, it is understandable that many people’s faith has balked at the clear promises that ultimately we will see Him: “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).
- Jesus tells us that we should not swear, because “he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it” (Matthew 23:22).
- “God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the angels. Our creation in the image of God surely means that we can infer something about the real object, of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous of which we cannot conceive.
- The faithful are promised that they will inherit God’s nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- We will be given a body like that of Jesus (Philippians 3:21), and we know that he will have a physical body in the Kingdom.

The personality of God is, therefore, related to the Gospel of the Kingdom. There can be no sensible concept of worship, religion or personal relationship with God therefore until it is appreciated that God is a real being and that we are made in His image. We need to develop His mental likeness now, so that we may be made fully like Him in the Kingdom of God.

What Does This Mean for Me?

There is a vast difference between having a vague notion that there is a higher power, and actually being certain of what He is offering in return for faithful service to Him. Hebrews 11:6 makes this point, we “must believe that He (God) is” *and* “that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”.

An awareness within us that there is a God, does not mean that we are automatically acceptable to God. If we seriously agree that we really do have a creator, we should “therefore keep His... commandments” (Deuteronomy 4:39,40). As we search the Scriptures in order to do this, we will find that our faith in God’s existence is strengthened.

Part 6: THE REAL CHRIST

True Christian faith is centred around the work of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection form the basis for God's plan of salvation. It is vital to understand the real reason for Christ, his true status as Son of God and how we can benefit from his work. Jesus prayed to his Father just before his cruel death: "This is eternal life, that they (true believers) may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

The Virgin Birth

Over 2000 years ago the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with this message: "You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest... Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? (i.e. she was a virgin). And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:31-35).

Through the Holy Spirit (God's breath / power) acting upon her, Mary conceived Jesus while still a virgin. Thus Joseph was not the true father of Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit acting upon the womb of Mary, Jesus, the Son of God, could not have come into existence. Jesus was "begotten" by God (John 3:16), rather than created as Adam was originally. This explains the closeness of God's association with Jesus and also helps explain his natural aptitude for the ways of God his Father.

Christ's Place in God's Plan

God had a complete plan formulated right from the beginning of creation (John 1:1). His desire to have a Son was in His plan from the beginning. The Old Testament reveals different aspects of God's plan of salvation in Christ; from the promises to the Jewish fathers, to the prophecies of the prophets and the types of the Law of Moses. Christ existed in God's mind and purpose from the beginning, although he only came into existence physically through his birth of Mary.

Hebrews 1:4-7, 13,14 stress that Christ was not an angel; whilst in his mortal life he was less than angels (Hebrews 2:7), he was exalted to a far greater honour than them seeing he was God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The Apostle Peter sums up the position: Christ "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times" (1Peter 1:20). Jesus was the central pivot of the Gospel: God "had promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our

Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:1-4).

This summarizes the history of Christ:

1. Promised in the Old Testament – i.e. in God’s plan;
2. Created as a physical person through the virgin birth, as a seed of David.
3. Due to his perfect character (“the spirit of holiness”), shown during his mortal life He was resurrected;
4. Publicly declared to be the Son of God by the apostles’ spirit-gifted preaching.

The Foreknowledge of God

God has complete ‘foreknowledge’. We will be greatly helped in appreciating how fully Christ was in God’s mind at the beginning, while not physically existing, if we can come to terms with the fact that God knows all things which will occur in the ‘future’. God can therefore speak and think about things which do not exist, as though they do. God “calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (Romans 4:17). He declares “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). Because of this, God can speak of the dead as if they are alive, and can speak of men as if they were alive before birth. The “counsel”, or word of God, had prophesied Christ from the beginning; he was always in God’s purpose or “pleasure”. It was therefore certain that at some time Christ would be physically born; God would fulfil His stated purpose in Christ.

Biblical Hebrew has a ‘prophetic perfect’ tense, which uses the past tense to describe future things which God has promised. Thus David said, “This *is* the house of the Lord God” (1 Chronicles 22:1), when as yet the temple was only promised by God. Scripture abounds with examples of God’s foreknowledge. God was so certain that He would fulfil the promises to Abraham, that He told him: “To your descendants *I have given* this land...” (Genesis 15:18) at a time when Abraham did not even have descendants (see also Genesis 17:5). Christ was spoken of as existing from the beginning in God’s mind and plan, although physically he could not have done so. He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Jesus did not die then literally; he was the “Lamb of God sacrificed about 4,000 years later on the cross (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). In the same way as Jesus was chosen from the beginning, (1 Peter 1:20), so were the believers (Ephesians 1:4; the same Greek word for “chosen” is used in these

Differences Between God and Jesus

There is a fine balance to be drawn between those passages which emphasize the degree to which “God was in Christ” (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:19), and those which highlight his humanity. The latter group of passages makes it impossible to justify from the Bible the idea that Jesus is God Himself. One of the clearest summaries of the relationship between God and Jesus is found in 1 Timothy 2:5: “There is **one** God, **and** one **mediator** between God and men, the **man** Christ Jesus.”

Reflection upon the highlighted words leads to the following conclusions:

1. The Father is God. (1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8).
2. In addition to this one God, there is the mediator, the man Christ Jesus – “...**and** one mediator...,” indicating a difference between Christ and God.
3. “Mediator” means that Christ is a go-between. A mediator between sinful man and sinless God cannot be sinless God Himself; it had to be a sinless man, of human nature – “the *man* Christ Jesus.”

The Nature of Jesus

The word ‘nature’ refers to what we naturally, fundamentally are. The Bible speaks of only two natures – that of God, and that of man. By nature God cannot die, be tempted etc. Christ was not of God’s nature during his life, he was totally of human nature. It was vital that Christ was tempted like us (Hebrews 4:15), so that through his perfect overcoming of temptation he could gain forgiveness for us.

The wrong desires, which are the basis of our temptations, come from within us (Mark 7:15-23), from within our human nature (James 1:13-15). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should be of human nature so that he could experience and overcome these temptations.

“As the children (us) are partakers of flesh and blood (human nature), he (Christ) also himself likewise took part (i.e. “partook”, R.S.V.) of the same (nature); that through death he might destroy...the devil...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the (nature of the) seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest...to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted”. (Hebrews 2:14-18 KJV)

This passage emphasizes the fact that Jesus had human nature: “*He also himself likewise*” partook of it (Hebrews 2:14). This phrase uses three words

all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. Christ was the seed of Abraham (2:16), who had come to bring salvation for believers. In *every* way he had “to be made like unto his brethren” (2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice.

Forgiveness

Whenever baptized believers sin, they can come to God, confessing their sin in prayer through Christ (1 John 1:9); God is aware that Christ was tempted to sin exactly as they are, but that he was perfect, overcoming that very temptation which they fail. Because of this, “God for Christ’s sake” can forgive us (Ephesians 4:32 KJV). *“God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).*

“Sin” refers to the natural proneness to sin which we have by nature. We continue to sin, and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). To get out of this predicament, man needed help. God therefore intervened and gave us His own Son, who had our “sinful flesh”, with all the promptings to sin which we have. Unlike every other man, Christ overcame every temptation

The Humanity of Jesus

The Gospel records show how completely Jesus had human nature. He was weary, and had to sit down to drink from a well (John 4:6). “Jesus wept” at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35). Most supremely, the record of his final sufferings should be proof enough of his humanity. “Now my soul is troubled”, he admitted as he prayed for God to save him from having to go through with his death on the cross (John 12:27). He “prayed, saying, O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup (of suffering and death) pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39).

From childhood “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (i.e. spiritual maturity, cp Ephesians 4:13), and in favour with God and men”. (Luke 2:52); see also 2:40). This shows Christ’s physical growth as being parallel to his spiritual development. Obedience to God’s will is something which we can all learn over a period of time. Christ also had to go through this process of learning obedience to his Father. “Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and having been perfected (i.e. spiritually mature), he became the author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:8,9; see also Phil. 2:7,8.).

Jesus had to make a conscious, personal effort to be righteous; he was not forced by God, which would have resulted in him being a mere puppet. Jesus truly loved us, and gave his life on the cross from this motive. The constant emphasis upon the love of Christ for us would be hollow if God forced him

to die on the cross (Ephesians 5:2,25; Revelation 1:5; Galatians 2:20). That Jesus *did* have the option whether to obey or not, makes us able to appreciate his love, and to form a personal relationship with him. It was because of Christ's willingness to voluntarily give his life, that God was so delighted with him. "Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:17,18).

What Does This Mean For Me?

The Lord Jesus can become real to us in our common, everyday lives because He too faced the temptations we face. We can really believe that forgiveness is possible through the work of such a representative; his example can be a living inspiration to rise above our lower nature. Appreciating the doctrines of salvation through Christ enables us to pray acceptably; "we have boldness and access with confidence by *the Faith*" – not just 'by faith', but as a result of *the Faith* (Ephesians 3:12 KJV). After being baptized into Christ we can come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience (Hebrews 4:16). This "boldness" will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Corinthians 3:12; 7:4). 'Boldness' characterized the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Philippians 1:20).

God existed from infinity, and yet only 2,000 years ago He gave His only and His *begotten* Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans – only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000-year time span. That the only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawl on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time, is wondrous indeed.

Christ died so that God could work out our salvation. The love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Isaiah 62:5) with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this, Jesus Christ died for you, in the shameful way that He did. When this is fully appreciated we are left in total wonder and gratitude for God's love.

The Trinity – Unscriptural

The Bible's clear teaching about Christ gives no support for the doctrine of the Trinity. Consider the following:

Luke 1:31-35: Jesus *would be* the Son of God. Note the many future tenses in these verses. Jesus did not pre-exist before his birth of Mary.

John 3:16: Jesus was the "only *begotten* Son" of God. He 'began' when he was 'conceived' (idea of beginning, Luke 1:31) in Mary's womb. If Jesus was begotten by God, then his Father is older than he is. God has no beginning (Psalm 90:2) and therefore Jesus cannot be God Himself.

Mary is described in the Gospels as Christ's "mother". Jesus did not exist before his birth of Mary.

The word 'Trinity' never occurs in the Bible.

1 Timothy 2:5: "There is *one* God, and *one mediator* between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus." (see also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8).

"God is not a man" (Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9); yet Chris was "the son of man".

Christ is "the *Son* of the Highest" (Luke 1:32). God only has ultimate highness; Jesus as "the Son of the Highest" cannot have been God Himself in person.

The language of Father and Son, used about God and Jesus, shows they are not the same. A son may have certain similarities to his father, but cannot be one and the same person.

Jesus was "made like his brethren" (Hebrews 2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. To say that Jesus was not totally of human nature denies the good news of Christ.

There are a number of obvious differences between God and Jesus, which clearly show that Jesus was not God Himself.

GOD

"God cannot be tempted"
(James 1:13)

God cannot die – He is immortal by nature (Psalm 90:2; 1 Timothy 6:16).

God cannot be seen by men
(1 Timothy 6:16; Exodus 33:20)

JESUS

Christ "was in all points tempted as we are" (Hebrews 4:15).

Christ died for three days (Matthew 12:40; 16:21).

Men saw Jesus and handled him (1 John 1:1 emphasizes this).

In some ways Christ's 'will', or desires, was different from that of God (Matthew 26:39; John 5:30).

From childhood "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52). This would not be possible if Jesus was 'God the Son'.

Christ did not know the exact time of his second coming, although the Father did (Mark 13:32).

God was pleased with Christ's willing obedience which is hard to understand if Jesus was God, living out a life in human form as some kind of tokenistic association with sinful man (Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 17:5).

Part 7: THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Hebrew word translated “spirit” in the Old Testament strictly means “breath” or “power”; thus God’s spirit is His “breathing”, the very essence of God, reflecting His mind. It is not a separate person from God. It is a common Bible teaching that how a man thinks is expressed in his actions (Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 12:34). A little reflection upon our own actions will confirm this; we think of something and then we do it. God likewise thinks and therefore does things. “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand” (Isaiah 14:24).

Many passages clearly identify God’s spirit with His power. In order to create the earth, “...the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light” (Genesis 1:2,3). God’s spirit was the power by which all things, e.g. light, were made. A comparison of Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20 shows that “the finger of God” and “the spirit of God” are parallel – God in action is His spirit. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6). God’s spirit is therefore described as follows:

- His breath
- His word
- His finger
- His hand

It is therefore His power by which He achieves all things. The spirit given to us, and all creation, is what sustains our life. We have “the breath of the spirit of life” within us (Genesis 7:22) given to us by God at birth (Psalm 104:30; Genesis 2:7). God is the life force which sustains all creation. His spirit is present everywhere (Psalm 139:2,7,9,10).

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

At various times in His dealings with men, God gave the use of His power (“Holy Spirit”) to men. However, this was never in the form of a “blank cheque”, as it were, enabling them to do what they wished; always the use of this Holy Spirit was for a specific purpose. When it was accomplished, the gift of the Holy Spirit was withdrawn. We must remember that God’s spirit acts in a way which fulfils the purpose which is in His mind. The gifts of Holy Spirit were always to achieve specific things at specific times. The making of the tabernacle is an example. Early in Israel’s history; they were commanded to make an elaborate tent (“tabernacle”) in which the altar and other holy items could be kept; detailed instructions were given concerning how to make all the items which would be necessary for the worship of God. To accomplish

this, God gave His spirit to certain men. They were, “filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments...” etc. (Exodus 28:3).

Reasons for the Gifts in the First Century

Remembering the basic principles which we have already learnt about the gifts of God’s spirit, we now come to the New Testament record of the spirit gifts which were possessed in the early church (i.e. the groups of believers who lived in the generation after the time of Jesus).

Christ’s last command was for the apostles to go throughout the world preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16). This they did, with the theme of Christ’s death and resurrection foremost in their message. But remember that then there was no New Testament as we know it. As they stood in market places and synagogues speaking about this man Jesus of Nazareth, their story could have sounded bizarre – a carpenter from Israel who was perfect, who died and was then resurrected in accurate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and who was now asking them to be baptised and follow His example.

In our day we appeal to the New Testament records of the work and doctrine of Jesus in order to prove that our message is from God; but in those days, before it was written down and available, God allowed His preachers the use of His Holy Spirit in order to underline the truth of what they were saying. This was the specific reason for the use of the gifts in the sight of the world; the absence of the written New Testament would have also made it difficult for the new groups of believers to grow in their faith.

As ever, these reasons for the granting of the Holy Spirit were made abundantly plain:

- “When he (Jesus) ascended up on high (to heaven), he...gave (spirit) gifts unto men... for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry (preaching), for the edifying of the body of Christ (i.e. the believers)” (Ephesians 4:8,12 KJV).
- So Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established” (Romans 1:11).

Concerning the use of the gifts to confirm the preaching of the Gospel, we read: “God also bearing witness (to the message of salvation) both with signs and wonders, with various miracles” (Hebrews 2:4). “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done (a miracle), being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:12). All this is summarized by the comment on the apostles’ obedience to the command to preach: “And they

(the disciples) went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20).

The Withdrawal of the Gifts

The miraculous gifts of God’s spirit will be used again by the believers in order to change this present world into God’s Kingdom, after the return of Christ. The gifts are therefore called “the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:4,5); and Joel 2:26-29 describes a great outpouring of the spirit gifts after the repentance of Israel. The very fact that these gifts will be given to the believers on Christ’s return is proof enough that they are not possessed now. To any Christian, with eyes open to both Scripture and world events, the Lord’s return must surely be soon.

From all the Biblical records of the use of spirit gifts, it is clear that they were given at particular times for particular purposes and were withdrawn by God when His purpose was accomplished: “Whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues (the ability to speak foreign languages, in order to preach), they will cease...but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). As the Good News Bible clearly states: the gifts “are temporary”.

Ephesians 4:8-14 helps us understand this further. This passage explains that the gifts of the first century were to be given until the perfect, or mature, man was reached. Making such a fuss about possessing the spirit gifts is therefore not a sign of spiritual maturity. The progress each reader of these words should now make, is towards a deeper appreciation of the written Word of God, to rejoice in the completeness of God’s basic revelation of Himself to us through it, and to respond to it in humble obedience.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 teaches that response to “all scripture” enables the man of God to be “perfect”, complete, and mature. So once the New Testament was completed, towards the end of the first century, the gifts were no longer needed. They had achieved their purpose, of enabling the church to become “fully equipped” (Ephesians 4:8 Weymouth). When the Bible was completed, the church was indeed fully equipped to preach the gospel of salvation.

Present Claims of Spirit Possession

A number of other points have to be made concerning the repeated claims of those who think they now possess the miraculous gifts. Whatever one makes of the above arguments for the withdrawal of the gifts, the reality is that the present claims to Spirit gift possession are sadly in conflict with the nature of the gifts as recorded in the New Testament. Whatever is being done today is different from that which happened in the early church.

Present “speaking in tongues” tends to repeat the same short syllables over and over again, e.g. “Lala, lala, lala, shama. Jesus, Jesus.....”. This is not in the syntax associated with any language; when one hears someone speak in a foreign tongue, it is usually possible to discern that they are communicating something by the pattern of the words they use, although we may not understand those words. Yet modern tongue-speaking does not feature this, underlining the fact that it is not building up the church, which was the purpose of the first century gifts.

Some Pentecostals claim that speaking in tongues is a sign of being “saved” and will therefore accompany every true conversion. This claim runs into serious difficulty with the description of the early church as a body, in which those possessing different gifts were like the different parts. Not everyone was an arm or leg, and so likewise not everyone possessed any one gift, e.g. tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 makes this clear. Another problem for the Pentecostal argument is that Philip converted many people in Samaria – i.e. they were baptised in water after understanding the Gospel, but they did not receive the spirit gifts; because after this, Peter and John came to them: “When they had come down, (they) prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit...through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given” (Acts 8:4-18).

It is possible that the passing on of the Spirit gifts was only by this laying on of hands, which is not frequently practised by modern claimants. Thus Paul wanted to visit the Romans in order to give them the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:11 cf. Ephesians 4:12). It would therefore follow that once the generation who had this power passed away, there was no way of continuing the gifts. If indeed they are obtainable purely by prayer, it is difficult to understand why Paul had to visit Rome to transfer the gifts to believers there. The only answer must be that “through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given”.

Part 8: BAPTISM

Baptism is one of the most basic Bible doctrines (see Hebrews 6:2 for example). True baptism can only occur after a correct grasp of the basic truths which comprise the Gospel. If you wish to become truly associated with the great hope which the Bible offers through Jesus Christ, then baptism is an absolute necessity. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22) in the sense that the promises concerning salvation were made only to Abraham and his seed. We can only have those promises made to us if we become *in* the Seed, by being baptized *into* Christ (Galatians 3:22-29). Jesus therefore clearly

commanded His followers: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel (which is contained in the promises to Abraham – Galatians 3:8) to every creature. He who believes **and** is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16).

Baptism – Start of a New Life

Baptism is not just an optional extra, it is a vital prerequisite for salvation. Baptism must be followed by a lifetime of continued obedience to God’s Word. Jesus emphasized this: “Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). “Born of water” refers to baptism: after this, one must be born again of the spirit. This is an ongoing process “Being born again...through the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). Thus it is through our continued response to God’s spirit word that we become born of the spirit.

Baptized Into Christ

We are “baptized *into* Christ” (Galatians 3:27), *into* His name (Acts 19:5; 8:16; Matthew 28:19). Note that we are baptized *into Christ* – not into any church or any human organization. Without baptism we are not “in Christ”, and therefore not covered by His saving word (Acts 4:12).

True Belief Compels Baptism

The book of Acts of the Apostles shows the vital importance of baptism and emphasizes how *immediately* people were baptized after accepting the Gospel (e.g. Acts 8:12, 36-39; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15). This emphasis is understandable once it is appreciated that without baptism our learning of the Gospel is in vain. The prison keeper at Philippi was suddenly plunged into the crisis of his life by a massive earthquake which completely broke up his high security prison. The prisoners had ample opportunity to escape – something which would have cost him his life. His faith in the Gospel then became real, so much so that “the same hour of the night...immediately he and all his family were baptized” (Acts 16:33). Many a hesitant candidate for baptism can take true inspiration from that man. That he could make such an act of faith in the middle of huge immediate problems is proof enough that he already had a detailed knowledge of the Gospel, seeing that such real faith only comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17 cp. Acts 17:11).

Acts 8:26-40 records how an Ethiopian official was studying his Bible whilst riding in a chariot through the desert. He met Philip, who extensively explained the Gospel to him, including the requirement of baptism. Humanly speaking, it must have seemed impossible to obey the command to be baptized in that waterless desert. Yet God would not give a command which He knows some people cannot obey. “As they went down the road, they came to some water”, i.e. an oasis, where baptism was possible (Acts 8:36).

The apostle Paul received a dramatic vision from Christ which so pricked his conscience that as soon as possible he “arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). Paul later talked about his life after baptism like this: “I press toward the goal for the prize....” (Philippians 3:7,8,13,14). This is the language of an athlete straining forward to break the finishing tape. Such concentration of mental and physical endeavour should characterize our lives after baptism. Baptism is the beginning of a race toward the Kingdom of God; it is not just a token of having changed churches and beliefs, nor is it a passive entrance into a relaxed life of easy-going adherence to a few vaguely stated Christian principles. Baptism associates us in an ongoing sense with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-5).

As was true for Paul, so it is for all who have been properly baptized; baptism is a decision which one will never regret. All our lives we will be aware that we made the correct choice. Of few human decisions can we ever be so certain. The question has to be seriously answered: “Why should I not be baptized?”

How Should We Be Baptized?

There is a widely held view that baptism can be performed, especially on babies, by sprinkling water on their foreheads (i.e. ‘christening’). This is in stark contrast to the Biblical requirement for baptism. The Greek word ‘baptizo’, which is translated ‘baptize’ in the English Bible, does *not* mean to sprinkle; it means to completely wash and immerse in a liquid. This word is used in classical Greek concerning ships sinking and being ‘baptized’ (i.e. submerged) in water. It is also used with reference to a piece of cloth being dyed from one colour to another by ‘baptizing’, or dipping it into a dye. To change the colour of the cloth, it is evident that it had to be fully immersed under the liquid, rather than have the dye sprinkled upon it. That immersion is indeed the correct form of baptism is borne out by the following verses:

- “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was **much water** there” (John 3:23).
- Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan: “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway **out of the water**” (Matthew 3:13-16 KJV). His baptism was clearly by immersion – he “went up...**out of the water**” after baptism. One of the reasons for Jesus being baptized was in order to set an example, so that no one could seriously claim to follow Jesus without copying his example of baptism by immersion.
- Philip and the Ethiopian official “went down **into** the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up **out of the water**...” (Acts 8:38,39).
- Baptism is a burial (Colossians 2:12), which implies a total covering.

- Baptism is called a ‘washing away’ of sins (Acts 22:16). The point of true conversion is likened to a ‘washing’ in Revelation 1:5; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22 etc. This language of washing is far more relevant to baptism by dipping than to sprinkling.

There are several Old Testament indications that acceptable approach to God was through some form of washing (Priests: Leviticus 8:6; Exodus 40:32; Israelites: Deuteronomy 23:11; Naaman a Gentile: 2 Kings 5:9-14). So baptism refers to a complete dipping in water after first understanding the basic message of the Gospel.

The Meaning of Baptism

One of the reasons for baptism by immersion is that going under the water symbolizes our going into the grave – associating us with the death of Christ, and indicating our ‘death’ to our previous life of sin and ignorance. Coming up out of the water connects us with the resurrection of Christ, relating us to the hope of resurrection to eternal life at His return, as well as to living a new life now, spiritually triumphant over sin on account of Christ’s victory achieved by his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).

Because salvation has been made possible only through Christ’s death and resurrection, it is vital that we associate ourselves with these things if we are to be saved. The symbolic dying and resurrecting with Christ, which baptism gives, is the only way to do this. Sprinkling does not fulfil this symbol.

A New Way of Life

At baptism, “our old man (way of life) is crucified” along with Christ on the cross (Romans 6:6); God “made us alive together with Christ” at baptism (Ephesians 2:5). However, we still have human nature after baptism, and the fleshly way of life will keep raising its head. The ‘crucifixion’ of our flesh is therefore an ongoing process which only *begins* at baptism, hence Jesus told the believer to take up his cross each day and follow Him, as it were, in the procession towards Calvary (Luke 9:23; 14:27). Whilst a life of true crucifixion with Christ is not easy, there is unspeakable consolation and joy through being also united with Christ’s resurrection. Christ brought about “peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20. See also Philippians 4:7; John 14:27; 2 Corinthians 1:5).

There is also the freedom which comes from knowing that our natural self is really dead, and therefore Jesus is very actively living with us through our every trial. The great apostle Paul could speak from much experience of this all down the long eventful years of his life: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20).

Saved By Christ's Resurrection

Association with Christ's resurrection to eternal life gives a person access to the same at His return. It is through sharing in this resurrection, then, that we can finally be saved (1 Peter 3:21). Jesus stated this in very simple terms: "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19). Paul likewise: "We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son....we shall be saved by His life" (resurrection; Romans 5:10). By associating ourselves with Christ's death and sufferings in baptism, and our subsequent way of life, we will surely share in His glorious resurrection. (2 Timothy 2:11,12; 2 Corinthians 4:10,11,14; Philipians 3:10,11 compare with Galatians 6:14).

Luke 3:12 records how the "tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, Teacher, what shall we do?" There is a parallel between desiring baptism and realizing that we must *do* something concrete in our lives. The baptism process brings us into the realm of God's gracious forgiveness and redemption, and into living contact with the real Christ. There is no way we can be passive to this and do nothing about it.

Baptism is Vital for Salvation

When we are baptized we should try not to continue in sin, seeing we are "dead" to it (Romans 6:2). This is one of the most basic implications of baptism. We will realise that the unbaptized world (including those who have not been baptized properly) has no hope and we will try with all our heart to persuade others to be baptized. Baptism can never be undone; we for evermore live our lives with a sense of responsibility to God (1 Peter 1:17-19).

Carrying Christ's Name

The wonder of being baptized into Christ means that like the early brethren, we will rejoice to suffer shame for the sake of carrying Christ's Name (Matthew 10:24,25). It will be "enough" for us that we know something of our Lord's sufferings. The more we reflectively read the Gospels, the more we will know the nature and extent of His sufferings, and the more we will see in our own something of His.

Loving One Another As Ourselves

Paul reasons that we are the body of Christ by baptism; and nobody hates their own body. He feeds and cares for it. This not only means that the Lord will likewise care for us (Ephesians 5:29-30). It means that we now have the basis of self-respect and a healthy love of self (the kind the Lord had in mind when he said we should love our neighbour *as* we love ourselves). Because we are to count ourselves as the body of *Christ*, we no longer need to wallow

in the feeling that we are so unworthy, we aren't worth making the effort with. And therefore we should truly love our brother.

“One Man In Christ”

By being baptized into Christ, all that is true of him becomes true of us. We must aspire to be united, because “ye are all one man in Christ” (Galatians 3:28 RV). We “are all sons of God” (3:26) because of our baptism into the Son of God. And so Paul goes on to reason that just as Christ was “the heir”, who is “master of all”, “even so we” were kept under the law for a time (Galatians 4:1-3). The basis of our unity is that there is only one Jesus, and by being in Him we are living lives committed to the imitation of that same man. The unity between baptized believers is enough to witness to the world and arrest their attention – that this is all something true and valid.

APPENDIX: THE DEVIL AND SATAN

Many religions believe there is a monster called the Devil or Satan, who is the originator of all problems and is responsible for the sins we commit. But the Bible teaches us that God is all-powerful and that the Angels cannot sin. This means it is impossible that there is any supernatural being that is opposed to God. We are questioning the supremacy of God Almighty by believing that such a being does exist.

The Source of Evil

There is a belief that good things come from God and bad things from the Devil or Satan. The ancient Babylonians believed in a god of good, and a god of evil. God's response was, “I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides me ... I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create calamity. I, the LORD, do **all** these things” (Isaiah 45:5-7,22). God is the Author, the Creator of “calamity” and disaster. There is a difference between calamity and sin. Sin entered the world as a result of man not God (Romans 5:12). God tells the Babylonians, “There is **no** God beside me.” There is no source of power apart from Him. Thus a true believer in God cannot accept the idea of a supernatural devil or demons.

God: The Creator of Disaster

There are many examples of God bringing “evil” into people's lives. Amos 3:6 says that if there is calamity in a city God has done it.

- Micah 1:12 says that “disaster came down from the Lord to the gate of Jerusalem”.

- Job recognised that, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away” (Job 1:21). He does not say, “The Lord gave and Satan has taken away”. Job commented, “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (Job 2:10). Job’s friends comforted him over “all the adversity that **the LORD** had brought upon him” (Job 42:11 cp. 19:21; 8:3).

So God is the source of “evil” in the sense of being the ultimate permitter of problems in our lives.

The Orthodox Devil – Illogical

“For whom the LORD loves He chastens ... If you endure chastening ... afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:6-11). This shows that trials given by God eventually lead to our spiritual growth. To say that the devil forces us to sin while at the same time bringing problems which lead to our developing “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” is inconsistent. Here the orthodox idea of the devil runs into problems. For example, the passages which speak of delivering man to satan “that his spirit may be saved”. (1 Corinthians 5:5), or “that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20). If Satan is really a being bent on causing men to sin, why do these passages speak of “Satan” in a positive light? The answer: an adversary, a “Satan”, or difficulty in life, can often result in positive spiritual effects on a believer’s life.

The Origin of Sin

Sin comes from *inside* us. It is *our* fault that we sin. Remember, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) – sin leads to death. If it is the devil’s fault that we sin, then a just God should punish the devil rather than us. But the fact that we are judged for our own sins, shows that we are responsible for them. “There is **nothing** that enters a man from outside which can defile him ... For from **within**, out of **the heart** of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders ... All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:15-23).

The idea that there is something sinful **outside** of us which causes us to sin is incompatible with the teaching of Jesus. From **within**, out of the heart of man, come all these evil things. James 1:14 tells us how we are tempted: “Each one is tempted when he is drawn by his **own desires** and enticed”. We are tempted by our **own** evil desires, not by anything outside of us. “Where do wars and fights come from among you?” James asks; “Do they not come from **your** desires for pleasure?” (James 4:1). Each of us has temptation generated by our own evil desires.

Paul identifies the source of sin

Paul laments: “In me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells ... For the good that I will to do, I do not do ... if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7:18-21). Paul does not blame his sinning on an external being called the devil. He located his own evil nature as the real source of sin: “it is no longer I that do it, but **sin that dwells in me**. I find then a law, **that evil is present** with (i.e. within) me, the one who wills to do good” (Romans 7:20-21). So he says that the opposition to being spiritual comes from something that he calls “sin that dwells in me”.

The word ‘Satan’ in the Bible

1 Kings 11:14 records that the LORD raised up an adversary (same Hebrew word elsewhere translated “satan”) against Solomon. Hadad the Edomite”, “And God raised up another adversary (another satan) ... Rezon ... He was an adversary (a satan) of Israel” (1 Kings 11:23,25). God stirred up ordinary men, not a supernatural being, to be satans/adversaries to Solomon. Another example: Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem to die. Jesus turned and said to Peter “Get behind Me, **Satan!** ... you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:23). Thus Peter was called a satan by Christ.

God can be termed a ‘satan’

Because the word ‘satan’ just means an adversary, a good person, even God Himself can be termed a ‘satan’. There is nothing necessarily sinful about the word itself. God can be a satan to us by:

- *Bringing trials into our lives.*
- *Obstructing a wrong course of action we may be embarking upon.*

But the fact that God can be called a ‘satan’ does not mean that He Himself is sinful.

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents. 2 Samuel 24:1 records “**the LORD** ... moved David against them (Israel)” to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that “**Satan** stood up against Israel, and moved David” to take the census. In one passage God does the provoking, in the other Satan does it. Therefore God acted as a ‘satan’ or adversary to David.

The Word ‘Devil’ in the Bible

Similarly with the word ‘devil’. Jesus said “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot...” (John 6:70-71) who was an ordinary, mortal man. The word ‘devil’ here simply refers to a wicked

man. Another example is in 1 Timothy 3:11. The wives of church elders were not to be ‘slanderers’; the original Greek word *his* is ‘*diabolos*’, which is the same word translated ‘devil’ elsewhere. Thus Paul warns Titus that the aged women in the *ecclesia* should not be “false accusers” or ‘devils’ (Titus 2:3 KJV).

The words ‘devil’ and ‘satan’ do not refer to a fallen Angel or a sinful being outside of us.

Sin, Satan and the Devil

The words ‘satan’ and ‘devil’ are sometimes used figuratively to describe the **natural sinful tendencies** within us. These are our main ‘satan’ or adversary. They are also personified, and as such can be spoken of as ‘the devil’ – our enemy, a slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural ‘man’ is like – the very devil. The connection between the devil and our evil desires – sin within us – is made explicit in several passages:

- “As the children (ourselves) have partaken of flesh and blood. He (Jesus) Himself likewise shared in the same, that through (His) death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The **devil** is here described as being responsible for death. But Romans tells us that **sin** is responsible for death “the wages of **sin** is death” (Romans 6:23). Therefore sin and the devil must be parallel.
- Similarly James 1:14 says that our evil desires tempt us, leading us to sin and therefore to death, but Hebrews 2:14 says that the devil brings death. The same verse says that Jesus had our nature in order to destroy the devil.
- Contrast this with Romans 8:3: “God by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (that is, our human nature, ... He (Jesus) condemned sin, in the flesh.” This shows that the devil and the sinful tendencies that are naturally with human nature are effectively the same.

It is vitally important to understand that Jesus was tempted just like us. Misunderstanding the doctrine of the devil means that we cannot correctly appreciate the nature and work of Jesus. It was only because Jesus had our human nature – the ‘devil’ within him – that we can have the hope of salvation (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15). By overcoming the desires of his own nature, the Biblical devil, Jesus was able to destroy the devil on the cross. If the devil is a personal being, then he should no longer exist.

‘Our sins’ = ‘the works of the devil’

“He who sins is of the devil” (1 John 3:8), because sin is the result of giving way to our own natural, evil desires (James 1:14,15), which the Bible calls ‘the devil’. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). If we are correct in saying that the devil is our evil desires, then the works of our evil desires, i.e. what they result in, are our sins. This is confirmed by 1 John 3:5, “He (Jesus) was manifested to take away our sins”. This confirms that “our sins” and “the works of the devil” are the same. Acts 5:3 provides another example of this connection between the devil and our sins. Peter says to Ananias, “Why has **Satan** filled your heart?” Then in verse 4, Peter says “Why have **you conceived** this thing in your heart?” Conceiving something bad within our heart is the same as Satan filling our heart.

Personification

However, the Bible does talk as if the devil is a person! Hebrews 2:14 speaks of “him who had the power of death, that is, the devil”. The Bible often uses personification – speaking of an abstract idea as if it is a person. Thus Proverbs 9:1 speaks of a woman called ‘Wisdom’ building a house, and Romans 6:23 likens sin to a paymaster giving wages of death.

Our devil, the ‘diabolos’, represents our evil desires. Yet you cannot have abstract diabolism, the evil desires that are in a man’s heart cannot exist separately from a man; therefore ‘the devil’ is personified. Sin is often personified as a master (e.g. Romans 5:21; 6:6,17; 7:3). It is understandable, therefore, that the ‘devil’ is also personified, seeing that ‘the devil’ also refers to sin. In the same way, Paul speaks of us having two beings, as it were, within our flesh (Romans 7:15-21):

- *the man of the flesh, ‘the devil’,*
- *fighting with the man of the Spirit.*

Yet it is evident that there are not two literal, personal beings fighting within us. This sinful part of our nature is personified as “the evil one” (Matthew 6:13) – the Biblical devil. The devil is a common figure for our own nature; sin and temptation originate from within. The real arena of spiritual conflict is the human heart.

Practical Implications

If we grasp this, we will battle daily for control of the mind; we will strive to fill our mind with God’s word, we will read the Bible daily, we will be cynical about our motivations, we will examine ourselves, we will appreciate

the latent liability to sin which we and all men have by nature. We won't take the weakness of others towards us so personally; we will see it is their 'devil'. Belief in a personal devil is so popular because it takes the focus away from our own struggle with our innermost nature and thoughts.

Duncan Heaster

If you would like to study the Gospel more in order to be baptized, or if you have any questions about these teachings, please contact the publishers or email info@carelinks.net or dh@heaster.org.













