

## April 1

### **Numbers 15 – An appeal to the generation that would enter the Land**

Numbers 14 records the condemnation of all over the age of 20 to perish in the wilderness in the ensuing 38 years, except for Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14:22-24; 32:11-12). True to the character of Yahweh, He extends to the younger generation an invitation to endure the next 38 years with faith and patience and to enter the Land of Promise. The phrase “a sweet savour” occurs six times in Numbers 15 – Vv.3,7,10,13,14,24 – Lit. “a fragrance of rest.” (For more detail see Appendix 1).

V.1-16 constitute the first section of the chapter. This is an appeal (“speak” V.2, not a command as is often the case in the Law).

**V.2** – “When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you.” This is a promise that Yahweh would fulfil His promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:13-16). Some would finally enter the Land promised to Abraham (Heb. 4:6).

### **Voluntary offerings sought**

**V.3** – “And will make an offering by fire unto Yahweh” – These are specified as burnt and peace offerings (vow and freewill). Both required a meal and a drink offering to be offered in conjunction with them.

### **A compulsory requirement for meal and drink offerings**

**V.4** – “Then shall he that offereth...” – If one chose to make offerings indicating a desire to dedicate oneself (burnt), or to make commitments (vow and freewill – peace), then they had to also make an attendant meal (flour) and drink (wine) offering. This was compulsory. Why? When an offeror made a burnt or a peace offering under the Law, all that was required was to select an unblemished animal from herd or flock and take it to the priest at the place of sacrifice. Not a great deal of effort on the offeror's part was required. However, bringing along a meal and drink offering was quite different.

To produce fine flour takes many months of labour. There is ploughing (in cold wet weather); patient maintenance as the crop grows; harvesting in the heat of summer; threshing; winnowing; grinding; sifting, and preparation of the meal offering from fine flour. Similarly, to produce wine takes many months, and a lot of work. What was Yahweh teaching here? The obvious lesson was that good intentions and a desire to commit to Him were not enough of themselves. Yahweh wants ongoing dedication in the form of labours and ministration to others, works of faith and commitment to produce fruit.

Numbers 15:13-16 reveal the breadth of this requirement. Not only were Israelites to keep this ordinance, but also “strangers” (i.e. Gentiles) who attached themselves to Israel as “sojourners” (a word used 3 times in this bracket of verses). That is exactly our spiritual position if we are in Christ. The principle applies equally to us.

The meal and drink offerings of old are matched by the **bread** and **wine** of the table of remembrance in our experience. In baptism, we identified with the sacrifice of Christ, the fulfillment of all the altar sacrifices. Our responsibility is to daily take up the cross sharing his sacrifice – Luke 9:23 – “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

**V.22-31** – While offerings could be made for sins of ignorance it was not so for sins of presumption. The offender would be “cut off” from his people (disfellowshipped). In some cases the presumption was so egregious that death was the punishment. This was the case with the man found gathering sticks on the Sabbath (one of just two recorded incidents in 38 years). Despising the promise of rest in the Land (‘Kingdom’) was what Korah, Dathan and Abiram also did.

**V.37-41** – The focus is normally on the ribband of blue, but it is actually an accessory, like the cord that tied the golden plate to the high priest’s mitre (Ex. 28:36-37). It is the “**fringe**” that is important as careful reading reveals.

“fringe” – Strong #6734 - *tsîytsith* - fringe, tassel, lock. This word occurs only 4 times in the O.T. – three here and in Ezek. 8:3 (“lock”). It is in the **feminine form** in the Hebrew.

This word is cognate with *tsîyts* (Strong #6731) which first occurs in Ex. 28:36 of the “**plate**” of pure gold on the high priest’s ‘holy crown’ on which was inscribed “Holiness to Yahweh.” The same word occurs again of that crown in Ex. 39:30; Lev. 8:9 (there are 15 occs. in the O.T.). It is in the **masculine form** in the Hebrew.

It is not difficult to see the relationship to Christ (our High Priest) and ourselves (his ‘body’ and future bride wandering in the wilderness of life) walking towards the Land of Promise. Our walk must be governed by his mind (Phil. 2:5), and our feet kept within the bounds of his commandments (John 14:15,21; 15:10).

## Proverbs 11

The focus in this chapter turns from emphasising the importance of choosing wisdom over folly to the consequences of that choice.

## Luke 24

V.1-12 – “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.” – Christ rose from the dead and was immortalized at 6 pm on the Sabbath (see comments on John 20, **April 24** pg. 52) exactly three days and three nights (required by prophecy – Matt. 12:40) after being entombed at 6 pm on Wednesday 14th Abib (see comments on Ex. 16:1 on **February 8**). What we are reading of here is a reference to nearly 12 hours later as the sun began to rise on the first day of the week (we call Sunday). The two Mary’s who had sat and watched Jesus being interred on Wednesday evening were on their way back again, with others, early in the morning and were astonished to find the tomb open. Entering, they found the tomb empty, but were confronted by two angels who gently reminded them of Christ’s words that he would be crucified and rise again the third day. Returning to the despondent disciples, they recounted their experience at which Peter rushed to the sepulchre to see for himself. Like all the disciples, including the two on the way to Emmaus later that day, it was a ‘mountain’ to climb for Peter and his companions.

V.13-35 – “behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs” – Cleopas and his companion (possibly his wife) who were avid disciples of Christ were most likely returning home after the distressing events of the past few days. The risen Lord joined them and a lively conversation ensued. “Their eyes were holden that they should not know him” as they walked and talked about their shattered hopes.

In regard to the locality of Emmaus, it seems quite probable that it is the same village which is referred to by Josephus ("Jewish Wars," vii. 6, Section 6), who states that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Titus gave "Emmaus," distant from Jerusalem threescore furlongs (8 miles or 13 kms west of Jerusalem), to 800 of his troops, whom he had dismissed from his army, for their habitation. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. ii. p. 307, 540) regards it as the present Kuriet el 'Aineb, which has been identified with Kirjath-jearim. It was an arduous journey on foot in those days.

As the conversation reached a point where the two expressed their bemusement at reports of an empty tomb, the Lord chimed in with a rebuke – "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" but even this did not awaken them to whom they were speaking. It was not until they sat down with him in their abode and broke bread that they suddenly realized who he was – "he was known of them in breaking of bread" (V.35). We too, should 'know' him in the breaking of bread – 1 Cor. 11:26 (Weymouth) "For every time that you eat this bread and drink from the cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death--until He returns." They acknowledged their hearts had burned "while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures," so they hurriedly retraced their steps back to Jerusalem to inform the disciples who continued to doubt.

V.36-49 – As the two from Emmaus spoke to the disciples, the Lord suddenly appeared in the room much to their shock and fear. Wounds in hands and feet, and consumption of food convinced them they had not seen a phantom (Griesbach text has *phantasma* in lieu of *pneuma*), and he proceeded to make their hearts burn as well – "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." They then received their commission – "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

V.50-53 – The Lord's ascension to his Father from Bethany presaged his return to the very same place, but not alone next time when he will arrive with his glorified saints – Zech. 14:4-5. The rejoicing disciples returned to Jerusalem awaiting to be "endued with power from on high" that they might commence their work.

## April 2

### Numbers 16

Num. 16:1 – Rotherham – "Then **took** Korah, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi,—and Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth sons of Reuben." The name Korah means "ice" which fits his character. Rotherham's translation strengthens the notion that Korah was the driving force behind this rebellion. The tribe of Reuben lived adjacent to the camp of the Kohathites on the south eastern side of the encampment. His compatriots from the tribe of Reuben were almost certainly condemned to die in the wilderness, but Korah was not. The Levites were not numbered in the first census (Num. 2:33; 14:29). Therefore his conspiracy was staggering. He sought the leadership ("captain" - V.4) to lead the nation back to Egypt.

This is one of two incidents recorded in 38 years of wilderness wandering. The other being the man found gathering sticks on the Sabbath (it is essentially the same kind of rebellion).

Jude refers to this rebellion twice in his epistle – V.6 – "And the angels which **kept not their first estate**, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting

**chains under darkness** unto the judgment of the great day” (“the earth opened her mouth, and **swallowed them up**”). And, V.11 – “and perished in the gainsaying of Core (Korah).” The earth swallowed the rebellious Reubenites and the family of Korah (except for his sons) and his companions (Num. 16:31-34), and fire immolated Korah and 250 compatriots who presumptuously approached the door of the Tabernacle with their incense censers using strange fire. Accordingly, they met the same fate as Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2).

Num. 16:36-40 – The censers were collected and formed into plates to cover the Altar as a warning against any future rebellion. However, the next day the seething anger of the people burst out with cries of “Ye have killed the people of Yahweh,” triggering a plague that wiped out another 14,700. Only with the intervention of Aaron with incense (prayer) and fire from the Altar (sacrifice) was the plague stayed. Such was the perfidy of the condemned of Num. 14.

## Proverbs 12

Prov. 12:1 – “He that loveth correction, loveth knowledge, but, he that hateth reproof, is brutish” (*baár* – like a dumb animal). Human nature is not naturally inclined to accept criticism. That is why in the Discourse on the Mount the very first characteristic of those who will inherit the Kingdom is ‘poverty of spirit’ (Matt. 5:3). Christ draws this from Isa. 57:15; 66:2 where Yahweh says He only looks to those who have a humble spirit; whose self-will is ‘smitten’ and who tremble at His Word. We cannot even begin on the road to salvation while self-will and human obduracy stand in the way. Loving correction is fundamental to progress, but that is not natural.

A subtle shift is noticeable in this chapter towards the power of words for good and evil.

## Galatians 1

The very existence of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians is evidence that it is very difficult in any era to **maintain purity of doctrine**. There are always influences at work to undermine and adulterate the pure teachings of Christ and his apostles (Acts 20:29-30). The history of the Brotherhood of Christ in the first and second centuries proved that. Even before he fell asleep under the vicious hand of Nero in AD 68, the Apostle could write to Timothy – 2 Tim. 4:3-4 – “For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and **shall be turned unto fables**,” after having previously said – 2 Tim. 1:15 – “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.”

Doctrinal purity is paramount for salvation. Wrong doctrine leads to rejection – Gal. 1:8-9 – “But though **we**, or an **angel** from heaven, **preach any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **accursed**. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man **preach any other gospel** unto you than that ye have received, let him be **accursed**.” The Greek word for “accursed” used twice is *anathema* – Thayer – “a man accursed, devoted to the direst of woes.” This means exclusion from the Kingdom. In a time when the importance of doctrine is being minimized, the careful reading of this epistle is advisable.

The greatest challenge to Paul was the machinations of Judaistic teachers who undermined both his authority as an Apostle and his teachings. Hence, Gal. 1 is largely devoted to establishing his authority. He does this by arrogating to himself Isa. 49 (and rightly so – Gal.

1:1). Paul had done this before in Acts 13:47 – “For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth” (a citation from Isa. 49:6 which is about the mission of Christ). In Gal. 1:15, Paul cites Isa. 49:1 of himself, although it is clearly about Christ – “Yahweh hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.” Christ was to be revealed in the Apostle as his ambassador to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:16). Therefore, special preparation for his mission was undertaken – Gal. 1:16-24. It is also why he could say, “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you” (3:1).

## **Galatians 2**

The Jerusalem Conference (circa AD 51) was a major crossroad for the first century brotherhood. Judaism was at work to “pervert the Gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7; Acts 15). Despite “the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem” (Acts 15:20-31; 16:4), Judaism continued to undermine the community until it matured ultimately into the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church.

V.4-5 – “because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” – The importance of standing against the corrosive influence of wrong doctrine is made clear in this introduction to the tensions that animated the Conference.

V.9 – “James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars” – James the Lord’s half brother was instrumental in bringing an acceptable resolution to the Jerusalem Conference with his brilliant use of Scripture after personal testimonies had largely failed. “The decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem” were largely written under his steady hand.

V.11-14 – Subsequently, “when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” as he hypocritically joined the Judaisers and avoided Gentiles out of fear of them. Barnabas too became wobbly on this issue. That Peter and Barnabas could be derailed by the over-bearing presence and subtle arguments of Judaisers in the community shows how omnipresent and dangerous it was. Had it not been for the Apostle Paul, things may have gone another way with serious ramifications for us today.

V.15-21 – We can be thankful that Paul stood his ground and confirmed the path for both Jew and Gentile to attain eternal life in the absence of the Law, although not without law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21) – “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” That path is to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24), and to walk by the power of the Spirit Word of God that provides a motivation far greater than law – “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

## April 3

### Numbers 17

In the aftermath of the deep seated rebellion of Korah and his company, it was necessary to make it plain to the nation which tribe was Yahweh's representative and where its head Aaron stood in relation to the leaders of each tribe.

V.2 – “rod” – *matteh* – a branch (as extending); figuratively a tribe; also a rod. This word is translated “tribe” 16 times in Num. 2 and 8 times in Num. 10. Twelve rods representing the 12 tribes were laid alongside Aaron's rod. The latter sprang into life and budded bringing forth blossoms and almonds. The almond is the first to blossom among trees (Jer. 1:11-12) and pointed to the resurrection of our High Priest to hasten Yahweh's purpose. This put an end to the attempt to overthrow Aaron (Ps. 99:6).

### Numbers 18

Having demonstrated Aaron's position, it became necessary to confirm the position of the tribe of Levi.

V.8-14 – The tribe of Levi were to be sustained by the offerings of the people. Even the relevant portions of the sacrifices fell to them as Yahweh's representatives.

The “heave offering” is mentioned 9 times in the chapter. It stood for “surrender” to God. By making heave offerings to Yahweh which the Levites accepted and consumed, the people were indicating their acceptance and surrender to this ordinance.

### Proverbs 13

Prov. 13:7 – “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.” This was true of Christ – 2 Cor. 8:9.

Prov. 13:10 – “Only by pride cometh contention.” Most contention over things of little consequence would be avoided if it were not for human pride. Humility is not a natural tendency of human nature – 1 Pet. 5:5; Matt. 23:12. In a time of rampant Humanism when ‘man’ is elevated above God and the individual becomes his/her own authority, strife, division, selfishness, revenge and a range of other evils emanating from pride are common.

### Galatians 3

This chapter is fundamental to our faith. Identification with Abraham and the promises made to him, and baptism into Christ (his ‘seed’ – V.16) is the only way to eternal life – Gal. 3:26-29. Paul begins in V.1 by confirming what he asserted in Gal. 1 concerning his appointment as Apostle to the Gentiles. In him, Christ had “been vividly portrayed as on the Cross” (Weymouth).

The RV translation of Gal 3:17 is clearer – “Now this I say; A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise (i.e. to Abraham) of none effect.”

The Law of Moses was never designed to give eternal life (V.21). Not even Christ attained life by fulfilling every moral requirement of the Law, for it condemned him in the manner of his death by Divine appointment – Deut. 21:22-23; Gal. 3:13. The Law was a “schoolmaster” to bring those under it to Christ (V.24). The Greek word is *paidagōgos* – Thayer Definition – a tutor, i.e. a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not

allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood.

V.26-29 – Baptism into Christ produces members of the “seed” (singular V.16) of Abraham – “if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” In this there is equality for Jew and Gentile; slave or freeman; male and female. Some have misused the latter to assert the Humanist mantra that there is equality of rank in Christ between male and female. This flies in the face of many Scriptures – 1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 3:6; etc. This ‘equality’ has only to do with relationship to salvation.

#### Galatians 4

To illustrate the huge gap that existed between Jews who thought eternal life could be won by keeping the Law, and those who are baptized into Christ and are “heirs according to the promise,” the Apostle uses the illustration of slaves versus heirs. Two words are used of the slave condition in verse 1 and 7 – “servants” – *doulos* – a slave, bondman, man of servile condition. A cognate word *douleuō* – to be a slave, serve, do service, is translated “did service” in V.8, and “bondage” in verses 9 and 25.

The “heirs” are called adopted “sons” (V.5) – *uihothesia* – adoption of sons. By this means they are related to God's “son” – *uihos* – a word used 9 times in Gal. 4. Gal. 4:6 – “And, because ye are **sons**, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his **Son** into our hearts, exclaiming, Abba! Oh Father!” By contrast, both Jews and Gentiles “did service” (*douleuō*) to another. The Gentiles “did service” to false gods (V.8), and the Jews had been in “bondage” (*douleuō*) to the Law. Therefore, neither had been ‘heirs’ of God. Some wanted to return to that slavery.

The allegory of Gal. 4:21-31 sets out these two classes – bondslaves to the Law represented by Hagar and her bondslave son, Ishmael; and the freeborn heir Isaac, born to Sarah the representative of the Abrahamic Covenant.

### April 4

#### Numbers 19

These notes are by courtesy of Bro. Ron Abel who fell asleep in 1983.

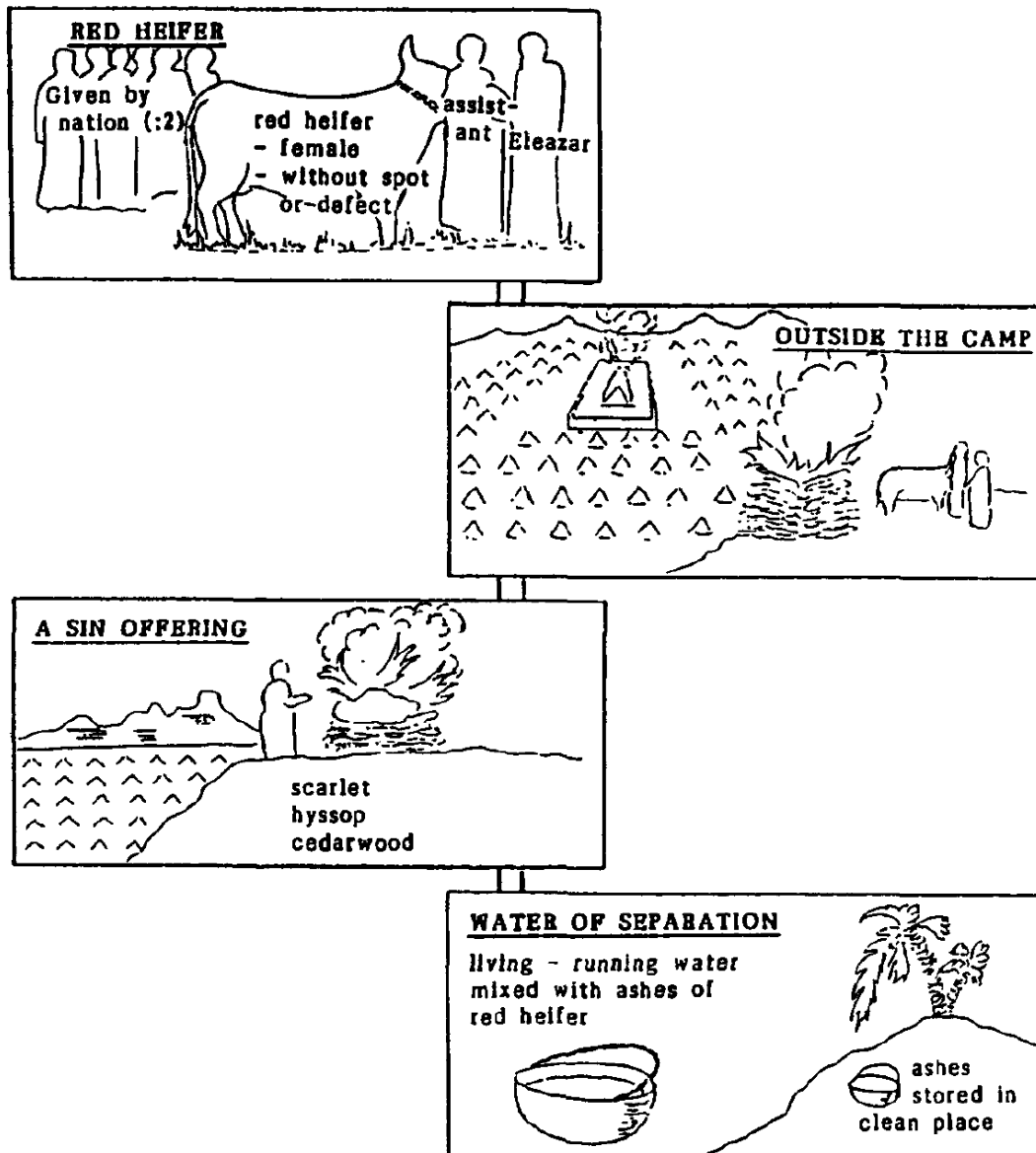
The Significance of the Red Heifer – The red heifer was a sacrifice designed to remove defilement through contact with human death. It is significant that the children of Israel had suffered the death of 14,700 rebellious Israelites by a plague (Num.16:49). Under hot desert conditions, the bodies would require immediate burial in graves. It was at this time that God gave the instructions to Moses and Aaron regarding the red heifer. The significance of the red heifer to cleanse from the defilement of death, came at a most impressive time. The connection between sin and death could hardly be more apparent.

The uniqueness of **the** sacrifice – In all of the sacrifices prescribed by the Mosaic Law, there was none quite like the red heifer. Note the following:

1. It is not listed with the other offerings in Leviticus or Exodus, but in the book of Numbers.
2. It was a special sin offering. A sin offering was for a sin – i.e. a transgression had been committed. This was offered for contact with the dead whether purposeful or accidental.

3. It was a sin offering, but it was not offered in the same way as the other sin offerings. The animal was slaughtered outside the camp, and the blood and the skin and the dung were all burned outside the camp. In the other sin offerings (e.g. Lev. 4), the animal was slain inside the camp, the blood poured out at the base of the altar, and then the carcase was removed and burned outside the camp.

#### THE RED HEIFER (Num.19)



4. It was the only sacrifice which could be used more than once. Its ashes were used repeatedly until depleted.
5. It is the only offering in which the ashes were used.
6. The offering was performed either by Eleazar, the high priest elect, or under his supervision. The instructions were given to Moses and Aaron (Num. 19:1), but it was not offered by them.
7. It was the only offering which could remove defilement caused by death.

#### **CLEANSING FROM DEFILEMENT BY DEATH**



## Details of the Offering

The above diagram helps remember the sequence of the chapter. By way of review the following points are listed:

1. The instructions regarding the red heifer were given immediately after the plague in which 14,700 Israelites died. The association between sin and death was apparent.
2. The ritual order was given by God to Moses and Aaron (it was not unique in this feature, but this fact adds to the importance of the instruction), but neither Moses nor Aaron had anything to do with the offering (19:1).
3. The nation was to bring the heifer, therefore it was a national offering (19:2).
4. The animal was to be a female – a heifer (19:2).

What an intriguing study is the Red Heifer! It pointed forward to Christ who would die without the camp (Heb. 13:10-14), and be raised to life to provide redemption from death for all who have faith in him and his sacrifice (Heb. 13:20-21).

## Proverbs 14

V.1 – “**Every wise woman buildeth her house:** but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.” Women as wives and mothers have a critically important part to play in the building of a family. This is shown by many admonitions in Scripture:

Titus 2:4 – “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

1 Tim. 5:14 – “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”

Prov. 31:1 – “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.” Solomon owed as much to his mother as he did to David his father.

Humanism has undermined Biblical family values and a heavy price is being paid in society for it. The International Women's Year of 1975 was aimed at destroying the traditional family structure. The continued croaking of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity have largely succeeded in destroying what God set in place “in the beginning.”

Prov. 14:14 – Rotherham – “**With his own ways**, shall be filled **the backslider in heart**, and, **from** himself, shall a good man be satisfied.” The wise man's observations are true. Evil men are only interested in their own matters. Those seeking to do good give of themselves for others and are not consumed with selfishness.

Prov. 14:18 – “The simple **inherit folly**: but the prudent are **crowned** with knowledge.” Our natural heritage is folly, but wisdom is a gift from God, and it is related to the head (crown).

## Galatians 5

In this chapter, the Apostle continues to dismantle the arguments of the Judaisers that were influencing some in the Galatian ecclesias to return to keeping the rituals of the Law of Moses (V.1). He deals first of all with circumcision (V.2-12), showing that the motivation behind this push was to avoid persecution from unbelieving Jews, and perhaps from improperly converted Jews within the community (V.11). The aim of life in Christ had been forgotten – Gal. 5:5 – “For we through the Spirit wait for **the hope of righteousness** by **faith**.” Righteousness in the fullest sense is a hope set before us which is pursued by

faith, not by ritual. It is the **hope** for a change of nature fostered by the continual working of the Spirit Word in us. Gal. 5:6 – “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; **but faith which worketh by love.**”

The slide copied at right shows the various ways that this process is presented in the N.T.

Gal. 5:12 – “I would they were even **cut off** which trouble you.” The Apostle is so angry at the false teachers that he even suggests they should be dismembered themselves seeing they were so keen on foisting circumcision on Gentile converts. His reference is to the contemporary rite practiced by the Phrygians in the worship of Cybele (their goddess). They practiced genital mutilation.

Gal. 5:13 – “For, brethren, ye have been called unto **liberty**; only use not **liberty** for an occasion to the flesh, but **by love serve one another.**” Knowing only too well the imbalance and deception of human nature (Jer. 17:9), Paul immediately counterbalances any slide towards liberalism after criticizing ritualism. He counsels “love” (*agapao* – a sacrificial love of the will/mind) for it was evident furious arguments had broken out among them over these issues (V.15).

V.16 – He returns to the theme of V.5 – “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” The following translation by Weymouth of Gal 5:17 is helpful – “For the **cravings** of the lower nature are opposed to those of the Spirit, and the **cravings** of the Spirit are opposed to those of the lower nature; because these are antagonistic to each other, **so that you cannot do everything to which you are inclined.**” For the word “lusteth” in the KJV, Weymouth has “cravings.” This is consistent with the Greek word used – *epithumeo* – to fix the desire. It occurs 16 times in the N.T., the first being Matt. 5:28 (a passage sometimes misunderstood. It is not the casual unbidden sensations that are common in human nature that are in view here, but the fixed and determined desire for the forbidden). So the battle between flesh and spirit is unrelenting and endless. They “are contrary one to the other” and cannot be reconciled (Rom. 8:4-8). Whereas the KJV translation provides two possible options to interpret the phrase “so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” Weymouth is correct. The flesh is indeed strong, but the Spirit is stronger, and those who walk in it can fend off most of its natural tendencies and machinations.

V.19-21 – Paul lists 17 works of the flesh, and as nearly always, sexual immorality heads the list. To the Hebrew mind, 17 was the number of absolute completeness (7+10).

V.22-23 – By contrast the singular “fruit of the Spirit” is displayed in a multifarious display of Divine characteristics and blessings. It is the work, and reward, of God. Walking in this atmosphere they, like Christ “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (V.24). Given the fractious nature of the debates that were occurring in the Galatian ecclesias, it was fitting for Paul to conclude this section with – “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

## Galatians 6

V.1 – “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; **considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted**” – Knowing only too well the nature we bear, which as the Apostle found “when I



would do good, evil is present with me,” there was a need for merciful consideration of others who had fallen to it. Even those with a strong Judaistic “touch not, taste not” mindset would stumble. They needed each other. Yet even in the act of reaching out, if it is not wisely handled, disaster can strike. How often is it that we have seen brethren getting involved in marriage problems, for example, only to fall victim to what the Apostle calls “fornication” in 1 Cor. 7:2, and going “beyond and defraud his brother” in 1 Thess. 4:6. Those who understand the weakness and bias of human nature always take the precaution of having someone else with them when dealing with sensitive matters involving the opposite sex.

V.2-10 – We have an obligation to assist others with their burdens, but at the Judgement Seat we will bear our own. No one else can carry us across the line there. We will be judged according to the choices we have made in life on one universal principle – “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” The problem we have is weariness – “let us not be weary in well doing” for there is a reward, so “as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

V.11-18 – “Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand” – Paul dictated his epistles to other brethren who wrote out what he said (see notes at the end of his epistles). In this epistle he signed off in his own handwriting in large unmistakable Greek letters. The reason for this harks back to chapter 1 where he spent considerable time establishing his apostolic credentials because there were those in the Galatian ecclesias who were trying to undermine him in two ways – (1) Questioning his authority from Christ; and (2) Suggesting the letters were not actually from him. He next mentions the Judaistic contingent who were insisting on Gentile converts being circumcised. He recommends a much more effective ‘circumcision’ – a cutting off of the flesh that actually produces new life (V.14-15). Those who followed that “rule” would have peace and mercy because they were actually members of “the Israel of God.” His final message to his detractors was “henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” because he had been “Jesus Christ....evidently set forth, crucified among” them.

## April 5

As noted in the header, these comments are intended to be “brief comments on the daily readings”. There are some chapters where it is impossible to be brief. Numbers 20 and 21 are in that category. Accordingly, it has been decided to use slides from a series of studies titled “Christ in the Wilderness” recently delivered at Tulsa, Oklahoma and uploaded to Christadelphian Videos – [Video Links – JimCowie.info](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLsmUZDApxHVGArZn-sCzF1PsDqe5vrCS0&v=onEfWWcq8Gk)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLsmUZDApxHVGArZn-sCzF1PsDqe5vrCS0&v=onEfWWcq8Gk>

The selected slides will enable a quick review of the extensive message of these two chapters.

### Numbers 20

Moses made a serious mistake at Kadesh-Barnea – “the sanctuary of the wandering son” that costs him entry into the Land of Promise as a mortal (Deut. 32:48-52). Ps. 106:33 – “Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” He will however certainly enter it as an immortal (Heb. 3:2,5).

Near the end of their 40 year sojourn in the wilderness, Israel again complain bitterly against Moses and Aaron due to a lack of water. They declared that it would have been better for them to be among the victims of Yahweh’s past judgements, and that they wanted

to return to Egypt (the world), even though they stand at the border of the Promised Land (the Kingdom to us). There is an obvious exhortation for the final generation in this record.

It is important to recognize that the events at Rephidim when water came from the rock, and the events at Kadesh-Barnea are inextricably related. When the Apostle wrote in 1 Cor. 10:4 – “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ**,” he was indicating by the Spirit that the two rocks involved represented the mission of Christ, but in two different phases – his mortal ministry and his immortal ministry. Though doubtless the water had also followed them for a while, Paul is not focusing on the water, but on the rocks – **two different rocks**.

The slides following will summarize the important elements of this record.

Moses was commanded to “speak” to the rock at Kadesh-Barnea. “That rock was Christ” we are informed. It is important at a time when some are advocating that prayers should be made to Christ that it be clearly stated that such an approach is not Scriptural, but rather a practice of the apostate churches whose doctrine of the Trinity does not discriminate between Yahweh and His son. The Biblical admonition is very clear – Eph. 5:20 – “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Prayer should be made to God, not Christ (Phil. 4:6). He is the mediator between God and man – 1 Tim. 2:5.

## Two rods

### Ex. 17 – Rephidim

**V.5** – “take with thee the elders of Israel” – “Rep. the leaders of the Mosaic system” (**Matt. 23:2**).

“thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river” – The serpent rod. Instrument of divine authority to afflict flesh in the hands of Moses the lawgiver. Symbol for the cross of Christ.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

### Num. 20 – Meribah

**V.8** – “Aaron thy brother” – Typical of Christ the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec (**Heb. 5:4-6**).

“Take the rod” – Aaron’s rod that budded “laid up before Yahweh” in the Ark (**Num. 17:7**). Represents Christ (**Isa. 11:1**), once dead, but now resurrected to an everlasting priesthood (**Heb. 10:11-14; 7:23-25**).

## Two rocks

### Ex.17 – Rephidim

**V.6** – “smite the rock” – Speaks typically of Christ’s crucifixion. He was “smitten for our iniquities” (**Isa. 53:4-6**).

“the rock” – *tzur* – a huge rock, a boulder being set in the earth providing shelter and shade for man and beast. A divine title (**Deut. 32:4,15,18**). A type of Christ’s mortality.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

### Num.20 – Meribah

**V.8** – “speak ye unto the rock” – We cannot crucify Christ afresh (**Heb. 6:6**). Once smitten, he must now be spoken to.

“the rock” – *selah* – a cliff or crag; high up and inaccessible. Is used in the sense of a fortress (see **Ps. 31:3; Song 2:14; 2 Sam. 22:2**). Represents the immortal Christ as High Priest of his people.

## The use of *tzur* and *selah* in the O.T.

- ❖ First occurrence of *tzur* is in **Ex. 17:6** (twice).
- ❖ **Num. 20:8** is also the first occurrence of *selah*.
- ❖ Paul unites these two passages in **1 Cor. 10:4**.
- ❖ Both *tzur* and *selah* are used to represent Yahweh, particularly in the Psalms.
- ❖ The context and scriptural commentary determine the way to interpret these words.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

## Selah – Grace through Christ

- ❖ **Num. 20:8** – “Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes”.
- ❖ The Hebrew word “rock” is *selah* – a lofty, craggy rock; i.e. inaccessible. Occurs 5 times (the number of grace) in **Num. 20**.
- ❖ Moses was to speak to this rock, but struck it twice thus destroying the type.
- ❖ Hence, *selah* represented Christ in his **immortality** as mediator between God and man.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

## Numbers 21

Christ's words in John 3:14-15 signify how important this context was to him – “And **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The events of this record encapsulated his entire mission as the oft quoted next verse demonstrates – John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The first high priest of the Law of Moses died and was replaced by another pointing to the last great High Priest (Heb. 4:14). Then Israel learnt how to deal with ‘the Canaanite within.’ Then at Punon the far-reaching incident of the brazen serpent occurs.

### The death of Aaron – Num. 20:22-29

- ❖ Israel left **Kadesh-Barnea** (“The sanctuary of the wandering son”) and journeyed to Mt. Hor.
- ❖ **Aaron** is stripped of his priestly robes and Eleazar (“Whom God helps”) becomes high priest in his stead.
- ❖ **Aaron dies in Mt. Hor** – Representative of the Law of Moses is replaced by Eleazar.

**Context – The death of the first high priest representing the Law and his replacement by a new and living high priest representing Christ.**

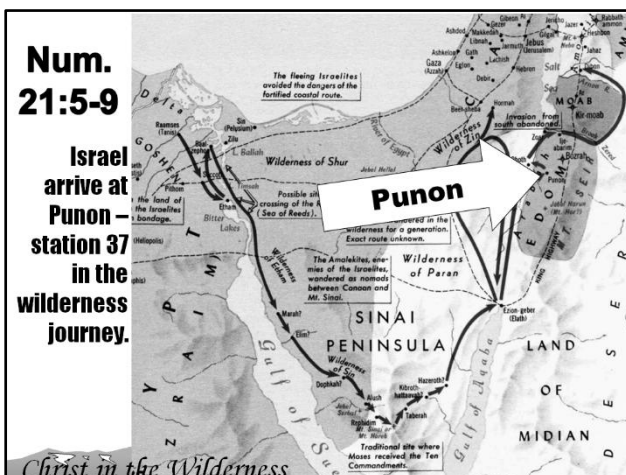
*Christ in the Wilderness*

### Arad the Canaanite defeated – Num. 21

- ❖ **V.1 – Arad** – “Fugitive”.
- ❖ **King of the Canaanites** – “humiliation” – **Phil. 3:21**. Symbol for king Sin – the monarch of flesh.
- ❖ “by the way of the **spies**” – **atharim** – prob. sig. steps; and therefore spies (only occ.).
- ❖ **V.2** – Israel’s vow – “utterly destroy” (**charam** – exterminate) “their cities”; i.e. their way of life.
- ❖ **Hormah** – from the root **charam** – devoted to utter destruction.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

Israel found “the way of the Red Sea” (a reminder of their baptism – 1 Cor. 10:1-2), very difficult as they approached the Land of Promise (it is no different for us as the return of Christ approaches). The obstacles; the scarcity of water, and their loathing of the manna all contributed to revolt and the blasphemous accusation that they had been ‘called’ to perish in the wilderness. The answer was “the fiery serpents” of Deut. 8:15. The ‘fiery’ element is a reference to the potency of the venom – a graphic symbol for sin (1 Cor. 15:55-56).



### Station 37 – Punon

- ❖ The brazen serpent incident occurred at Punon – **Num. 33:43**.
- ❖ **Punon** signifies “perplexity”; from a root “to turn; i.e. to be perplexed”. Some suggest means “Great doubting, amazement or distraction of mind”, citing **Ps. 88:15** where the root is used. Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon says it means “darkness”.
- ❖ Another meaning given to **Punon** is “The face of the Son”, or “the looking on or beholding of the Son”.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

The misconception of the people was that the ‘serpent’ (singular) could be removed from them. That can only happen at the Judgement Seat when a change of nature is granted – Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:50-57.

## The serpent in the wilderness

- ❖ **Num. 21:6** – “**serpents**” – *nâchâsh* – serpent, snake. Occurs 31 times in O.T.
- ❖ The word for “serpent/s” occurs 5 times in the context (6 in the A.V. – “fiery serpent” **v.8** is one word *saraph*).
- ❖ The only occurrence of *nachash* in plural is in **v.6**.
- ❖ Significantly, in **v.7** and **v.9** the word serpent is singular!

### Why?

*Christ in the Wilderness*

## “Take away the serpent from us”

- ❖ **V.7** – Rotherham – “**Pray thou unto Yahweh, that he may take from us the serpent.**”
- ❖ Serpents were always in the wilderness (**Deut. 8:15**). We cannot be free of them until a change of nature. It is the bite (sin) we need a cure for now.
- ❖ The basis of return is laid in **v.7**:
  - Confession of sin – prerequisite for forgiveness
  - Use of divinely appointed mediator

*Christ in the Wilderness*

## Fiery serpents

- ❖ Thought to be the carpet or saw-scaled viper (Genus *Echis*) which grows to 2' (60 cm) long. Is very aggressive and its venom is more potent than any other viper.
- ❖ **The venom induces a burning inflammation** before its victim dies several days after being bitten. The vital internal organs are slowly destroyed by the venom.



*Christ in the Wilderness*

## The brazen serpent

- ❖ “**brass**” – *nechosheth* – copper or its alloy bronze. Gesenius says the word is related to *nachash* – serpent.
- ❖ Brass characterised Goliath – **1 Sam. 17:5-6,38** = **flesh**.
- ❖ Represented Christ – **John 3:14; Gen. 3:15; Col. 2:15; Rom. 8:3**.
- ❖ Inert brass – harmless; no venom (sin) = moral perfection in human nature.
- ❖ Gave life if looked at intently in **faith**.



*Christ in the Wilderness*

Mankind has two great needs – one is moral, the other is physical:

1. The **forgiveness of sins** without which there will be no change of nature;
2. A **change of nature** from mortality in which the serpent resides to a nature without a bias towards sin and the corruption that leads to death.

## Everyone who looked lived!

- ❖ “**every one**” – i.e. “whosoever.” Christ later applied this to all men – **John 3:15**.
- ❖ **V.8** – “looketh” – *ra’ah* – to see.
- ❖ **V.9** – “beheld” – *nabat* – to scan; look intently at.
- ❖ The word “lived” is *chayay* – to live. Occurs twice in the context.
- ❖ They lived to cross Jordan – birth of the Spirit.
- ❖ *chayay* occurs 15 times in O.T. (15 = 3 x 5 – the fruit of grace) – the first occurrence is **Gen. 3:22** of the tree of life!

*Christ in the Wilderness*

## Jesus Christ and him crucified!

- ❖ The word “**pole**” (**vv.8 & 9**) is *nes* – the first occurrence is in **Ex. 17:16**. Next **Num. 21:8,9**. In both contexts it speaks of the **cross of Christ**.
- ❖ Christ emphasised, “And as Moses **lifted up** the serpent in the wilderness” – **John 3:14**.
- ❖ Hezekiah later destroyed the brasen serpent – **2 Kings 18:4** – why? Because it had become an object of worship in its own right – **in the absence of the pole**.
- ❖ See Paul’s determination in **1 Cor. 2:2**.

*Christ in the Wilderness*

**John 3:14-15 – “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”**

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLsmUZDApxHVGArZn-sCzF1PsDqe5vrCS0&v=2v2DOy7CzQ0>)

## **Proverbs 15**

V.1-2 – These verses are reflected in James 3:2 – “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in **word**, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” Because “of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45), the natural man finds it very difficult to control the power of the tongue (James 3:2-12). “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright” is an aspiration only possible through consistent application to the Word that develops right attitudes and character. Outcomes can then be wholesome – V.23 – “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”

The chapter sharply contrasts wise and foolish behaviors and their outcomes under the watchful gaze of the Almighty – Prov. 15:3 – “The eyes of Yahweh are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” Constant awareness of this fact (difficult) is a strong corrective and directive of attitudes and actions.

## **Ephesians 1**

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a general epistle in the sense that it does not deal with any specific problems, but with the deep principles of the Truth. It has no special greetings to, or even reference to, any individuals, as would be expected in an epistle to one ecclesia, especially where Paul had but recently spent three years, as he had at Ephesus.

It gives the appearance of being intended, not just for Ephesus, but for the brethren and sisters of all the ecclesias of Western Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the centre and hub—the same group of ecclesias to whom John wrote from Patmos (see Col. 4:16).

In the first two chapters, Paul describes the eternal purpose of God to unite in one perfect, harmonious, unblemished (that’s the point), spiritual whole, all things in Christ.

The Epistle is divided into two sections – one primarily doctrinal (Chaps. 1 to 3), the other mainly about the practical application of that doctrine (Chaps. 4 to 6). There is a **nexus between doctrine and behavior** – 1 Tim. 2:9-10. Having listed a plethora of human sins and immoralities that the Law sought to expose, the Apostle adds, “and if there be any other thing that is **contrary to sound doctrine**.” Wrong doctrine invariably leads to wrong practice.

V.3-23 – It was important that Gentile believers should understand that they were saved by grace that operated through faith; that there was no virtue in the flesh as such, and that, however wretched had once been their condition; they now had equal privileges with the Jews. He then proceeds to encourage them in their calling in Christ, by declaring with what steadfastness he suffered for the truth, and with what earnestness he prayed for their establishment and continuance in it, and he urged them strongly that they walk as becoming saints in a full discharge of the responsibilities that their new-found spiritual outlook brought with it.

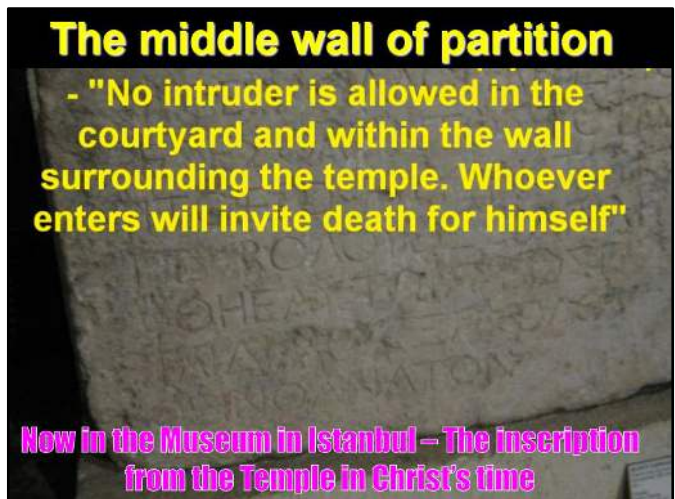


## Ephesians 2

V.1-3 – ESV – “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.” This is a very clear description of the prior condition of Gentile converts to the truth. Some have misconstrued the phrase “were by nature children of wrath” to mean that the very possession of our nature alienates us from God. This is not correct as V.1 implies. We are alienated from God by our own sins, not held guilty for possessing Adam’s fallen nature. As Bro. Thomas wrote in Elpis Israel page 77 – “This sinful nature we inherit. It is our misfortune, not our crime, that we possess it. We are only blameworthy when, being supplied with the power of subduing it, we permit it to reign over us.”

V.4-10 – “Not of works, lest any man should boast” – This statement too has been misused to assert that works are not required for salvation, only grace. What Paul means by works here is works of the Law in which the Jews placed so much store. We will have our destiny determined by our works – Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6-11; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 22:12. Those works must be works of faith – V.10; Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3; James 2:14-26.

V.11-22 – Gentiles had gone from being “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” to becoming “an holy temple in the Lord” and “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” The “middle wall of partition” that stood between Jew and Gentile had been “broken down” in Christ. The plaque on the wall between the Jewish and Gentile courts in the temple in Christ’s day is now in the Museum in Istanbul (see at right).



Christ “abolished in his flesh the **enmity**, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the **enmity** thereby.” The problem with the Law of Moses was that it highlighted sin and human failure because no one could keep it (Rom. 7:7-13; 8:3). That is what created the “enmity.” With Christ’s death and resurrection the Law was abolished (Gal. 3:13) and salvation is by grace through “faith which works by love” (Gal. 5:6). In Christ, both Jew and Gentile are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”



## April 6

### Numbers 22 and 23

The following extract from the Numbers Expositor is a good summary of the prophecy of Balaam.

Balaam enters the narrative as unexpectedly as Elijah; but once there he never really leaves it. He is found throughout Scripture, even in the Apocalypse (Rev. 2:14). It is even the spirit of Balaam that is responsible for the revolt at the end of the thousand years' reign of Christ (Rev. 20:7-9). Balaam is hired to curse the people of God, but Yahweh turns the curse into a blessing. He speaks well: "Let me die the death of the righteous" (Num. 21:10); "God is not a man that He should die" (Num. 23:19); "He hath blessed and I cannot reverse it" (Num. 23:20). But his influence is pernicious to the children of God, as is his type in every age (Rev. 2:14). He cannot curse the people because God won't permit it, but he can seduce them; and that is what he ultimately does, bringing about the death of many.

His parables, or prophecies, are apocalyptic in their concept, and can be divided into five: (1) Israel's separateness (Num. 23:9); (2) Israel's righteousness (Num. 23:21); (3) Israel's strength (Num. 24:8); (4) Israel's king (Num. 24:17); (5) Israel's conquests (Num. 24:23). The manner in which Yahweh "turned the curse into a blessing" (Neh. 13:2) was recalled over 800 years later by Micah, as he pleaded with the people to lean upon God for help (Micah 6:5). The future will see that blessing manifested in the earth.

Commencing in Num. 22:5 and ending in Rev. 2:14 there are 63 references to Balaam in Scripture. That emphasizes his importance in the scheme of things. The major exhortation that arises is noted by Jude who says some "**ran greedily** after the error of **Balaam** for reward." This is a reference to Num. 22:5-21. Denied by Yahweh, he tried again and ignored the requirement to wait for the messengers of Balak to arrive.

Peter had provided Jude with this exhortation previously – 2 Pet. 2:15 – "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following **the way of Balaam** the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" ("The love of money is the root of all evil.")

**Num. 23:21** – "He hath not beheld **iniquity** in Jacob, neither hath he seen **perverseness** in Israel." Taken at face value this assertion would seem incorrect, for Yahweh had seen much iniquity in Israel throughout the wilderness wandering. What might it mean? Israel were Yahweh's people ("a holy nation" – Ex. 19:6), and He was in a covenant relationship with them. No other nation or people enjoyed that status (Deut. 4:7-8). There was faithlessness and perversity in their ranks as history showed, but He would fulfil His promises to their fathers. The wicked individuals would perish, but not the nation. It is a similar situation with the Brotherhood of Christ who are called collectively "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9). Not all in that community will be saved. It depends on individual response and faith, but there will be a glorified Bride of Christ in the end. This fact should be a warning against alignment in any form with communities that do not share that status – 2 Cor. 6:14-15 – "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

## Proverbs 16

In this age of Humanism there are two verses in this chapter that align. Prov. 16:2 – “All **the ways of a man** are clean in his own eyes; but Yahweh weigheth the **spirits**”; and Prov. 16:25 – “There is **a way that seemeth right unto a man**, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” In Rev. 16:13-14, Christ prophesied that the ‘spirits’ (i.e. attitudes) of the French Revolution would permeate the entire world before his Second Advent – Rev. 16:14 – ESV – “For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.” Situational ethics dominates society today – “Every man does right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Wisdom dictates that we must be different for “Yahweh weigheth the spirits.”

## Ephesians 3

The Apostle rounds out the doctrinal section of the epistle with a prayer interrupted at the beginning with a dissertation on the breadth of the mission of Christ to include the Gentiles in the call of the Gospel (V.6). Accordingly, Paul had received the commission to “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (V.8). Note the repetition of the phrase of V.1 – “For this cause” in V.14 where the prayer is concluded through to V.21.

V.14-21 – In completing the prayer initiated in V.1, the Apostle invokes diligent attention to the Word of God so that we might “be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” and “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth**, and **length**, and **depth**, and **height**; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the **fulness** of God” (V.17-19). The reference is to the hope of immortality that awaits the faithful which is symbolized by the Most Holy Place where Christ now is (Heb. 9:24). The Most Holy was foursquare. In measuring a perfect cube only three measurements are required, but here there are four. Why? In the metaphor used of the new Jerusalem as the “holy city” or perfected Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:16), we note it is foursquare – “The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal” (three measurements are provided). The key to what Paul writes is the phrase “that ye might be **filled** with all the **fulness** of God.” **Four** is the number of **righteousness** and **God manifestation**. Entering the ‘Most Holy’ is set before us, but manifesting the righteousness of God is the key to entry. This is a long process that can only be accomplished by being “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

## Ephesians 4

Paul begins the chapter by emphasizing the exclusiveness of the ‘body’ of Christ – the ecclesia (V.1-6), before showing the grace given by God through Christ to perfect that body (V.7-16). He concludes the chapter by demonstrating the difference between the former way of life and the new creation in Christ. He likens the process to the changing of garments. There is a beautiful presentation of this with the two diverse situations separated by the fulcrum that produces it, as follows:

Eph. 4:22 – “That ye **put off** concerning the former conversation the **old man**, which is **corrupt according to the deceitful lusts**.” (This is our natural state in Adam).

V.23 – “And be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**,” (This is what creates the change!)

V.24 – “And that ye put on the **new man**, which **after God is created** in righteousness and true holiness.” (There must be a new creation by God after His own pattern – 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Rom. 6:4-6; 7:6; Col. 3:10).

V.25-32 – The Apostle then shows how sin can be overcome. It is by the principle of Rom. 12:21 – “Be not overcome of evil, but **overcome evil with good**.” For example, stealing can be overcome by making things to give away (V.28). Negativity of the “touch not; taste not; handle not” variety (Col. 2:21) rarely works for very long. Flesh will invariably win that battle. Positivity, or sublimation, is often very successful. As Bro. Carter once wisely wrote – “Sublimation is better than repression.”

## April 7

### Numbers 24

Num. 24 contains the last three of the five Divinely inspired parables of Balaam. Included in them are some very important and far-reaching prophecies concerning Israel's future and the demise of all their enemies. Here are a selection:

V.7 – Israel's “king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.” The Septuagint translates “Agag” as “Gog”. Christ will be higher than Gog who will be destroyed by him in the Land (Ezek. 38:17-23).

V.9 – “He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up?” This is the language of Gen. 49:8-10 in Jacob's prophecy of the last days. Christ of the tribe of Judah will govern the Kingdom of Israel restored.

V.17 – “there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.” The “morning star” (Rev. 2:28), namely Christ will hold the sceptre of Divine authority promised in Gen. 49:10.

V.18 – “And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.” This is the typical Edom, namely, Babylon the Great of the latter days proven by the citation of Isa. 34:9-10 in Rev. 14:10-11, and Isa. 34:11 in Rev. 18:2 (look at the margin in Isa. 34). Israel returning under Elijah in the Second Exodus is Yahweh's weapon against Catholic Europe (“Babylon the Great”) – Isa. 11:11-12; Mic. 5:4-8; 7:14-17; Zech. 9:13-16; Rev. 19:11-15, etc.

V.19 – “Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.” This is the same ‘city’ as in Isa. 25:2-3; 26:5, namely, Rome. This is confirmed in Rev. 19:21.

V.20 – “And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, **Amalek was the first of the nations**; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.” Amalek was not the first nation to exist, but was the first nation to attack Israel. That occurred in Ex. 17 where Amalek becomes a national type of the **serpent**. Hence, alluding to Gen. 3:15 in Ex. 17:16, Yahweh declared war on Amalek from “generation to generation” until the ‘serpent’ is finally destroyed. That is why “Gog and Magog” make an appearance in Rev. 20:8 which deals with the final destruction of the “old serpent” (Gen. 3) at the end of the Millennium.

## Numbers 25

Balaam was unsuccessful in cursing Israel for Balak, but incredibly successful in corrupting them by the most prone of all human weaknesses – immorality (Num. 31:16). His counsel to Balak to send in the women of Moab and Midian led to idolatry (V.1-2), and the loss of 24,000 lives (V.9). Note there is no discrepancy in 1 Cor. 10:8 where it is recorded 23,000 died. These died of the plague while 1,000 who were the ringleaders were hung up before Yahweh (V.4-5). Among those killed by direct action was Zimri a leader of the tribe of Simeon (V.14). He and his Gentile mistress, Cozbi, a Midianite princess, were assassinated by Phineas during an extraordinary display of rebellion.

Zimri brazenly brought Cozbi to the door of the Tabernacle where Moses and a weeping multitude were present (V.6). The word for “tent” in V.8 is *qûbbâh* – a *pavilion* (as a domed cavity). In other words, a tent with open sides so that all could see what was transpiring in the tent. A more contemptuous act could hardly be imagined and Phineas put an end to the travesty by spearing both of them through with one stroke. Thus the wrath of Yahweh was assuaged, and Phineas granted a special blessing (V.10-13).

The tribe of Simeon were encamped on the south of the encampment of Israel and the Midianitish women came from the south. Hence, it appears the majority of the 24,000 slain were from that tribe. This shows up in the second census in Num. 26:14 where Simeon has 22,200 opposed to the 59,300 in the first census (Num. 2:13).

## Proverbs 17

Prov. 17:5 – “Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.” The first phrase is reflected in James 3:8-9 – “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.” The second phrase addresses one phenomena of modern times – the prevalence of **revenge** in both the media and human behavior. To take pleasure in the misfortune of others bespeaks a selfish and pernicious spirit.

Prov. 17:15 – “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to Yahweh.” This too, is characteristic of our times, as it was in Isaiah’s – Isa. 5:20 – “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” The chapter ends with the observation that the less that is spoken, the better (V.27-28).

## Ephesians 5

V.1 – Weymouth – “Therefore be imitators of God, as His dear children.” Imitation and walking in love (*agape*) gives God a rest from contention and is “a sweet smelling savour” to Him (V.2 – see notes on “A sweet savour” – February 28), and leads to the eschewing of base human behavior and dubious jesting. The covetousness of human nature is a form of idolatry (V.5), the antidote for which is the “giving of thanks” (V.4), and seeking to walk in the light (V.7-14) which sinful men seek to avoid (John 3:19-21).

Time waits for no man, so making the most profitable use of it is wise. If wasteful habits have stolen time in the past, then it needs to be bought up (V.16). The word “redeeming” is *exagorazō* – to buy up, that is, ransom.

V.19 – Deliberately focusing the mind on higher things by psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is recommended. This is likened to plucking the strings of an instrument (the meaning of the word *psallo* rendered as “making melody”), and that instrument is the heart.

V.22-33 is a well-known section used in wedding ceremonies and oft quoted when the subject of marriage responsibilities are the focus. The foundation for success is recognition and acceptance of the Divine order established in the Garden (Gen. 2; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-14). There is a two way obligation where both partners to a marriage are in Christ. The wife should submit to her husband as the ecclesia does to Christ, and the husband must be prepared to lay down his life for his wife as Christ did for the ecclesia. Just as it is in our relationship to Christ, that the means of cleansing and development is the Word of God (V.26), so the Word must be at the centre of a marriage if it is to prosper.

## Ephesians 6

V.1-4 – “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise).” Having dealt with marriage responsibilities, the Apostle now turns to family relationships. It is fundamental for children to obey their parents in Christ as that fulfilled the 5th commandment which many Judaistic Jews abrogated by their Corban law (Matt. 15:4-6; Mark 7:9-13). This was the first and only commandment of the ten that carried an inherent promise of longevity in the Land. It hardly needs to be said that respect and honour for parents in the modern Humanistic world is largely a thing of the past. Similarly, wise and positive parenting is becoming a rarer commodity.

V.5-9 – Two thirds of the Roman world were slaves, so it was not uncommon for believers to have slaves, as in the case of Philemon and Onesimus (Epistle to Philemon). Accordingly, in a number of his letters the Apostle addresses this subject. There were reciprocal responsibilities. Believing slaves were to serve their earthly masters as though they were serving Christ, and believing slave owners were to treat their slaves as brethren. The “eyeservice” mentioned is so typical of human nature. When the master is present, full service is offered, but when he is absent, slackness emerges. Recent disputes over the installation of CCTV cameras in workplaces illustrates the point. Workers have objected to such scrutiny. There are also now TV shows involving bosses posing as workers to see how their employees operate. Human nature has not changed. Believers have a greater scrutiny than others – “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13).

V.10-20 – “Put on **the whole armour of God**, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” – The Apostle had spent a lot of time in Rome from whence he wrote this letter bound to, or in the presence of a Roman soldier (Acts 28:16). He knew their armour very well and now uses it as metaphor for a spiritual warrior – “Wherefore take unto you **the whole armour of God**, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

**Sword of the Spirit** = The Word of God. The Greek word is *machaira* – a short sword, and was the only offensive weapon worn by the warrior. Being a ‘short sword’ it could only be used in close combat. It demonstrates that we must be proficient in our handling of the Word of God – 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Heb. 4:12.

**Loins girded with truth** – The girdle (Gr. *zoma*) went about the loins and served to brace the armour tight to the body. It represents truth, which is firstly a mental condition (1 Pet. 1:13) and is essentially the foundation upon which our spiritual warfare is based – John 18:37.



**Helmet of salvation** – Greek *peri-kephalaia* signifying around the head. In Thess. 5:8 it is styled the hope of salvation and Paul states “we are saved by the hope.”

**Breastplate of righteousness** – The breastplate of a Roman soldier consisted of two parts; one covering the front of the body and the other the back. It guarded the heart and other vital organs frequently regarded as the seat of the emotions. It represents righteousness, and the two parts of the breastplate answer to the two aspects of righteousness – (1) Imputed – Rom. 3:22-26; Ps. 32:1-2; and (2) Manifested (in faith and love) – 1 Thess. 5:8.

**Feet shod with the gospel of peace** – This illustrates the Truth in action. It is reminiscent of Isa. 52:7 which Paul quotes in Rom. 10:15.

**Shield of faith** – Gr. *thureos* – was a large oblong shield used for heavy combat. It covered the whole forepart of the body, and being constructed of wood covered with hide, was particularly suitable for extinguishing “fiery darts” fired by the wicked. This symbol represents the trial of faith which each saint must endure before his character can be perfected (1 Pet. 1:7).

What believers stood against was not another human opponent, but a corrupt system. This was warfare against “principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

## April 8

### Numbers 26

The second census of Israel at the end of 40 years wandering presents some interesting considerations. The huge reduction in the number of males over 20 in the tribe of Simeon was referred to in the comments on Num. 25. It is evident that the majority of the 24,000 slain in that chapter were from Simeon.

• Reuben	<b>46,500</b> – 43,730
• Simeon	<b>59,300</b> – 22,200
• Gad	<b>40,500</b> – 45,650
• Judah	<b>76,500</b> – 74,600
• Issachar	<b>64,300</b> – 54,400
• Zebulun	<b>60,500</b> – 57,400
• Ephraim	<b>32,500</b> – 40,500
• Benjaimn	<b>45,600</b> – 35,400
• Manasseh	<b>52,700</b> – 32,200
• Dan	<b>64,400</b> – 62,700
• Naphtali	<b>45,400</b> – 53,400
• Asher	<b>53,400</b> – 41,500

Judah remained the largest and most influential tribe consistent with the prophecy of Jacob – Gen. 49:8.

Dan remained the second largest tribe which begs the question as to why they were not able to conquer the large portion of territory assigned to them in the land of Canaan – Josh. 19:40-48; Judges 18:1. Lack of faith and poor leadership appear to have been the problem.

Head count numbers had an impact of the amount of territory allocated to each tribe – Num. 26:53-65 – “Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him.”

### Proverbs 18

Prov. 18:8 – “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” Social media has facilitated the spreading of rumors and the telling of lies to harm others. Sometimes this results in mental illness in the victims who can be alienated from friends and family (cp. V.19). There is a simple antidote to this problem – always tell the truth (Eph. 4:25), and do unto others as you would have them do to you (Matt. 7:12).

Prov. 18:13 – “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Another hallmark of the modern Humanistic era is the unwillingness to listen before responding. How often do we see, or experience, an interlocutor butting in, or over-shouting someone speaking in a conversation. Genuine interest in another’s point of view and restraint are uncommon characteristics today.

Prov. 18:24 – “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” We sometimes hear in ecclesial life the complaint that “no one comes and talks to me at the meetings.” The counsel of the wise man is – “Go and talk to someone who seems to be in a similar situation to yourself.” Reaching out to others is the best medicine for loneliness.

## Philippians 1

The Apostle Paul was instrumental in establishing the ecclesia at Philippi at considerable cost to his own safety. It was the pain and suffering of wrongful imprisonment that created a special bond with his fellow sufferers – V.28-30. Situated on the Ignatian Way near the Aegean port of Neapolis, Philippi was an important city in Roman times. It became a retirement village for veterans and disabled soldiers of the Roman legions, and therefore a dangerous place for followers of Christ. This was demonstrated by the extraordinary unlawful treatment dished out to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-24).

The troubles Paul experienced he endured because they aided the preaching of the Gospel in a variety of ways (V.12-17). Not all was as he would have desired, but Christ was preached in a pagan world with positive results (V.18). Paul had only one reason to live – the fulfilling of his commission to preach Christ to the Gentiles (V.19-30).

## Philippians 2

V.1-4 – Paul’s sufferings were met by compassion and support from the Philippian brethren and sisters that exceeded many other ecclesias (Phil. 4:14-16). Now he calls upon them to show the same “bowels and mercies” towards each other in the ecclesia (V.2-4). By doing this they manifested the mind of Christ (V.5).

V.6 – ESV – “Who, though he was in the form (i.e. character) of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.” So, he could say, “the Father is greater than I” – John 14:28.

Echoes of the four faces of the Cherubim that frame the four Gospel accounts appear in the exaltation of Christ as the complete manifestation of the Shekinah glory. The **lion** of government and authority is reflected in V.6 – “the form of God” and again in V.9-11. The **ox** “form of a servant” principle in V.7. The **man** “in the likeness of men” (V.7), and “being found in fashion as a man” (V.8). The **eagle** power of the Spirit leading to his exaltation over all men (V.9-11).

V.12-13 – Effort is required to “**work** out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” The word for “work” is *katergazomai* – to perform, accomplish, achieve. This is antithetical to evangelical thinking that emphasizes grace in the absence of works. Works of faith are required for salvation – James 2:26; Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6-11. However, it is the motivation behind the works that is crucial. Judaistic thinking takes pride in personal achievement and attributes success to its own ability. Conversely the servant of Christ knows that no good thing comes from the natural man. Therefore, they do not trust in self, “For it is **God** which worketh in you **both to will and to do** of his good pleasure.” The will and motivation to perform comes from the influence of God through His Word (V.16).

## April 9

### Numbers 27

Among the final duties of Moses was dealing with a family anomaly and the appointment and preparation of Joshua to assume his role. This chapter addresses these two things.

V.1-11 – In the orders for the division of the land, just given (Num. 26), no provision had been made for females, in case of failure of male issue. The five daughters of Zelophehad, therefore, considered themselves as destitute, having neither father nor brother, and feeling themselves entirely overlooked agreed to refer the case to Moses and the rulers, whether it were not equitable that they should inherit their father's portion. This led to the enactment of an additional law to the civil code of Israel, which satisfactorily ascertained and amply secured the right of succession in cases of inheritance. This law, which is as reasonable as it is just, stands thus:

1. On the demise of the father, the estate descends to the sons.
2. If there be no son, the daughters succeed.
3. If there be no daughter, the brothers of the deceased inherit.
4. If there be no brethren, or paternal uncles, the estate goes to the grand uncles, or brothers of his father.
5. If there be no grand uncles, then the nearest of kin succeeds to the inheritance.

The daughters of Zelophehad appear again in Num. 36:1-12.

V.12-23 – Moses was allowed one view of the land promised to Abraham before his death. This raised the issue of who would replace him as leader of the nation. His question is answered by Yahweh in the appointment of Joshua.

### Proverbs 19

Prov. 19:1 – “Better is the **poor** that walketh in his **integrity**, than he that is **perverse** in his lips, and is a **fool**.” Poverty and integrity do not always go hand in hand. In fact, sometimes poverty produces a perversity that blames God for its condition; V.3 – “The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and **his heart fretteth against Yahweh**.” The rich have friends (V.6), but nobody wants to know the poor man (V.4,7), except “the king's son” – V.17; Ps. 72:12-14.

Having begun with “integrity” in V.1, there is an emphasis in this chapter on the scourge of false witnesses – V.5,9,28. Nothing is more harmful than the peddling of lies and rumors.

### Philippians 3

V.2 – “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision” (*katatomē* – cutting off; mutilation = circumcision). Paul warns against Judaisers who worked surreptitiously to undermine his influence. That the term ‘dog’ could be used of them indicates how unruly and vicious their behavior was. The term dog also is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, and is evidently so employed here. Paul acknowledges that he had acted like them in the past, but had been rescued from it by Christ's intervention (V.3-9).

His rescue had been a ‘resurrection’ to a new life in Christ (V.10), but one that brought sufferings and persecution such as he had dealt out to believers. He looked for a better “resurrection” – the word in V.11 is *exanastasis* – a rising from death (but to be given eternal life), hence, the prefix. *Anastasis* is about raising the dead to mortal life. Paul knows



that his total commitment to Christ after his conversion in 'repayment' for his persecuting past will lead to eternal life (1 Cor. 9:16-18; 15:8-10).

V.12-17 – But Paul is careful not to wallow in the past as there was much to do, and there were many handicaps, not the least of these human nature to which some had capitulated (V.18-19). In a series of engaging sentences well translated by Weymouth, Paul set forth his goals – V.12-14 – “I do not say that I have already won the race or have already reached perfection. But I am pressing on, striving to lay hold of the prize for which also Christ has laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not imagine that I have yet laid hold of it. But this one thing I do--forgetting everything which is past and stretching forward to what lies in front of me, **with my eyes fixed on the goal** I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus.”

V.20 – “For our conversation (*politeuma* – citizenship) is in heaven,” hence, followers of Christ do not participate in politics on earth in any form.

V.21 – “Who shall change our **vile** body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” This is the “prize” of V.14. While there is nothing good in human nature, the KJV translation is deficient. A number of reliable translations have transform “the body of our **humiliation**.” Human nature routinely **humiliates** us by disease, regressive malfunction, transgression and an endless bias towards evil, and of course, ultimately death. We seek to receive the now “glorious body” of our Lord from him.

#### Philippians 4

V.1-4 – Having founded the ecclesia at Philippi through great personal suffering, Paul's association with, and love for, the fledgling ecclesia was deep – “my joy and crown” he called them. But even this little ecclesia had its internal problems because of the frailties and inclinations of human nature. The straight up counsel for two sisters “that they be of the same mind in the Lord” is indicative that they had not been so. Petty and trifling issues can create disharmony in an ecclesia. If we are to “stand fast in the Lord” as good soldiers in Christ (Philippi being a city of army veterans) we need confidence in each other.

“**Rejoice** in the Lord alway: and again I say, **Rejoice**” – If you are confident your name is in “the Book of Life” there are good grounds to rejoice, but this repeated admonition must hint at something else. There will always be reason for some disappointment in our life in the truth. Paul had many disappointments, but these are outweighed by far by the positives and the joys, if we view things correctly. Rejoicing is not only a display of happiness, it is a sign of gratitude for all that has been done for us. How many of the Roman veterans who lived around the tiny ecclesia had any real reason to rejoice?

V.5-7 – “Let your **moderation** be known unto all men” – Barnes in his commentary on the word “moderation” says: “ἐπιεικὲς *epieikes* – refers to restraint on the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then propriety, gentleness, mildness.” This was Paul's counsel because “the Lord is at hand.” How much more relevant is that to us? So, we need to “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” That is how one acquires “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”

V.8-9 – A list of six virtues to be focused on is recommended – things that are **true, honest** (i.e. honourable), **just, pure, lovely** and of **good report** – “if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think** (*logizomai* – compute, calculate) on these things.” Together with following the Apostle’s teaching and example, the practice of these virtues testifies to the existence of “moderation.”

V.10-20 – Paul commends the ecclesia for their concern and generosity towards him and his missionary work which had exceeded other ecclesias. In the process he makes some statements about the privations attending his work. It necessitated selfless flexibility – “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.” That is the normal human approach, but the Apostle was motivated by a higher consideration – “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

## April 10

### Numbers 28

V.1-8 – Specifications for the daily continual burnt offerings were by “command” (V.2). In other words, this was compulsory, not discretionary. One lamb in the morning and another in the evening (3 pm) accompanied by meal, wine and oil meant that the “fragrance of rest” (i.e. “sweet savour” – see previous notes for February 28, page 9, and Appendix 1) Yahweh sought from His people would be present continually in symbol. Dedication (burnt offering); works of faith (bread and wine) motivated by the Word (beaten oil), if translated from ritual to action in daily life would give Yahweh rest from struggling with the waywardness of human nature (Gen. 6:3).

V.9-10 – Two lambs morning and evening demonstrated the importance of the Sabbath as the aim of Israel’s call, pointing to the wonders and rest of the Kingdom Age.

V.11-15 – Each new month additional burnt offerings of two young bullocks, one ram and seven first year lambs, plus one kid of the goats for a sin offering were accompanied by meal, drink and oil as with the continual burnt offerings. This drove home to perceptive Israelites that despite the daily indications of dedication and service, human nature, being what it is would require a new start to be made on a regular basis, hence the sin offering.

V.16-31 – Similarly, for Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread and Feast of weeks the same pattern as for the new month was to be followed.

### Proverbs 20

A variety of pithy counsel characterize this chapter.

Prov. 20:14 – ESV – “Bad, bad, says the buyer, but when he goes away, then he boasts.” It is a phenomenon of human nature to want to beat down the price of a desired object, even to denigrating its quality, but if successful in having the price greatly reduced, there is boasting of the bargain. “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

Prov. 20:17 – “Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.” How true this proves to be in human experience. Fulfilling fleshly desires seems delightful at the time, but it turns into pangs of conscience, regret and separation from God – gravel in the mouth!

Prov. 20:25 – “It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.” Perhaps Christ had this kind of ‘stony ground’ character in mind

in the parable of the sower. Initial enthusiasm, but no depth or counting of the cost leads to doubt and then departure.

## John 1

Bro. John Carter wrote in 1943 – “there is a correspondence between the four gospels and the four faces of the cherubim” and goes on to show Matthew corresponds with the lion; Mark the ox; Luke the man; and John the eagle.

The Gospel of John soars into heavenly regions like the **eagle** whose Cherubic face is the symbol for his writing. It is widely recognized for its loftiness and demanding spiritual content, and yet with oftentimes simple phrasing. Accordingly, most of the apostate doctrines of orthodox churches are drawn from this book. It was written for the spiritual, not the immature and misguided.

The opening section of John 1 is drawn from Gen. 1 and is echoed in 1 John 1. “In the beginning was the Word” – *logos* – the expression of the mind by the spoken word. The mind of God is personified as ‘Wisdom’ in Proverbs 8 when Yahweh set out to create the heavens and earth of our solar system, and was finally manifested at the end of the fourth millennium embodied in the person of His son (John 1:14) who “declared him” (V.18) – the word “declared” is *exēgeomai* (from which the English word ‘exegesis’ comes) – to give an exposition of; to interpret. That exposition is delivered in this book “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

Four days are covered in chapter 1 – (1) V.19-28; (2) V.29-34; (3) V.35-42; (4) V.43-51, in which John the Baptist introduces Jesus as “the Lamb of God” and five of his 12 disciples begin to follow the Lord. The most curious of these is Nathanael (“Given of El”) who lived in Cana (John 21:2) and who was possibly the bridegroom of the wedding there in John 2:1-11 (certainly the Scriptures he was contemplating were about Jacob seeking a wife and ending with four because of ‘guile’). He was clearly a man of considerable spiritual advancement being called “an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.” Guile was Jacob’s problem and Nathanael had been ruminating on Jacob’s experiences revealed in Micah 4 and 5. The “fig tree” (Mic. 4:4); Jacob’s Divinely inflicted handicap to limit trust in self (“halteth” – Mic. 4:6); the declaration “thou art the King of Israel” – Mic. 5:2; reference to “heaven open” (i.e. Divine government on earth – Mic. 4:1-5); and “the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (Gen. 28:12), all show the spiritual quality Christ found in Nathanael. He was ready for the marriage to come.

## April 11

### Numbers 29

This chapter completes what was begun in Num. 28 with similar offerings to be made for the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (V.1-6); the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month (V.7-11); the Feast of Tabernacles from the fifteenth to twenty-first day of the seventh month (V.12-34); and the last holy convocation of the religious year – the 8th day (“that great day of the feast” – V.35-38; John 7:37).

The peculiar feature of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles was the difference in the **number of bullocks offered each day**. Whereas the same number of rams and lambs were to be offered each day, it was not so with the bullocks. Day 1 was 13; day 2 was 12; day 3 was 11 etc., reducing by one each day until day 7 when 7 bullocks were offered. The aggregate was **70** – the number of the **nations** scattered by Nimrod’s rebellion (Gen. 10).

That is why 13 bullocks began the process = rebellion (Gen. 14:4), and Nimrod whose name means “we will rebel” was the 13th generation from Adam. The Feast of Tabernacles pointed to the **Millennium** when Yahweh will finally reverse the outcome of Nimrod’s rebellion by incorporating all nations into the nation of Israel through the Abrahamic promises which is why 7 bullocks were offered on **day 7** (seven = the Abrahamic Covenant). Hence, the nations during the Millennium will keep the Feast of Tabernacles – Zech. 14:16. On the **8th day** only **one bullock** was offered because beyond the Millennium there will only be **one nation** on the earth, and that will be **Israel** (Jer. 30:11).

## Numbers 30

This chapter contains laws governing vows and oaths. If a man made any of these, he had to keep them (V.1-2; Ecc. 5:4-5). But if he overheard his daughter or wife make a vow, he could disannul it the same day (V.3-16). This is a Divine ordinance. What might it teach? It clearly teaches that the Divine hierarchy which made the man the head of the woman in the family is not negotiable (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23). Humanism has effectively inverted that order.

## Proverbs 21

Prov. 21:2 – “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but Yahweh pondereth the hearts.” Self-justification is the automatic way of human nature (Judges 21:25).

Prov. 21:3 – “To do **justice** and judgment is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice.” This is consistent with Mic. 6:8 – “What doth Yahweh require of thee, but **to do justly**, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” The primary requirement of us is integrity and honesty. If these qualities are held as paramount, then the showing of mercy and walking humbly will follow.

Prov. 21:16 – “The man that wandereth out of **the way of understanding** shall remain in the congregation of the dead.” Understanding, and walking in the way of truth is essential for salvation – Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:3-4.

## John 2

V.1-11 record the first of the **eight signs** of John’s Gospel. The purpose of these is stated in John 20:30-31. The Greek word *semeion* rendered “miracles” in V.11 primarily signifies a ‘sign’ to point in a direction. This first ‘sign’ points to “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7).

V.1 – “And the third day there was a **marriage** in Cana of Galilee.” This is the third day after the last one mentioned (John 1:43), and that was the fourth. This therefore is the 7th day of John’s narrative which is significant in regard to the blessings of the 7th millennium that begins with the marriage of the Lamb to his ‘disciples’ (V.2). It is significant that in the three other records of a wedding in the Gospels there is no mention of the bride, as here, only of invited guests (Matt. 22:3); virgin companions of the bride (Matt. 25:1); and the servants (Luke 12:36-38). All of these, including the “disciples” (V.2,11) and “servants” (V.5) are potentially members of the Bride of Christ if they choose to be. The Bridegroom is ready – the Bride is still being formed.

The **wine** of the marriage feast represents the doctrine of the atoning work of Christ that will lead to the marriage to his Bride because of the shedding of his blood – Matt. 26:28; John 6:53-54; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 19:9,13. The Jewish ‘wine’ had failed. New wine had to be put in new bottles – Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38.

V.6 – The “six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews” were empty, as were the disciples present (2 Cor. 4:7). All Judaistic rituals performed had not led to true cleansing. The Law could not give life. They needed to be filled with the ‘water’ of the Word (V.7; Eph. 5:26). Then a process of change into “new wine” could begin. (5 disciples can be identified from John 1 to which can be added the Lord’s “mother” who clearly believes in him – V.5).

The purpose of the sign was to demonstrate the change required in Christ’s relationships from natural family (“Woman” V.4; “mother” 3 times) to his spiritual family – the potential members of his future Bride through an internal transformation. Only “servants” who have observed the change in themselves understand “whence” this change came from (V.9). The “governor” (men like Nicodemus) did not know. This is why his natural family return to Nazareth after the Lord chooses Capernaum as his new home (V.12).

The balance of this chapter deals with the token cleansing of the trading court of the Temple as preparations were being made for “the Jew’s passover” (not Christ’s Passover of three years later – Luke 22:15 – hinted at in V.19 – “in three days I will raise it up”). Many believed on him, but he knew their fickleness knowing “what was in man” (V.23-25).

### John 3

V.1-13 – Christ’s encounter with Nicodemus adequately revealed the truth of John 2:24-25 – “he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” Nicodemus occupied the third most important position in the religious structure of the time. He was the point of reference for all matters concerning the interpretation of the Scriptures. Hence, the Lord proceeded to demonstrate his ignorance as a means of converting him. It succeeded, but only when Nicodemus willingly allied himself with the crucified Messiah (John 19:38-40) – “there came also **Nicodemus**, which at the first **came to Jesus by night**” to assist Joseph of Arimathaea with the Lord’s burial. This is the first time the Spirit releases Nicodemus from the **dark** for “the same came to Jesus by **night**” to conceal his curiosity from his compatriots. It is one reason why Christ says in V.19-21 – “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

“Rabbi, **we** know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” revealed that not only was Nicodemus impressed by the miracles, but so were his compatriots in the hierarchy of the Jewish religion. The Lord astonishes him with his opening response – “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” and immediately it is evident what the problem was – ignorance and blindness to Divine thoughts. Nicodemus was the arbiter of Scriptural exegesis; the font of all wisdom, or so they believed, yet he had no concept of being **begotten** from above. The Greek word for “born” is *gennaō* which does service for both begetting and birth. These are 280 days apart among humans. This is important because the Lord then adds, “Except a man be born of water **and** of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” To be “born of water” is clearly the process leading to begetting by the power of the Word of God (water is a symbol for the Spirit Word – Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; 3:21; Zech. 13:1). Belief of the truth and baptism must come first. However, to enter the Kingdom requires a change of nature. That is a **birth** of the Spirit after the same pattern by which everyone is born (a physical fact). First begetting and then birth. This pattern was seen in the experiences of the wilderness generation. They were first “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (Red Sea – 1 Cor. 10:4), and then 40 years later crossed the Jordan (baptism of the Spirit) into the ‘kingdom’ (so to

speak) as a pattern for all faithful believers. Some disagree with this interpretation because of V.8 which speaks of the mysterious activity of the wind as a symbol for the Spirit. However, Scripture always interprets itself. That being “born of the Spirit” means attaining everlasting life is evident from V.15 – “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” That is where the Lord’s argument ended up (see also V.16-17). V.8 is about the **unseen** activity of the wind which has **observable results** and harks back to V.2, and forward to V.12-13. How so?

In V.2, Nicodemus acknowledged results (i.e. undeniable miracles). He did not know how they were produced. The answer was “the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.” Similarly, he had no concept of the “heavenly things” of V.12-13. How was it possible to understand the statement that “no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” unless you were ‘begotten from above’ by an unseen power like the Spirit Word that does produce results.

V.14-15 signify how important the events of Num. 21:4-9 were to Christ – “And **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The events of Num. 21 encapsulated his entire mission as the oft quoted next verse demonstrates – John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” See extensive comments on Num. 21 on **April 5**. In addition, it is important to be reminded that the title “**the Son of man**” that is used in verses 13 and 14 of this chapter, and 9 more times in John (84 times in the four gospels), is a title that refers to Christ’s delegated authority from God to exercise dominion over all carnal things and not primarily to his humanity (refer to the final paragraph on Luke 5 for **March 14** – page 32). This is consistent with V.8.

V.19-21 – “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” – The exhortation is obvious. If we avoid the Word (the source of light) it is because we wish to give the flesh free reign. If we seek the light of the Word, it is because we desire to crucify the flesh and walk with God.

V.22-36 – John the Baptist, not yet imprisoned, exalted Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah saying, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but **the friend of the bridegroom** (himself), which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” He certainly perceived the activity of the Spirit “wind” of V.8 – “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.” As John understood, “he that hath received his testimony” is begotten from above (V.33), and “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (V.36) and will be “born of the Spirit.”

## April 12

### Numbers 31

Moses had one final work to do, except for the writing of Deuteronomy, and that was to wreak vengeance on the Midianites for the disaster of Baal-Peor (Num. 25) – Num. 31:2 –

“Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.” For a man forbidden to enter the Land at that time, there was one positive outcome of the vengeance on Midian – not one Israelite soldier died (V.49). However, human nature proved alarmingly short-sighted even in total victory in which 5 kings of Midian and Balaam were slain (V.7-8). Balaam was still enjoying “the pleasures of sin for a season” in Midian though his home was hundreds of miles away to the north.

V.9-12 – They brought the women of Midian and their children back to the camp to the frustration of Moses (V.14). As he explained, it was the women of Midian who had been at the centre of the sin of Peor through the counsel of Balaam. All males and all women who had known man were slain. The law of the red heifer was invoked – V.19-24. Of the war booty, only that which survived the fire (judgement) was retained (the principle to be used at the Judgement Seat – 1 Cor. 3:12-15).

V.25-47 – The spoils were equally divided between the fighting men and the rest of Israel, but a levy of one man per 500 from the warriors and one portion of 50 from the people was to be **surrendered** to Yahweh by **heave offering** for the service of the Tabernacle.

V.48-51 – For the gift of life (“there lacketh not one man of us”), the officers of the army offered the valuables collected in victory “to make an atonement for our souls before Yahweh,” but it seems only the gold (symbol of tried faith – 1 Pet. 1:7) was accepted.

## Proverbs 22

Prov. 22:1 – RV – “A **good name** is rather to be chosen than great riches, and **loving favour** rather than **silver** and **gold**.” The only name worth having is one “written in heaven” in the Book of Life (Luke 10:20). Silver (redemption) and gold (tried faith) are the means of attaining to eternal life, but it is only the “loving favour” of God that will grant it (Rom. 6:23).

Prov. 22:3 – “A prudent man **foreseeth** the evil, and **hideth himself**: but the simple pass on, and are **punished**.” Foresight is better than hindsight. It is better to avoid evil than to be sorry after capitulating to it.

Prov. 22:28 – “Remove not the **ancient landmark**, which thy fathers have set.” In the age of Humanism and Wokeism with its rampant “cancel culture” ancient ‘landmarks’ are routinely removed. This must not be found true of the principles of God among those who are trained up in the ways of truth (V.6).

## John 4

There are two subjects in John 4 – The conversion of the woman of Samaria and many Samaritans; and the second sign of John’s Gospel – the healing of the nobleman’s son.

Long shadows were cast when Dinah chose to forsake Jacob’s family (Gen. 34) and was forced back into it only after witnessing the slaying of her defiler by her own brothers (Gen. 34:26). The conversion of the morally loose woman of Samaria is actually a parable about bringing Dinah home **willingly**.

### The Samaritans

- ❖ Wrote their own version of the Pentateuch and altered **Gen. 14, 22**, and **Deut. 12:11-14** to reflect their claims.
- ❖ Claimed descent from Jacob/Joseph but Christ regarded them as Gentiles – **Luke 17:16-18**.
- ❖ Mutual hatred characterised their relationship with the Jews over the rightful place of worship – **Luke 9:52-54**.  
“**The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.**” – **John 4:9**

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*



Having met stiff resistance in Jerusalem the Lord preached in Judea and instead of taking the easier route along the Jordan Valley back to the Galilee, chose the mountainous route through Shechem. V.4 – “And he must needs go through Samaria” indicates a distinct purpose for this journey. Christ called Samaritans “strangers” (Luke 17:18; i.e. Gentiles) regardless of their claim to have Jacob as their father (V.12,20). Sitting on the well of Jacob in the parcel of ground that he bequeathed to Joseph (“the increaser”), Christ offers the woman a different kind of water than that she came to draw.

### Map of the Lord's opening ministry

1. Visits Jerusalem for Passover – **John 2:13**. Nicodemus – **John 3:1**.
2. Preached through Judea.
3. Converted woman of Samaria – **John 4**.
4. Returns to Galilee.

### Sychar

**The name is from a Hebrew root *shekar* - an intoxicating drink; become tipsy; drunkard.**

A village on the slope of Mt. Ebal a short distance east of Shechem and about 800 metres (½ mile) north of Jacob's well situated in the parcel of ground that Jacob bought from Hamor and later bequeathed to Joseph (**Gen. 33:19; 48:22**).

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

Intrigued, she asks to receive this water that ends thirst. Christ then exposes her dubious past – V.18 – “For thou hast had **five husbands**.” The Samaritans came from **five nations** transported to the vacant kingdom of Israel in BC 722 (2 Kings 17:24), and one of the principal tribes were the Dinaites (derived from Dinah – Ezra 4:9). The stage was set to bring ‘Dinah’ home.

Challenging the Samaritan claim that Mt Gerizim was where Abraham offered Isaac, the Lord asserts that “salvation is of the Jews”, but only by “spirit (sincerity) and truth” an obvious allusion to Josh. 24:14. Shechem had always been the place of decision making, beginning with Abram – Gen. 12:6. It was for Israel in Josh. 24, and now for Samaritans confronted with the Messiah – John 4:25-26.

### Historical and prophetic echoes **John 4**

- ❖ **Shechem** – Place of decisions and choice – to shoulder responsibility and serve in spirit and truth.
- ❖ **Gerizim & Ebal** – Mountains of blessing and cursing (**Josh. 8:30-35**).
- ❖ **Joseph's heritage** – Double portion given to Joseph inherited by Manasseh and Ephraim – Jew and Gentile.

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

### Manasseh and Ephraim

- ❖ **Manasseh** – “causing to forget” or “forgetting.”
- ❖ **The natural firstborn** – **Gen. 41:50-51** – Type of natural Israel as God's firstborn nation – **Ex. 4:22; Amos 3:1-2**.
- ❖ **“My people have forgotten me days without number”** (**Jer. 2:32**).

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

Sitting on the boundary of the territory of Manasseh and Ephraim, the Lord having been denied by his own people represented in the allegory by Manasseh, turns to the Gentiles represented by Ephraim that “double fruit” might accrue to God. On hearing a report from the woman, many Samaritans emerge to hear the ‘Messiah’ for themselves. He remained



for **two days** preaching among them (V.40,43) indicative of the **2,000 years** that the Gospel would be offered to the Gentiles (2 Pet. 2:8).

### Historical and prophetic echoes

#### John 4

- ❖ **V.5** – “The increaser” sowed the seed and reaped a great harvest to save the world.
- ❖ Named (Egyptian) **Zaphnath-pa-aneah** – “**The saviour of the world**” (Gen. 41:45; John 4:42).
- ❖ The prophecy of Jacob – **Gen. 49:22**.
- ❖ Joseph a son of a fruitful vine by a well.
- ❖ His daughters “run over the wall” to build the Divine family.

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

### Manasseh and Ephraim

- ❖ **Ephraim** – “Double fruit” (Gen. 41:52).
- ❖ Appointed the rightful firstborn by Jacob – **Gen. 48:13-20**.
- ❖ **Type of spiritual Israel** – Abraham’s multitudinous seed – **Gen. 48:19**.  
“**The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof**” - **Matt. 21:43**.

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

The presence of Joseph in this context and the Lord’s reference to an overwhelming ‘harvest’ (V.35-38) opens up many lines of exploration for the inquisitive.

Prophecy in type and enacted parables were fulfilled in the events of this chapter. The Samaritans gave to Christ the Egyptian name of Joseph in whose inheritance he sat as – “The saviour of the world.” The prophecy of Jacob in Gen. 49:22-26 was beautifully illustrated as El Shaddai (nourisher of a family) built His family from Jew and Gentile.

Should there be any doubt that the conversion of the woman of Samaria was about finally bringing the errant ‘Dinah’ home, the following slides make the comparison clear.

### The woman of Samaria

#### Comparison with Dinah the daughter of Jacob

- ❖ Dinah’s name survived in the Dinaïtes of **Ezra 4:9** who were Samaritans. Their original worship included *Succoth-benoth* (“Booths of the daughters”) an immoral worship involving prostitution.
- ❖ Dinah’s name occurs **8 times** in Scripture (number of a **new beginning**) - The woman makes a new beginning and ‘Dinah’ is finally brought ‘home’.

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

### The woman of Samaria

#### Comparison with Dinah the daughter of Jacob

- ❖ Dinah the only daughter of Jacob (**Gen. 46:15**) – Woman claimed to be a daughter of Jacob (**John 4:12,20**).
- ❖ Both were found willingly living with a man outside of wedlock – **Gen. 34:2,26; John 4:17-18**.
- ❖ Dinah went to see the daughters of the land and was defiled – Woman was defiled and ostracised by the daughters of the land.

*Bringing Dinah Home – Conversion of the woman of Samaria*

V.46-54 – The **second sign** of John’s Gospel is the healing of the Nobleman’s son (V.54). The first sign demonstrated the powerlessness of the Law to save. New wine (doctrine) needed to be poured into ‘new bottles’ and Judaism forsaken if one wanted to be part of the coming ‘marriage’ (Cana is mentioned again). This sign is about God’s people being near ‘death’ because they would not (in the main) forsake their own ‘fig leaf’ religion. The “certain nobleman” typifies the “fathers” of Israel who seek for their “son” to be healed, but this will not happen until the “two days” of V.40,43 (2,000 years) have passed (Isa. 29:22-24). When the fulness of the Gentiles have come in (Rom. 11:25), Israel’s “blindness” will be cured when “there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26). Jesus did not need to go to Capernaum (“the city of comfort”) in order to heal, and neither will his method of healing

Israel in the future be by their design – “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” It must be on the basis of faith – “Go thy way; thy son liveth.” The nobleman **believed**, and his son was cured in the 7th hour as Israel will be cured in the 7th millennium. The conversion reaches to “his whole house” which is the subject of the third sign.

## April 13

### Numbers 32

Moses is confronted with another serious challenge when the tribes of Reuben and Gad fall in love with the ideal grazing land recently captured from Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan (V.1-5), and seek it as their inheritance.

V.6-15 – Moses launches into a tirade against the men of Reuben and Gad reviving memories of the faithless spies which included two from these very tribes. His final salvo – “And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, **an increase of sinful men**, to augment yet the fierce anger of Yahweh toward Israel,” may have been a little too harsh but underscored his deep concern that this request would discourage the rest of the nation from taking their inheritance in the Land as the spies had done.

V.16-42 – The matter is resolved by the leaders of Reuben and Gad committing to going with their brethren across Jordan and fighting with them until the inheritance of the remaining tribes had been won. That was a huge commitment which proved to be seven years in which they did not see their families who were installed in fenced cities with only the elderly and very young males to protect them. Absolute trust in Yahweh would be essential.

During this lengthy negotiation Moses makes a statement that is relevant for all times – “be sure your sin will find you out” (V.23). The breaking of promises, oaths and commitments will ultimately be brought to account – “God is not mocked” – Gal. 6:7.

### Proverbs 23

This chapter might be dubbed the ‘cut throat’ chapter of Proverbs.

V.1-8 speak of someone who accepts the obviously hypocritical lavish entertainment of another in authority through whom they think they might secure advantage and profit. They are invariably deceived, not understanding human nature, and end up ‘cutting their own throat’ (V.2).

Similarly, the foolish and unthinking ‘cut their own throat’ by envying the wicked (V.17); falling victim to alcohol and gluttony (V.20-21; 29-35); or to sexual immorality (V.27-28).

V.13-14 – Humanistic doctrine has completely abandoned the admonition to apply corporal punishment to young children who deserve correction. Even among believers prominent voices are raised against it. The common argument being that by “rod” is meant corrective words! No honest assessment of these two verses (not to mention many others in Proverbs) could reasonably come to that conclusion.

### John 5

The third sign in John’s Gospel is an enacted parable of the ultimate redemption of Israel.

V.1 – “After this there was **a feast of the Jews**; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” It is uncertain which of the feasts it was, but two things hint at it being Passover – reference

to the sheep gate (where sheep bred in Bethlehem entered the temple), and the fact that what follows is the enactment of the redemption of Israel which occurred at the first Passover.

V.2 – “a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue **Bethesda**, having **five** porches.” Nothing in Scripture is ever included without purpose. Thought must be given as to why a pool called Bethesda is described as having one feature worthy of note (after all, who really cares how many porches or windows a pool has?). The author of the Bible clearly wants us to understand something by its inclusion. **Five** is the Biblical number of Divine **grace**. This is easily established by a study of the subject. Bethesda consists of two Hebrew words – *bayith* (*beth* in the anglicized form of the Greek) and simply means ‘house’; and *chesed* – loving-kindness, the word used of Yahweh’s characteristic translated “goodness” in Ex. 34:6 and “mercy” in Ex. 34:7. Therefore, **Bethesda is the ‘house of God’s grace’** where a man representing his own nation of Israel is finally cured of his lameness and disability after 38 years.

V.3-4 – Hundreds of impotent folk had gathered in the hope the mythical “moving of the water” would cure them if they were first into it. It is interesting that many translations exclude V.4 altogether, including the RV and Rotherham. However, it is simple enough to read “**It was thought** an angel went down at a certain season into the pool,” for this was another Jewish fable. The really fascinating thing here is the determination of Christ to heal only **one man** in this incident. Normally, he would cure all present (Matt. 12:15; Luke 6:19). The margin for V.13 is helpful – “for Jesus had conveyed himself **away from** the multitude in that place.” That is, he came only to heal one man. It was an enacted parable with far-reaching implications.

V.5 – “And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity **thirty and eight years**.” Israel wandered for **38 years** in the wilderness after the condemnation of an entire generation (Num. 14; Deut. 2:13-14 – note echoes “rise up” and “wasted”). They had a serious “infirmity” described as impotence (V.7) – namely, a lack of faith that Yahweh could get them across the Jordan through “the moving of the water” (Josh. 3:15-16) into the Land of Promise.

V.6 – “Wilt thou be made whole?” The word “Wilt” is *ethelō* – to will, have in mind, intend; to be resolved or determined, to purpose. This is what was lacking in the wilderness generation – willingness to be made “whole” – *hugiēs* – healthy. Spiritual health depends on faith, and faith produces willingness to aim towards the Land of Promise. It will finally come to “all Israel” – Romans 11:26; but only when the ‘Sabbath’ arrives (V.9-10).

V.16-18 – Working to redeem mankind on the Sabbath as his Father had done since Adam sinned, the Lord exposed himself to violent retribution from law-keeping Jews. It was an opportunity to speak of his delegated authority to do so.

V.19-29 – The terms “Father” and “Son” are used repeatedly in this discourse and are tied to the titles “the Son of God” (V.25) and “the Son of man” (V.27). The former refers to his origin, and the latter to his delegated authority because of that origin. What he saw his Father do (V.19), he assumed responsibility for because it was delegated to him, including raising the dead and granting eternal life. There were two phases to his mission – V.25 – preaching to the spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1; Luke 9:60); and V.28-29 – raising the literally dead from their graves to face judgement.

V.30-47 – The Lord then calls upon five independent witnesses to validate his authority. They are – (1) John the Baptist – V.32-35; (2) his Father’s works – V.36; (3) the Father Himself – V.37-38; (4) the Scriptures – V.39; (5) Moses the law-giver – V.45-47.

In the course of the events of this chapter, six of the 10 commandments were referred to, and some breached. They are: 1st – failure to love “the only God” (ESV) – V.42,44; 2nd – God’s shape or form replaced by their own ‘image’ – V.37; 4th – the Sabbath in which they failed to work with God – V.17-18; 5th – No honour to the Father because they did not honour the Son – V.23; 6th – sought to kill Christ – V.18; 9th – acceptance of false witnesses – V.32.

## April 14

### Numbers 33

This chapter records all of the 44 ‘stations’ where Israel camped in their 40 year journey to the Land. These were appointed by the movement of the cloud (Ex. 13:20-22; Num. 9:15-23). In this chapter the Hebrew word *chanah* which means “to pitch a tent” is translated as “pitched” and “encamped.” It occurs 42 times in the chapter and 74 in the book. Virtually no details of what happened at these sites is recorded here.

V.50-56 – Israel is instructed to eliminate every Canaanite from the land of their inheritance, and to destroy all of their idolatrous paraphernalia. Failure to do so would result in disaster as history testifies it did. The lesson for us is obvious. We must endeavor to eliminate from our lives any impediment to attaining a place in the Kingdom – Heb. 12:1 – “let us lay aside **every weight**, and the **sin which doth so easily beset us.**”

### Proverbs 24

Prov. 24:9 – “The thought of foolishness is sin.” This phrase has been used to suggest that Christ could not have even processed the suggestions of the tempter in his mind (Matt. 4). A much better translation lays this error aside – ESV – “The devising of folly is sin.”

There are many valuable words of wisdom in this chapter. Here is a small selection:

V.10 – “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.” Faith can endure all things. Trust in God in the worst of circumstances will never fail in the end. There are always reasons for the trials that God’s servants face – 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:13-14; Lam. 3:31-36.

V.21 – “My son, fear thou Yahweh and the king: and **meddle not with them that are given to change.**” The Humanistic world we live in wants to change everything just for the sake of change. Best not to meddle with them. “Remove not the ancient landmark.”

V.23-26 – When Christ comes, the inversion of right and wrong by Humanism will be eradicated and the world will rejoice.

V.27 – “Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.” The old saying “putting the cart before the horse” applies here. Unless there is food to sustain the builders, the project cannot be completed. In life there is a need to use foresight to decide on priorities. Even worse is laziness that neither cultivates field or builds a house – V.30-34.

### John 6

The chapter contains two of the 8 signs of John – V.1-14 – The feeding of the five thousand; and V.15-21 – The calming of the Sea of Galilee. Both are enacted parables of far-reaching extent. The comments made on the two feedings of a multitude bear repeating here: The 5,000 were mainly Jews – and the 4,000 mainly Gentiles (Mark 8:1-9). What the Jews

needed was **faith in the promises** made to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so that they might receive God's **grace**. Hence, there were **5** loaves (5 = grace – John 5:2) and 2 fish (Jew and Gentile) for a total of 7 = covenant. The 4,000 were fed with **7** loaves for they being Gentiles needed the **covenant** God made with Abraham (Gal. 3). This is noted in Rom. 3:30 where the Apostle says, "Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision (Jews) by (*ek* - out of) **faith**, and uncircumcision (Gentiles) through **the faith**" (Diaglott). The 5,000 Jews left 12 wicker hand baskets (Gr. *kophinos*) of crumbs. The 4,000 Gentiles left only 7 small lunch packs (*spuris* – a lunch hamper woven from reeds). Don't be deflected by those who point out that *spuris* is the word used of the basket Paul was lowered down the wall of Damascus in – Acts 9:26. Woven reed baskets can be of any size. It is ludicrous to think the disciples used a bag that size to carry their lunch on a day trip. What is the meaning of this? It is simple – the Gentiles were hungrier for the teachings of Christ than the Jews. History has testified to that, as does John 6.

This chapter is framed on Isa. 54 and 55. Christ tells us that by quoting Isa. 54:13 in John 6:45.

### Comparison of Isa. 55 & John 6

**Isa. 54:13** – “And all thy children shall be taught of Yahweh”

**Isa. 55:1** – “come ye, buy and eat”

**V.1** – “he that hath no money”

**V.1** – “Ho, every one”

**V.6** – “Seek ye Yahweh”

**John 6:45** – “It is written ...., And they shall be all taught of God”

**V.5** – “Whence shall we buy bread”

**V.7** – “200 penny worth ...not sufficient”

**V.7,40** – “that every one”

**V.26** – “Ye seek me”

### Isa. 55

**V.2** – “and your labour for that which satisfieth not”

**V.3** – “an everlasting covenant...the sure mercies of David”

**V.10** – “as the rain cometh down”

**V.1** – “every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters”

### John 6

**V.27** – “Labour not for the meat which perisheth”

**V.27** – “meat which endureth unto everlasting life”

**V.33** – “which cometh down from heaven”

**V. 35** – “he that believeth on me shall never thirst”

The Jews came only for the free food (V.26). By the end of the chapter the Lord was down to 12 disciples! And even they were struggling!

The **5<sup>th</sup> Sign** is ultimately designed for the generation who would experience the return of Christ. The disciples in the absence of Christ were crossing the Sea of Galilee (called “Galilee of the nations” – Isa. 9:1) towards Capernaum (“the city of comfort”) in a ‘ship’ (the ecclesia) in the company of their brethren (fellow disciples). The ecclesial ship was being buffeted and tossed to and fro by a violent storm (Rev. 16:14), and only the appearance of Christ could save them. When he arrived the storm was calmed (Ps. 65:7), and the ship was immediately at the place they had set out for – “the city of comfort” (Isa. 51:3; 66:13; Zech. 1:17).

Christ made it very clear that though he desired not to lose anyone (V.12,39), salvation depends on response to the call of the Father (V.35-40,44-45). The words of his Father (likened to manna) were embodied in him (V.32-35), therefore the words he spoke could give life (V.63). Hence, when he called upon them to eat his flesh, they were horrified and took umbrage (V.47-58). This was God's way of separating natural and spiritual thinking. It

### Isa. 55

**V.3** – “your soul shall live”

**V.2** – “eat ye that is good”

**V.11** – “it shall not return unto me void”

**V.11** – “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth”

### John 6

**V.40** – “have everlasting life”

**V.54** – “Whoso eateth my flesh”

**V.62** – “ascend up where he was before”

**V.63** – “the words that I speak...they are spirit, and they are life”

*“And they shall be all taught of God”*

required effort to rise above the Judaism to which they were accustomed. Many could not do it.

V.28-59 – “**What shall we do**, that we might **work** the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent” – The difficult task Christ had in converting his own people was emphasized here. Judaism is all about **what man can do for God**, not believing what He can do for them. So the Lord launches into a discourse on how God works – “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (V.37). “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (V.44). “It is written in the prophets, And **they shall be all taught of God**. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (V.45). So, it all comes back to an understanding of the Word of God. Christ declared “the **bread of God** is he which cometh down from heaven” and “**I am the bread of life**,” so “the **words** that I speak unto you, they are **spirit**, and they are **life**.” Accordingly, Christ applies pressure on the Judaistic thinkers crowding around him to be fed with natural bread. “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” absolutely horrified them. They thought he was talking about cannibalism. The words used for ‘eating’ are important (see slide at right). They were talking about natural eating; he was talking about spiritual eating. What is required is ‘chewing’ on the Word and ruminating on it. Shallow Judaistic thinkers had no hope of understanding (eating) “the bread of heaven.” Even the Lord’s disciples struggled because they were all products of shallow rabbinical teaching.

### Dividing natural from spiritual thinkers – John 6:59-71

- ❖ “All” taught of God – drawn (*helko* – drag) by learning – **Vv.37-44**.
- ❖ Eating his flesh – **Vv.51-58**. Two words “eat” -  
 - **phago** – to eat (11 occs. in chap. = failure)  
 - **trogo** – to chew, gnaw; hence to eat (4 occs. in chap. – only 6 in N.T.).
- ❖ God’s words are spirit and life – **Vv.63, 68-69**.  
**“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”**

## April 15

### Numbers 34

This chapter describes the borders of the land of Canaan which Yahweh was about to make available to the Israelites for their possession. However, the area defined was never fully occupied by Israel, simply because the tribes never fulfilled the conditions imposed.

The chapter is divided into six sections: (1) South border – V.1-5; (2) West border – V.6; (3) North border – V.7-9; (4) East border – V.10-13; (5) Transjordan area – V.14-15; (6) The leaders appointed to divide the land by lot – V.16-29.

V.7-8 – The Mount Hor of these verses should not be confused with the place where Aaron was buried. That Mount Hor was in the South, whereas this one is to the North. The word ‘Hor’ is a common name for mountain, and therefore the expression “Mount Hor” can signify Great Mountain. It doubtless defines the whole Lebanese range of mountains some 80 or more miles (129 km) in length, commencing east of Zidon. and terminating at the point immediately above the entrance of Hamath.

## Proverbs 25

Prov. 25:2 – “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” It is significant that the very first thing Hezekiah’s men chose when compiling more of Solomon’s proverbs (V.1) is this reference to the way Yahweh has ‘concealed’ many things in His Word that only those who are prospective ‘kings’ in the Kingdom will understand by diligent inquiry. This is perfectly consistent with the comments made on John 6 above. This is what Christ meant in Mark 4:24-25.

V.7 – Christ repeats this admonition in Luke 14:7-11.

V.11-12 are mutually supportive. For V. 11 the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge comments – “A word spoken with propriety, opportunely, and suitably to the occasion, is as much in its place, and as conspicuously beautiful, as the golden fruit which appears through the apertures of an exquisitely wrought silver basket.” Bearing in mind that silver is a symbol for redemption, V.12 adds another element – “As an **earring of gold**, and an ornament of fine **gold**, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient **ear**.” It is not difficult to see the connection between ‘tried faith’ (I Pet. 1:7) and the **hearing** of the Word by which faith is sustained (Rom. 10:17). Wisely chosen words of reproof can be very effective on an obedient ear.

## John 7

V.1 – “Jewry” refers to Judea (V.3) and is distinguished from Galilee and Samaria, and contained the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan. “Jews” describes the religious class who sought to kill Christ, not all Jews in Judea.

V.5 – “For neither did his brethren believe in him.” Ps. 69:8 informed the Lord that his siblings would not initially believe in him, and so it proved – Mark 3:21. But he also knew from Ps. 69 that this would change after his resurrection – Ps. 69:25; is cited in Acts 1:13-20 where “his brethren” are found with the Apostles (Acts 1:13-14).

V.10-14 – Jesus did go up after his doubting brethren had left, but secretly, keeping a low profile until the middle of the seven day feast of tabernacles. A debate ensued with reference to V.1, and then the Lord harks back to the healing of the impotent man of John 5:1-17.

V.21-24 – Christ contrasts his attitude to the Sabbath with that of his Judaistic enemies. They would circumcise a male child on a Sabbath to keep a practice that preceded the Law (by cutting off flesh = negative), but condemned him for making a man “whole” – *hugies* – healthy (positive). Such was the gulf of understanding about the purpose of the Sabbath.

Each day of the feast, water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in the Temple commemorating the water supplied to Israel in the wilderness. On the 8th day signifying blessings on the Land, no water was poured out. Hence, verses 37-39.

V.37-39 – Days of division among leaders and common people culminate in Christ making a great declaration on the 8th day – “that great day of the feast” – Lev. 23:36,39; Num. 29:35. For those who were thirsty due to the dry and harsh Judaism thrust upon them (Acts 15:10), the promise of the Holy Spirit in their lives would see it flow to many others. But the Lord is also taking aim at the hypocritical Judaisers who sought to kill him by alluding to Jer. 17:13-18. This is indicated by the way the chapter ends – “And every man went unto his own house” (more on this in John 8).

V.40-52 – Division of opinion saw those sent to arrest Christ (V.32) return empty-handed. The Pharisees were furious and revealed their true attitude towards their own people – V.49 – “But **this people** who knoweth not the law are **cursed**.” However, their own ignorance is then on display when Nicodemus intervenes and they retort – V.52 – “Art thou also of **Galilee**? Search, and look: for out of **Galilee** ariseth no prophet.” There was one prophet out of **Galilee** and his name was **Jonah** (2 Kings 14:25), and “there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet **Jonah**” (Matt. 16:4). How blind they were!

## April 16

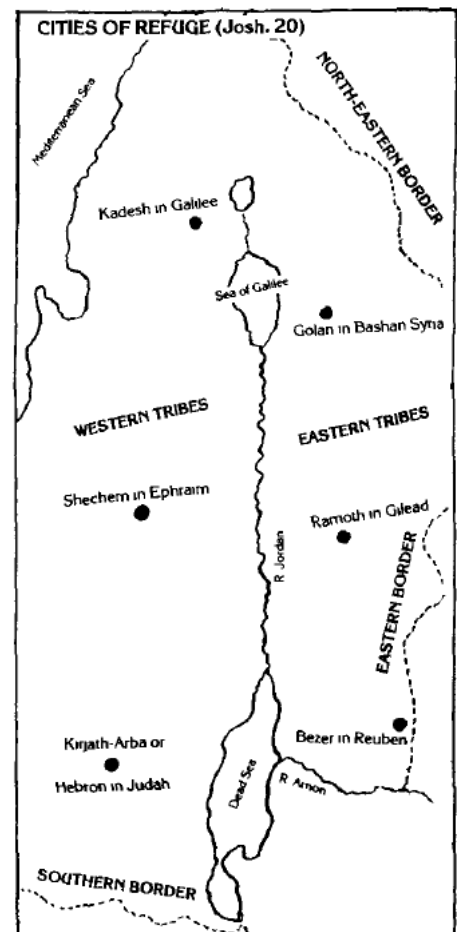
### Numbers 35

Because no land was allotted to the tribe of Levi for an inheritance, Yahweh provided cities for the Levites to dwell in throughout all the territory of the other tribes. 48 cities were provided. These continued to be the possession of the children of Israel, but were granted to the Levites as dwelling places, whilst six were appointed as Cities of Refuge where justice and mercy were administered in the case of murder or manslaughter.

The Levites were the guides and educators of the nation – Mal. 2:4-9; Neh. 8:7-9. It was essential that they be spread throughout the Land so that they were able to fulfil their role as ministers of the Word.

V.2-5 – The word “suburbs” is *migrâshâh* – a suburb (that is, open country whither flocks are driven for pasture). It is evident the Levites would have cattle and other animals (V.3). Hence, they would not be entirely dependent on the obedience of the other tribes for the delivery of the tithes that were intended to provide for their needs so they could focus on their task as teachers. This was all too often the case in Israel's history – Neh. 13:10. Out of the 48 Levitical towns, six were to be cities of refuge for the accidental manslayer (V.6-8).

V.9-34 – Ordinances governing the purpose of, and operation of the cities of refuge complete the chapter. They largely speak for themselves. Murder was punishable by death without recourse to redemption (V.31), but accidental and unintentional killing of another permitted refuge from death at the hand of the avenger of blood in a city of refuge after a trial. Release and return to inheritance could only happen on the death of the high priest (pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ). However, under the Law, safety after release depended on the obedience of law-keepers, a point made in Heb. 6:18-20 where the Apostle contrasts the dubious value of holding to the Law with seeking ‘refuge’ in Jesus Anointed, now an undying ever-living High Priest.



### Proverbs 26

Prov. 26:4-5 – “**Answer not a fool** according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. **Answer a fool** according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.” There



is an answer to this dichotomy in the preceding verses. It is in assessing **appropriateness**. Snow in summer and rain in harvest are inappropriate. “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back” are all appropriate. So judgements have to be made when confronted with fools. If the assessment is that there is value in answering a fool, then it is appropriate, but if the assessment is that an answer would lead to scorn or blasphemy, then it is inappropriate. The Lord taught the same thing in Matt. 7:6.

V.6-12 – Each verse refers to fools and is followed by a bracket of proverbs about slothfulness which is another form of foolishness (V.13-16).

Prov. 26:11 – “As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.” Peter repeats this message in 2 Pet. 2:22. Humans tend to act like dogs at times.

Prov. 26:17 – “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.” You are likely to be bitten trying to release your grip. It is better not to meddle in other people's private affairs – 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 5:13.

## John 8

It is an unusual statement that ends John 7 – “every man went unto his own house.” Why would readers want to know that? Wouldn't everyone go home after the feast had ended? Yes, but one Pharisee obviously found his wife “in the very act” with another Pharisee. Some assumptions are made here, but they are defensible from what follows. In Matt. 5:27-32 Christ pinpointed the practice of Pharisees who followed the teachings of Rabbis Hillel and Shamai, and reinforced it in Luke 16:18. They were known to routinely seek another wife by finding either a sexual sin in her, or some other impediment in domestic life. The fact that there is no guilty male partner brought to Jesus with the woman (V.3-4) strongly suggests he was one of their number. The fact that all of the accusers were guilty of the same sin is evidenced by V.9.

V.5-9 – They cite Moses' law (actually Yahweh's) of Lev. 20:10, but it required both parties to the adultery to be stoned. What was the Lord to do in the face of this hypocritical injustice? Uphold the Law! Yes, but in doing so he first does something which at first glance appears very defensive – stalling for time his enemies doubtless thought; unsure of what to say perhaps, until they read what he had written on the ground. The Lord twice stooped down so he could write on the ground. He was not doodling. The clue had been given in John 7:37-38 where a clear allusion was made to Jer. 17:9-14. This is the context where we read – Jer. 17:9 – LITV translation – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is incurable; who can know it?” Clearly, Christ had seen straight through the hypocrisy of the adulterers before him.

Jer. 17:13 – “O Yahweh, the hope of Israel, **all that forsake thee shall be ashamed**, and they that depart from me **shall be written in the earth**, because they have forsaken Yahweh, **the fountain of living waters.**” It is apparent that Christ was writing names on the ground, and the obvious suggestion is that he began with the eldest among his enemies down to the youngest (John 8:9). His challenge was “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” In other words, he was happy to uphold the Law, but it required two or three guiltless witnesses – V.17; Deut. 17:6; 19:17. He was one. He just needed another. There were none. They were all guilty of exactly the same sin as the woman, and the oldest among them the most experienced in it. When we read, “and by **the conscience** being convinced” (Diaglott) it is not a reference to their individual conscience, for they did not have one. It was **the collective**

**conscience.** They would have looked at each other knowing the truth, and at the people looking on, and quietly exited backstage to the shadows where they truly belonged.

V.10-11 – It is critically important to understand that Christ was willing to uphold the Law (Matt. 5:17 – “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” He could not in this case, for there was only one guiltless witness. So, God’s righteousness having been upheld, he applied mercy (Mic. 6:8; James 2:13). The price for the woman was “Go, and sin no more.” This was a positive end to the Feast of Tabernacles where rejoicing in deliverance from Egypt (“the house of sin and death”) was centerpiece – Lev. 23:39-43.

V.12-30 – “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in **darkness**, but shall have the light of life” – The ‘dark side’ Pharisees had departed, but those who remained wished to defend themselves as bearers of light saying, “Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.” The remainder of the chapter then becomes a debate about **origins** – “Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for **I know whence I came**, and whither I go; but **ye cannot tell whence I come**, and whither I go.” But he had two incontrovertible witnesses – himself and his Father. What follows is about the contrast between shallow and profound – “Ye are from **beneath**; I am from **above**: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” It foreshadowed his crucifixion at their hands (V.28). However, “as he spake these words, many believed on him,” but he knew their understanding was shallow and it was to be seriously tested.

V.31-38 – “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you **free**” – They took umbrage at the suggestion that they were not “free” for they were “Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” Christ is referring to the allegory expounded by Paul in Gal. 4:22-31 which he understood better than anyone. Ishmael represented Jews living under the Law (symbolized by his mother Hagar), and Isaac represented ‘freeborn’ believers in the promises made to Abraham (symbolized by Sarah). While Jews insisted on staying under the Law, and not coming to Christ, they were truly in bondage to the “schoolmaster” which served to condemn them.

V.34 – (LITV) “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone practicing sin is a slave of sin” – This truth is repeated by John (1 John 3:4-8). It is about what governs our life. If it is flesh (1 John 2:15-16 – “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” = the *diabolos*) then we are the slaves of king sin. For “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24), or as Christ put it here – “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Judaism was antithetical to this approach as was blatantly illustrated at the beginning of the chapter. They were indeed Abraham’s natural seed, but their true father was the *diabolos* – the serpent.

V.39-47 – Of the potential murderers Christ said, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” for “ye do the deeds of your father” the serpent. The debate gets nasty – “We be not born of **fornication**; we have one Father, even God” they said, proving themselves to be the progeny of Ishmael who accused Isaac of being begotten by Abimelech (Gen. 21:9 – the source of the Allegory – Gal. 4:30 cited from V.10). The blasphemers are suggesting the same thing of Jesus Anointed, that he was the product of fornication, and not the Son of God (V.42).

“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word” – The principle of Rom. 8:7 emerges – “the **carnal mind** is enmity against God: for it **is not subject** to the law of God, **neither indeed can be**” because it is amoral, like the serpent of old – “Ye are of your father the devil” (*diabolos*) “he a **manslayer** was from a beginning” (Diaglott). The serpent was not guilty of murder because he did not intend to bring about the death of Adam and Eve, but did. The same would happen again. The problem was a failure to hear and understand the Word of God – “He that is of God heareth God's words.”

V.48-59 – The blasphemy steps up a notch – “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (*daimonion* – demon). Christ's response is to emphasize the great gulf in thinking – “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” The natural thinkers took umbrage again arguing Abraham and the prophets were long dead. The pressure rises – “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” This was a reference to Gen. 22 when Abraham saw in the ‘sacrifice’ of Isaac a type of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ (Heb. 11:19). To their bemused and shallow defense, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” the Lord claimed again to be the Son of God – “Before Abraham was, I am” for “thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24); 1 Pet. 1:20 – “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.”

## April 17

### Numbers 36

V.1-4 – The addition to the Law in Num. 27 concerning the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad comes into view again when the leaders of the tribe of Manasseh realize the implications of the law at the time of Jubilee. Intermarriage of Zelophehad's daughters into other tribes could see a loss of inheritance to the tribe of Manasseh. This was resolved by the injunction for Zelophehad's daughters to only marry men of their own tribe – V.6-7. The law was then extended to all tribes where a similar circumstance might arise – V.8-9.

V.10-12 – The daughters of Zelophehad manifested their faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh's commands and married within the family of their own tribe. The **principle** of marriage only within the body of Christ is thus emphasized – 1 Cor. 7:39.

### Proverbs 27

Prov. 27:1 – “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” James criticizes Jews of his time that were guilty of this (James 4:13-17). We ought always to say, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

Prov. 27:2 – “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.” This is perhaps the most difficult of all human weaknesses to overcome. **Pride** is the last great bastion of the flesh (1 John 2:15-16), and the most difficult to overcome. Even in every day conversation when others are talking about their own experiences or achievements we find it difficult to refrain from speaking about our own. Christ's admonition should always be at the forefront of our mind – Luke 14:11 – “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that **humbleth himself** shall be exalted.” Connect V.21.

Prov. 27:5 – “Open rebuke is better than secret love.” This is what God's law enjoined – Lev. 19:17. Close friendship should not deter necessary corrective rebuke (V.6).

V.12 is a repetition of Prov. 22:3 highlighting its importance. “Fools rush in” it is said.

Prov. 27:17 – “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Those who regularly discuss the Word with others of like mind (Mal. 3:16) know the truth of this saying. Job had done this (Job 4:3-4), and the Apostle recommends it – Heb. 10:24. Connect V.19.

Prov. 27:22 – Rotherham – “Though thou pound a fool in a **mortar**, amidst grain, with a **pestle**, his folly, will not depart from him.” No amount of pounding with the Word can change a foolish man set in his ways. This is antithetical to V.17 and 19.



Prov. 27:23 – “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.” Wise men know the importance of careful maintenance of flock and herd (V.24-27). The same care and diligence is necessary with Yahweh’s flock – Ezek. 34; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2-3.

## John 9

V.1-41 – The healing of the man born blind is appropriately the **6th Sign** of John’s Gospel. Yahweh has given 6,000 years for the probation of the human race. On the ‘Sabbath’ (the Millennium) He will open their eyes. We are all born ‘blind’ (vacant headed and ignorant). What is necessary is “a new creation” (ESV – 2 Cor. 5:17) so that men can see “the light of the world” (V.5; John 8:12). All these things are foreshadowed in this sign.

V.3-5 – It was Adam that brought death into the world (Rom. 5:12). Our parents simply pass on his nature to us their children. Conversion from ‘blindness’ now brings glory to God and foreshadows the certainty of greater success in the Kingdom Age. A long ‘night’ of both Jewish and Gentile darkness was ahead of the Lord, but it would finally end in “a new creation” beyond the Millennium – Rev. 21:5. Hence, Christ healed this blind man on a **Sabbath** day – V.14. Like his Father he worked on the Sabbath for the redemption of mankind – John 5:17-18. The word “works” (plural in English) is *ergon* and signifies to work, whereas “work” (singular) is *ergazomai* in the Middle Voice from the same root and adds the element of personal effort – to toil (as a task, occupation).

V.6-7 – Making clay from spittle is redolent of the creative activity of the angels on day six of the Creation week (remember, this is the 6th sign) – Gen. 2:7. The Word of God was the operative power in creation – Ps. 33:6-9 – “For he spake, and it was done” – 2 Pet. 3:5. When we speak, moisture proceeds from the mouth (just check a speaker’s Bible), hence, Christ’s spittle represents the words he spoke, and that was the Word of God – John 6:63,68; 12:49-50. Clay represents the stuff of human nature which ‘blinds’ (V.39-41). Anointing the blind man’s eyes with clay is like starting all over again. Sending him to the Pool of Siloam to wash the clay away with the water of the Word is the answer to blindness (V.7). But why Siloam?

Christ has in mind Isa. 8:6 – “the waters of Shiloah that go softly.” Deep below the feet of faithless king Ahaz was the Spring Gihon whose waters were later routed to the Pool of Siloam by Hezekiah’s tunnel. Like Ahaz, the Lord’s generation rejected the Word of God. There are many echoes in John 9 from Isa. 8 – (1) V.8 – “Immanuel” i.e. ‘God with us’ reflected in John 9:3-5; (2) V.13 – John 9:24; (3) V.14 – Jesus a stumbling-block – John 9:22; (4) V.20 – “no light in them” – the word “light” is *shachar* – (Rotherham) “they have no dawning day” – John 9:5; (5) V.22; 9:1-2 – “The people that walked in **darkness** have seen a great **light**” – John 9:6. The connections are obvious.

V.8-38 – The important lesson from what follows is to stick to the facts and not be swayed by ‘political’ pressure from interest groups (like the Pharisees), or by the failure of normally anticipated support from family (V.20-22). The newly seeing blind man just used simple logic and stuck with the facts and made the Pharisees look like ‘blind’ fools which Christ confirmed – V.39-41.

## John 10

V.1-21 – “he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” – The Pharisees sought to enter the fold of the flock of God (Ezek. 34:31) by their own methods – Judaism, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Hence, they were interlopers, and effectively thieves. The true shepherd entered by the Divinely prescribed “door” as he was not only a shepherd then, but in the future – Ezek. 34:23 – “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.” But firstly, he would suffer at the hands of the robbers – Zech. 13:7 – “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow,” for “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” This shepherd knows the names of all his sheep (Luke 10:20) and the sheep follow his ‘voice,’ but the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees were “hirelings” who were only interested in their own wellbeing and fled at the approach of danger.

V.16 – “**other sheep** I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” – The Gentiles would also be called to enter the one fold.

V.17-18 – “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have **power** to lay it down, and I have **power** to take it again” – The word “power” is *exousia* – delegated authority. Perfect obedience to the death of the cross ensured Christ’s resurrection and change of nature. In that sense he had delegated authority to give his life and take it again. He knew that the righteousness of God upheld in his death would also be upheld in his resurrection.

V.22-42 – “it was at Jerusalem the feast of the **dedication**, and it was **winter**” – This was the festival of Hannukah. Vincent’s Word Studies makes the following comment – Only here in the New Testament. The word signifies *renewal*, from *καίνος*, *new, fresh*. Josephus calls it *φῶτα*, *lights*. It was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus (BC 164), in memory of the cleansing of the temple from the pollutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. The victorious Jews, says Dean Stanley, “entered and found the scene of havoc which the Syrian occupation had left. The corridors of the priests’ chambers, which encircled the temple, were torn down; the gates were in ashes, the altar was disfigured. Then, whilst the foreign garrison was kept at bay, the warriors first began the elaborate process of cleansing the polluted place.... For the interior of the temple everything had to be refurnished afresh – vessels, candlesticks and incense-altar, and tables and curtains. At last all was completed, and on the 25th of Chisleu (middle of December), the same day that, three years before, the profanation had occurred, the temple was rededicated.... What most lived in the recollection of the time was that the perpetual light blazed again.” The festival lasted for eight days. Lights were kindled, not only in the temple, but in every home. The Jews assembled in the temple, or in the synagogues of the places where they resided, bearing branches of palm, and singing psalms of praise. No fast or mourning, on account of any calamity or bereavement, was permitted to commence during the festival. This was not a feast prescribed by the Law, but instituted by the Maccabees. It is still kept today in Israel in December (winter). This is significant in the

context, because Christ had pointed at the self-appointed methods of entry to the fold (V.1). God's people were more observant of "the commandments of men" than of Him.

"I and my Father are one" – Doubting Jews pressed Christ for confirmation that he was the Messiah, but he pointed out that they had not believed the miracles he had performed because they were not his sheep. They sought to stone him for blasphemy ("being a man, makest thyself God"), but he countered with Ps. 82, "I said, Ye are gods" to no avail. He escaped a further attempt to kill him and preached beyond Jordan to a confused people.

## April 18

### Deuteronomy 1

The following extracts from the Deuteronomy Expositor are a good introduction.

"Deuteronomy", the title of the book is taken from the Greek Septuagint *To Deuteronomion Touto*. The phrase is found in Deut. 17:18: "A copy of this Law" (Deut. 17:18), lit. "*This second law*". The book was given this title because most of it consists of a restatement of the Law by Moses on the eve of the crossing of the Jordan into Canaan. The Greek *Deuteros* signifies *second*, and *nomos* — signifies *Law*. Deuteronomy, therefore, signifies *Second Law*, that is the second giving of the Law. It is not a new Law, but a repetition of the one Law given by Moses. The Hebrew title, however is *Haddebbharim*, or "the words". This title is derived from the first verse: "These be *the words*."

Interspersed throughout the book are captions such as are found in ch. 4:44: "And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel". These statements provide breaks in the narrative, pauses in the discourse of Moses. Such breaks divide the book into nine sections. They are as follows:

**First Discourse:** Retrospect — Israel's faithlessness and Yahweh's care: chap. 1:1-4:43.

**Second Discourse:** Review — What the present generation should heed: chap. 4:44-26:19.

**Third Discourse:** Warning — The solemn responsibility resting upon the nation: chap. 27:1-28:68.

**Fourth Discourse:** Covenant — Terms that would ensure Israel's continued occupancy of the Land: chap. 29:1-30:20.

**Fifth Discourse:** Counsel — Moses' final words of advice: chap. 31:1-23.

**Sixth Discourse:** Instruction — The written Law preserved as a witness: chap. 31:24-29.

**Seventh Discourse:** Song — A Psalm of witness against Israel: chap. 31:30-32:52.

**Epitaph:** Death — Yahweh buries His workman: chap. 34:1-12.

In these brief comments, our focus will not be on exposition, but rather on **exhortation**.

In the first three chapters of Deuteronomy there is a focus on **giants**. This was Israel's problem from the faithless spies to a timid people, they were all put off by **giants** that stood in the way of their inheritance. It is no different for us. We have three **giants** that stand between us and an inheritance in the Kingdom of God. They are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). Only implicit faith in the strength that God can provide can these giants be overcome. Caleb had that faith (V.36).

V.2 – It was only an eleven day journey from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea (the southern border of the Land of Canaan. Israel were now ready for the conflict required to conquer the land. However, when they left Egypt a similar time frame applied, but they were led south because they were not ready to fight – Ex. 13:17 – "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh

had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” They proved this to be true when ‘trapped’ by the Red Sea – Ex. 14:11-12. This is the ‘shallow ground’ state of the parable of the sower. Early in our life in the Truth we are too immature to fight long and strenuous battles. Consolidation is necessary. Hence, a ‘wilderness’ journey.

## Proverbs 28

Prov. 28:4 – “They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.” This is the same principle as Luke 11:23 – “He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” That is not how most see it. Neutrality and half-heartedness are a scourge of the Humanistic world in which we live. There is no middle ground – no man can serve two masters.

Prov. 28:9 – “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” A relationship with God is a two way street. God speaks to us through His Word – we speak to him through prayer created by the Word – Rom. 8:26.

Prov. 28:13 – “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them **shall have mercy.**” This is an encouragement to own up to sins and correct our way immediately we come to our senses. David learnt the power of this proverb.

## John 11

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is the **7th Sign** of John’s Gospel. No other gospel writer records it. This is because of John 5:19-29 – “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will” – John 5:21. This sign was a declaration that Jesus Anointed was the Son of God. That is the purpose of John’s writing – John 20:31 – “But these are written, that ye might believe that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;** and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

One Christadelphian commentator wrote – Lazarus means “Ail helpeth.” Bethany means “House of the poor or afflicted one.” The picture thus presented to us is that “Ail will help the house of the poor or afflicted one.” This statement is relative to mortality. The human race is “poor” and “afflicted” being bound with the chains of mortality and corruption. Thus the message of this sign is that the power of God can raise us from the state of weakness inherent in the flesh, to a state of glorious power and eternal life.

V.3-7 – After hearing of Lazarus’ illness, the Lord tarried two days. This signified that not only would God be glorified, but that the whole transaction would be an enacted parable of greater things to come 2,000 years later (2 Pet. 3:8).

V.9-10 – There are only two states for man – life (day) and death (night). He was still alive. Lazarus was dead. Christ needed to work while he had life.

V.11-15 – Death is only a sleep for those possessing a covenant with God – 1 Thess. 4:13-14.

V.21-27 – Martha’s faith in the resurrection was sound, but she fell short of John 5:19-29. The Lord sets her straight – “**I am the resurrection, and the life:** he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” This is a much deeper perception.

V.35 – “Jesus wept” – The shortest sentence in the Bible is nevertheless not well understood, then or now. Jesus was not weeping for Lazarus, but for the grief of Mary and Martha. This is not just compassion, but empathy – 1 Cor. 12:26.

V.38-40 – Martha’s fragility is again displayed in her warning “Lord, by this time he stinketh” (i.e. after 4 days – V.17,39). V.40 – “Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” – Rom. 1:3-4; Heb. 1:2-3 (“being the brightness of his glory”); Eph. 1:19-23 (“the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead”).

V.41-44 – Lazarus emerged “bound hand and foot with graveclothes” because he was going to return to the grave in due course. When Christ was raised in the tomb he was given “a change of raiment” because his nature was changed in the tomb and he would leave it never to return again (Zech. 3:1-5; John 20:4-8).

V.45-57 – The Jewish authorities became even more determined to put Jesus where Lazarus had been – in a tomb. Later they even sought to kill Lazarus – John 12:10.

## April 19

### Deuteronomy 2

V.9-11 – Israel were not to lay a hand on the Moabites for Yahweh had given their inheritance to them, and the Moabites had removed **giants** from it. This is an allusion to the faithless spies who discouraged the people because of the **giants** at Hebron. If Yahweh could secure an inheritance for the Moabites who did not believe in Him, why could He not also do it for Israel if they did believe in Him? There is a message here for all generations.

V.17-25 – The same message appears again. Yahweh had given the Ammonites their land, and they had removed **giants**, as had the Edomites. What could prevent Israel from doing the same among the Canaanites? Only a lack of faith and obedience.

V.26-37 – Israel received a taste of what Yahweh’s help could do for them with the total defeat and destruction of Sihon king of the Amorites.

### Proverbs 29

Prov. 29:1 – “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” In the Humanistic world in which we live very few are prepared to accept constructive criticism. Hardening the neck (in rebellion) leads to destruction and oblivion.

Prov. 29:18 – “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” This is one of the great truisms of the Bible, but the surrounding context is not always related to it. It is about looking into the future and taking measures now to ensure that ultimate objectives are reached. That is why a wise father will correct his son while he is young (V.17). It is why a master with a child slave wisely and delicately brings him up so that he will never desire to depart (V.21).

#### The importance of a vision

Heb. *chazown* – mental sight; root *chazah* – to gaze at; mentally to perceive, contemplate (with pleasure); to have a vision.

#### Proverbs 29:18

18 Where *there is no vision*, the people *perish*: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

Heb. *para* – to loosen; to expose, dismiss.

Roth. – “a people is let loose.”

Young’s Lit. – “without a vision is a people made naked.”



The slide above provides details of the words used. The Lord warned that some might be found 'naked' at his return – Rev. 16:15 due to Humanism. A clear vision of the future is the antidote.

## John 12

V.1-8 – The stark contrast between the generous sacrifice of precious ointment by Mary to anoint the Lord's feet with the hypocritical conniving avarice of Judas is on display. Mary had come to a rare understanding at that time that Jesus must die. Judas didn't believe that. As a hardened thief, he thought he could betray Jesus for silver, take the bag and cut his ties, and that the Lord would simply deliver himself as he had done on several occasions before. Everything would be fine – win win! Like Ahithophel before him he feigned love and loyalty while plotting against his lord and king – Ps. 55:12-15.

V.9-11 – The words of the parable proved true – Luke 16:30-31 – “if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” So the leaders sought to kill Lazarus and get rid of the evidence of resurrection from the dead.

V.12-19 – The triumphal entry of Christ on the Sabbath before Passover fulfilled Zech. 9:9 and is an enacted parable of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the purpose of God (as will be seen when considered in Mark 11). It is interesting though that John records the appearance of Greek proselytes who seek to see Jesus, who then lays down for them the pathway to life – V.20-26.

V.27-35 – The Lord is just 5 days from crucifixion. The weight of what is before him bears down heavily upon him – “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.” The flesh recoils from the horror to come, but the will is resolute. To strengthen that resolution he reverts to John 3:14 after his Father reinforced his determination. Typically, he ignored his own need and told the people who were groping in the darkness of their religious system that the voice from heaven was actually for them that they should seek the light while it was with them.

V.36-43 – Sadly, the appeal was in vain. Isaiah's prophecies were right – Isa. 53:1; 6:9-10. The glory his Father foresaw in V.28 was magnificently revealed in the vision of Yahweh in glory in the person of His son with all the redeemed in Isa. 6:1-5 (the basis of Rev. 4 – see below = saints in king-priest role). The challenge for some prominent leaders who believed in Jesus was a choice between the present and the future (V.23-26; Luke 17:33). They could choose ephemeral acceptance in the synagogue or the permanent glory of Isa. 6:1-5. They chose the present because of the fear of rejection by the Pharisees (V.42-43).

V.44-50 – There is a real sense of frustration in this final discourse – “Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.” In rejecting him, they rejected his Father (echoes of John 5:19-29). He had spoken to them God's Word and it would be their judge in the day of account (V.48).

Isaiah 6:1-4	Revelation 4
V.1 – “I saw also Yahweh (as it should be) sitting upon a <b>throne</b> , high and lifted up.”	V.2 – “a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” The Greek word <i>thronos</i> occurs 14 times in Rev. 4 and another 5 times in Rev. 5.
ESV – “and <b>the train of his robe</b> (priestly garment) filled the temple.”	V.4 – “ <b>four and twenty</b> elders sitting, clothed in <b>white raiment</b> ; and they

For a priestly robe to fill a temple indicates a multitude in one body = the Bride of Christ.	had on their heads <b>crowns</b> of gold.” 24 is the priestly number (1 Chron. 24 & 25). These are king priests – Rev. 5:9-10.
V.2 – “Above it stood the seraphims: each one had <b>six wings</b> .” The Cherubim of Ezekiel 1 – 4 wings = warfare role.	V.8 – LITV – “And the <b>four living creatures</b> (Seraphims) each one had <b>six wings</b> around.” i.e. 4 x 6 = 24 (V.4)
V.3 – “And one cried unto another, and said, <b>Holy, holy, holy</b> , is Yahweh of hosts.” = Outer court, Holy Place and Most Holy Place.	“And they had no rest day and night, saying, <b>Holy, holy, holy</b> , Lord God Almighty.” Access to all three courts of the Temple = Immortal beings.
“the whole earth is full of his <b>glory</b> .”	V.11 – “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive <b>glory</b> and honour.”

## April 20

### Deuteronomy 3

V.1 – The following description of Bashan by The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge is helpful – Bashan, one of the most fertile districts of the Holy Land, was bounded on the west by the Jordan and lake of Gennesareth, on the east by Trachonitis, on the south by the brook Jabbok, and on the north by mount Hermon; and seems to have been composed of two or three districts, on the south the land of Gilead, on the north the region of Argob, and east of both, the plain of Hauran. The scenery of this elevated tract is described as extremely beautiful. Its plains covered with a fertile soil; its hills covered with forests, and at every new turn presenting the most beautiful landscapes that can be imagined.

Unsurprisingly, after defeating the giant Og king of Bashan, the half tribe of **Manasseh** claimed it as their inheritance (V.13). The battle was fought at Edrei (modern Dara where the Syrian civil war began in 2011).

V.11 – “bedstead” – *eres* – is used of a bed in 9 other places, but is probably a reference here to a sarcophagus.

Deut. 3:12 – “And this land, which we possessed at that time, from **Aroer**, which is by the river **Arnon**, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the **Reubenites** and to the **Gadites**.”

V.18-20 – As with Reuben and Gad, the requirement was that the fighting men must go with their brethren across Jordan to conquer the land of Canaan. Their families would be left behind in the fenced cities until the task was completed. As it turned out it was **seven years** (cp. Josh. 14:1-5 with verse 10 – 45 years since Num. 14, less 38 in wilderness = 7).

V.23-29 – Moses reflects on the rejection by Yahweh of his earnest plea to be allowed to enter the Land. There were good reasons for this rejection. Firstly, Yahweh changes not



(Mal. 3:6) and He had been very clear about Moses being forbidden to enter the Land because of the failure at Kadesh-Barnea – Num. 20:12; 27:12-14. There was a typical reason also for this ban. Moses was the law-giver. Law cannot give life, so an inheritance cannot be obtained in the land promised to Abraham by law keeping. Only by faith in Jesus Anointed who confirmed the promises by his sacrifice (Rom. 15:8) is it possible to have an inheritance in the Land. Hence, it was Joshua (Yahshua = Jesus) who led the people into the Land (V.28). See how this is presented in Josh. 1:1-2 – “Now after **the death of Moses** the servant of Yahweh it came to pass, that Yahweh spake unto **Joshua** (Yahweh’s salvation) the son of **Nun** (“perpetuity”), Moses’ minister, saying, **Moses my servant is dead**; now therefore **arise**, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.”

### Proverbs 30 – “The burden of the gatherer”

Vv.1-6	The burden of the Gatherer
Vv.7-10	Two essential requests
Vv.11-14	Four wicked generations
Vv.15-17	Four insatiable things
Vv.18-20	Four untraceable things
Vv.21-23	Four intolerable situations
Vv.24-28	Four creatures little but wise
Vv.29-31	Four which excel in motion
Vv.32-33	Warning against self-justification

- ❖ The Book of Proverbs has 8 parts – the words of Agur form the 6<sup>th</sup> part (6 is the number of man).
- ❖ The authorship of Solomon is concealed by a pseudonym in order that its content might be representative of all men who have harvested wisdom from the experiences of life.
- ❖ The name Agur means “gatherer” from the root *agar* – to harvest.
- ❖ Jakeh means “obedience”. Youngs Literal – “Words of a gatherer, son of an obedient one”.

Proverbs 30 is a masterpiece. Once the structure is understood, the powerful exhortations of the four generations that are wicked can be contrasted with the four creatures that are little but wise. (A full set of notes can be found in Appendix 2)

### THE STRUCTURE OF PROVERBS 30:11-31

There are 6 groups of 4 things (with Acrostic structure) to the end of the chapter.

The characteristics of the **4 generations** listed in vv.11-14 are expanded in the groups that follow:

**V.11** – Disobedience – amplified by the examples of insatiability - **vv.15-17**

**V.12** – Hypocrisy – amplified by the hunters of **vv.18-20**

**V.13** – Pride – amplified by the intolerable oddities of **vv.21-23**

**V.14** – Oppression – amplified by the relentless warriors of **vv.29-31**

All except the foundation group (vv.11-14) and group 5 (vv.24-28) begin with, “There be three things....yea four...”. This Hebraism signifies sufficient and more than enough (see Amos 1).

### FOUR CREATURES LITTLE BUT WISE – V.24-28

The fifth (Grace) group of four (vv.24-28) is distinct (there is no “three things, yea four, just “four” the Scriptural number for righteousness and God manifestation). Theme – wisdom seen in action.

V.25 – Ants reveal wisdom by diligence – They never waste opportunities to serve others.

V.26 – Conies reveal wisdom by humility – They have no confidence in their own strength.

V.27 – Locusts reveal wisdom by obedience – They know the value of holding with their own.

V.28 – Gecko (can be taken in the hand) reveals wisdom by dependence on a safe environment.

All these creatures are conscious of their weakness and vulnerability and act wisely because of it (see vv.1-3). They are all seekers of refuge (v.5).

(See **Appendix 2** for a full set of notes from which the above has been extracted.)

### John 13

Having been rejected by the people and their leaders, the Lord now focuses on his disciples. Even among them there was a traitor and other over-confident disciples. They needed to be strengthened, and where necessary, exposed for their own good. He wanted to lose none that the Father had given him (John 6:12,37,39), but as in all ages, the disciples themselves were the arbiters of their own destiny by the choices they made.

V.2 – (ESV) “During supper (note the difference to KJV), when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.” Judas had already made his choice to betray Jesus for a handful of coins believing he would deliver himself again. The *diabolos* (“devil”) is a false accuser that ‘strikes through’ God’s law which had been at work in the mind of Judas. He was in its thralldom – a thief; consumed by avarice and offside with Christ (John 12:4-8) having been rebuked for his criticism of Mary, he had decided to abandon his discipleship. He has had many companions since!

V.4-17 – The washing of the disciples feet is as well known as any incident in the life of Christ. Even the Pope mimics this act every year. Its lesson is obvious. We have a duty to help our fellow disciples to the Kingdom. However, it is possible to miss the really important message, as Peter obviously does – “Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Peter did not get it. As the Lord then explains, disciples who have been washed by “the water of the Word” (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26) are ‘clean’ in their thinking, but can also turn out fakes, as was Judas. However, in the daily walk following Christ, contact with the dust of humanity will stick on their feet. That is what needs to be cleaned up every day by the application of “the water of the Word.” We have a duty to do as much of that washing of the feet (their walk) of others as is possible. Judaisers don’t do it because they are focused on self, but those grateful for the salvation there is in Christ do – see Luke 7:44.

V.18 – Christ quotes Ps. 41:9 of the betrayal of David by Ahithophel now duplicated by Judas – “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”

V.21-30 – The betrayer is identified by Jesus passing him “a morsel of bread” (KJV – “sop”). He departs without the disciples understanding why. We can be slow to pick up cues.

V.31-35 – The departure of Judas to betray Jesus to the priests and Sanhedrin was a major milestone in the events leading to the crucifixion. The Lord now knew it would not be long before they came to arrest him. Time was short to prepare the remaining disciples for the trial that would soon descend upon them. What they needed is what Judas lacked – a sacrificial love for their brethren. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all

men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” The word for “love” in V.34 is *agapao* – a sacrificial love of the will; while “love” in V.35 is *agape* – derived from *agapao*. This is the kind of love that considers others better than themselves – Phil 2:1-4. It is the test of true discipleship which John picks up again in his first epistle – 1 John 2:8-11.

V.36-38 – Peter’s love was to be sorely tested in the coming hours, and a few weeks later – John 21:15-17. Like all God’s servants, he had to learn there is nothing good in man of himself. Humility and total dependence on God’s grace and a full commitment to the work through gratitude is the only way.

## John 14

V.1-14 – “In my Father’s house are many mansions (*monē* - abiding places) if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” – Christ often referred to “the kingdom of heaven.” That is because its origin is from heaven like his own origin (John 3:13). Similarly, the Bride of Christ is said to come “down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Apostate teaching about man having an immortal soul which supposedly goes to heaven at death, would obviously seize upon a saying like this. However, their problem is the next verse – “if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**” This is irreconcilable with the false interpretation of V.2. The simple meaning is that salvation is a work of heaven. The benefits of that work will be enjoyed on the earth.

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” – The disciples were still struggling with the concepts presented. Here before them was “the way, the truth, and the life” – the very epitome of the Father in character. To see him was to see the Father, for as John 1:18 testified – (ESV) “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” – “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

V.15-31 – The promise of the Holy Spirit to provide comfort (“he shall give you another Comforter”); instruction as “the Spirit of truth” (V.26); and peace (V.27), would all be necessary as “the prince of this world” was coming to “smite the shepherd” (Zech. 13:7) and they would be on their own. They would need the Father – “Howbeit I will turn back my hand over the little ones” to protect them (Rotherham for Zech. 13:7).

## April 21

### Deuteronomy 4

The content of Deut. 4 is as follows:

Lessons of the past impressed upon the new generation — Chap. 4:1-40

Exhortation based on their privileged status – V.1-8

Individual responsibility to obey – V.9-13

Yahweh to be worshipped in Truth – V.14-20

Rejection of Moses’ plea reveals God as a consuming fire – V.21-24

Yahweh is merciful and will hearken to His repentant children – V.25-31

Israel’s tremendous privileges demand obedience – V.32-40

Appointment of Cities of Refuge – God’s mercy manifested – V.41-43

Introduction to the review of the Divine Covenant – V.44-49 (From Deut. 4:44 to 26:19)

V.2 – “Ye shall not **add** unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye **diminish** ought from it.” Significantly, this is the first admonition to the new generation about to enter the Land. It is repeated in Deut. 12:32 and thereafter to Joshua (Josh. 1:7); and by Solomon – Prov. 30:6; and finally by Christ – Rev. 22:18-19. Humanism has completely abandoned God’s Word as the arbiter of all that is good and right. People now either totally ignore the Word of God, or are willingly ignorant of it. Even those who acknowledge it will sometimes write it down for the sake of personal convenience.

V.3 – It is also significant that sexual immorality (Baal-Peor) should be the next thing highlighted. It is always at the head of the list of human sins and is invariably the principal reason why the Word of God is ‘written down’ and interpreted in favour of human weaknesses.

V.6-8 – Israel enjoyed a special status with God not shared by any other nation. Similarly, the ecclesia (“a holy nation” – 1 Pet. 2:9) enjoys a similar exclusive status before God. The “statutes and judgements” we call the Truth distinguish the Brotherhood of Christ from all other nations or religious organizations. Disobedience, faithlessness and perfidy ruin it and bring disrepute on God and Christ (V.9), and undermine the commitments made (V.10-14).

V.15-19 – Idolatry in any form is disastrous. The nation had been delivered from it (V.20). Even Moses by putting himself and Aaron in the forefront instead of Yahweh at Meribah taught that lesson (V.21-28). Nothing must be allowed to displace Yahweh in our lives.

Deut. 4:29 – “But if from thence thou shalt seek Yahweh thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” All men fail (1 Kings 8:46), but where there is a genuine desire to recover and Yahweh is sought earnestly, He will be found, for He “is a merciful God” – V.30-31; Deut. 6:5; 2 Chron. 15:2,15. He is also the only God, and had chosen Israel for His people (V.32-40).

### Proverbs 31

V.1-9 – Lemuel (“dedicated to God”) is probably another pseudonym for Solomon. If so, Bathsheba’s instructions to him (the 7th part of the book) set out the responsibilities of kings whether they be actual rulers or prospective rulers of the future Age. Self-discipline, good clean habits, consideration for others and insistence on truth and justice are key fundamentals to success as a ruler.

V.10-31 – The qualities and achievements of the virtuous woman set out in this final and 8th section of Proverbs (8 = new beginning; immortality) may have been rarely seen in an individual, however it is the Bride of Christ in preparation that is on view here. The dedication, industriousness, forethought and total commitment to the husband’s interests is what the Bride of Christ should manifest. No individual is perfect, but collectively, if all play their part in ecclesial life and contribute what they are best suited to do, then all of the qualities of the virtuous woman will be observed – Rom. 12:3-21; Acts 9:36-41; 1 Tim. 5:10; 1 Pet. 4:10.

### John 15

Yahweh had a vineyard (Israel – Isa. 5:1-7) which passed to the Gentiles after AD 70 (Matt. 21:33-43). A vineyard is useless if it produces no fruit. Christ is the true vine (V.1) and his disciples are the branches (V.5). Fruitful branches are pruned to ensure more fruit (V.2), but unfruitful branches are cut off and cast into the fire = judgement (V.6). This is the only use

that can be made of them as they are useless for any other purpose – Ezek. 15:2-6. On the contrary, producing much fruit brings glory to God (V.8).

V.9-10 – God's love is not unconditional as evangelical fervor asserts. It depends upon obedience – V.10 – **“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;** even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” What if Christ had disobeyed his Father? The answer is obvious.

V.11-17 – The ‘new commandment’ of John 13:34-35 is reinforced. Seeking the eternal well-being of others at great personal cost is the supreme manifestation of love (V.13) and creates a friendship bond between Christ and his disciples that is unbreakable.

V.18-27 – Obedience to God invariably creates enemies. Christ was hated and so will be his disciples (V.18-20).

V.23-25 – The works Christ had done gave his enemies no excuse – Scripture was fulfilled – “They hated me without a cause” (V.25) is drawn from Ps. 69:4 although the KJV margin suggests Ps. 35:19. The context of Ps. 69 seals that view, and Ps. 69:9 – “the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me” aligns with V.23 – “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.”

## John 16

V.1-4 – (Rotherham) – “These things, have I spoken unto you, that ye may not be caused to stumble” – The Lord knew that serious persecution would come upon his disciples from the Judaistic authorities – “the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” To be forewarned is to be forearmed. – cp. Rev. 2:10; 3:10.

V.5-16 – Baffling language, not understood because they still had no concept of a crucified Messiah caused them sorrow of heart, but it was better for them that the Lord go to his Father. The “Comforter” (the Holy Spirit) would not come until he did. It would work through them to convince the *kosmos* (the Jewish order of things) “of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement” as it did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-37).

V.17-33 – Confusion reigned in the disciples’ minds even as Christ clarified his “proverbs” a little, and hinted that the sorrow of his death would be replaced by the joy of his resurrection – like a new birth (V.19-22). They thought they had grasped his inscrutable “proverbs,” but they really had not, and he forecast their panic and dispersal when he was taken to be crucified leaving him alone with his Father. There are lessons here. Misunderstanding, over-confidence in one’s own loyalty (Matt. 26:33,35), and uncertainty about the future is a potent mix for failure. Had they understood the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27,45-47) the uncertainty would have dissipated and they would understand the truth of his assertion – “in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

## April 22

### Deuteronomy 5

Moses recounts the ten commandments (or “words”) delivered at Mt Horeb nearly 40 years before. It was a covenant given to the wilderness generation. It was different to the Abrahamic promises mentioned in V.3 where “our fathers” refers to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

V.4-5 – The Apostle comments on this scene in Heb. 12:18-21.

V.6 – “I am Yahweh thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” This language always refers to the Atonement – see its origin in Gen. 15:7 in the context of the sacrifice of Christ (Elpis Israel pg. 231), and Ex. 20:2.

V.7-24 are essentially a repetition of Ex. 20, but Moses reminded them of the fearful request of the elders that Moses become their mediator with Yahweh (V.25-28) with which He was pleased. However, there is an evident exasperation in the following words – “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” Their past had not been encouraging and their subsequent history was not much better. Yahweh sought the good of His people. It was they who let themselves down.

## Ecclesiastes 1

The following comment by Bro. Sargent provides a good overview of Ecclesiastes.

With all its apparent meanderings, its alternations and seeming contradictions, the Book of Ecclesiastes has an essential unity of character and purpose. It is marked by a freedom of play of thought, a ready and sometimes complex use of image and symbol which belong to poetry. And as with poetry, its meaning and purpose must be judged not in the isolated passage but in the whole. Then it is seen to lead from the exploration of life in terms of purely human experience to a loftier understanding which relates man's life to eternal aims. To follow through the thought is like tracing a stream from its earthy beginnings through all its turns and twists till with a full and even flow it merges with the sea: and it is a rich experience. Bro. L.G. Sargent

Refer to **Appendix 3** for a two page summary of the purpose of Ecclesiastes and its structure.

Some important phrases are used throughout the book that are key to understanding.

**“under the sun”** – occurs 29 times [1:3,9,14; 2:11,17,18,19,20,22; 3:16; 4:1,3,7,15; 5:13,18; 6:1,12; 8:9,15(2),17; 9:3,6,9(2),11,13; 10:5]. This describes the realm of mortality – the position of all mankind. We are all subject to this earthly system which is intimately linked with the brilliant centre of our solar system.

The similar phrase **“under the heaven”** occurs 1:13; 2:3, 3:1. cp. the phrase “upon earth” chap. 5:2; 8:14,16; 10:7; 11:2,3.

These key phrases set the limit of Solomon's enquiry. His study is of human life “under the sun” (a phrase which occurs 29 times in the book), i.e. he is concerned with the realm of mortality and human experience. The early chapters of Ecclesiastes which seem so negative and pessimistic can only be properly understood if this limited perspective is kept in view. It is not till later that the perspective changes when Solomon “sees the sun” (Ecc. 7:11; 11:7).

Ecc. 1:17 – “And I gave my heart to know wisdom.” It is the type of wisdom that is important. Solomon finally realized that – Ecc. 12:9-14.

## John 17

John 17 constitutes the greatest of all prayers. A careful reading yields many encouraging things. From the outset the focus is on the salvation of those whom his Father had called, and would later call, to be followers of His son. The prayer ends with the focus on the oneness of Father and Son, and of all in him. The key element to achieve this unity is in V.17 – “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Knowledge of the truth as



revealed in the Word of God is the unifier. That necessitates believing in the same things doctrinally – Rom. 15:4-6; 1 John 2:21,27.

## John 18

The betrayal and arrest of the Lord is marked by one of the most cynical acts of betrayal in history – “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48). As a close associate of Jesus throughout his ministry he knew full well where he would be that evening (V.2). His allegiance had completely changed – “And **Judas** also, which betrayed him, **stood with them.**”

V.4-7 – To the question in the dark “Whom seek ye,” and the arresting party’s response “Jesus of Nazareth” the Lord simply responded, “I am he,” and they all (including Judas) “went backward, and fell to the ground.” This was necessary that all, especially the disciples, might know that he willingly gave himself up to be crucified – Acts 2:23 – “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” He had made this clear in John 10:17-18 – “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.** I have power (*exousia* – delegated authority) to lay it down, and I have power (*exousia*) to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

V.8-11 – Jesus wanted his disciples to escape, but Peter took a sword and sliced off the right ear of the high priest’s servant named Malchus (Hebrew *melchi* – king). There were echoes here of Uzziah the leprous king of Judah who thought he was Messiah. Healed lepers were to have the blood of sacrifice applied to the right ear (Lev. 14:14). Jesus was about to be rejected as Israel’s king in the most egregious rejection of covenant ever – Hos. 10:4; John 19:15.

V.12-18 – First before Annas and then Caiaphas the Lord endured the two Jewish trials during which Peter made Judas’s mistake, but without malice or intent – “**Peter stood with them**” (V.5,18). Self-preservation always tests loyalty.

V.28-40 – Before Pilate the priests demanded the death sentence which under Jewish law would have been administered by stoning. This was not “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” so it had to be a Roman sentence that condemned him to crucifixion (V.31-32; Deut. 21:23; John 3:14; 12:32-33). The Lord was more open to Pilate, making it clear that he was Israel’s King but that his “kingdom is not of this world” (*kosmos* – order of things). However, when the time came his servants would fight as the Scriptures clearly teach they will – Ps. 149; Mal. 4:1-3; Zech. 14:3-5; etc.

When the Lord says “Every one that is of **the truth** heareth my voice” (V.37), Pilate’s lame response was “What is **truth**?” He had no interest in it like most men in authority, and far too many who are not.

V.39-40 – Pilate weakly gave the Jewish leaders one more opportunity to do justly. He would release either Jesus (“the prince of **life**” – Acts 3:15), or Barabbas a robber, insurrectionist and a **murderer** (Luke 23:18-19), one of their own kind.

## April 23

### Deuteronomy 6

Deut. 6 shows the critical importance of elevating Yahweh in life if there is to be success both individually and nationally (V.2). Israel's conquering of the Land would not be by military might or skill, but by trust in Yahweh and obedience to His commandments (V.3).

Deut. 6:4 – Rotherham – “Hear, O Israel: Yahweh, is our God,—Yahweh alone.” This introduction to the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-38) is called the great *Shema* by the Jews and it is one of the four passages which they write on their phylacteries. The word means to hear intelligently. **One God** has a right to demand **singleness** of service.

Deut. 6:5 – “And thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” The Divine process in the Creation was mental, moral and physical (Gen. 1). The mind is where it all begins. Bro. Thomas writes in *Elpis Israel* page 52 – “When the **mental disposition**, called the **heart**, is renewed, it becomes a mirror, as it were, in which one skilled in the word of the kingdom, can discern the spirit, or behold a reflection of the Divine Nature.” Bro. Carter wrote that “the heart is the deeper part of the mind where character is formed.” When the mind is fixed on manifesting Yahweh the “soul” becomes involved because the central focus of life becomes obedience to His will. That is the moral element. This leads almost automatically to vibrant activity to do God's will because of the motivation from mind and moral intent (Phil. 2:13).

V.7 – To ensure V.2 could be fulfilled, it was essential that parents teach their children diligently (*shânan* – to sharpen, whet). This was to be done at every available opportunity; at home, on a journey and at both ends of the day. Making the Word visible in daily life would be very important (V.8-9).

V.10-15 – The greatest danger would be easily acquired prosperity (as it is in the latter days – Luke 17:26-32). When life is easy, service to other gods is also much easier to fall into.

V.16 – The Lord cited this verse to the tempter – Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12.

V.17-25 – Success would depend on obedience and remembering the lessons of the past.

### Deuteronomy 7

V.1 – Seven nations inhabited the Land. The Canaanites chiefly inhabited Phoenecia; the Hittites, the mountains south of the promised land; the Hivites, mount Ebal, and Gerizim, and towards Hermon; the Girgashites, beyond Jordan, towards the lake of Gennesareth, the Jebusites, about Jerusalem; the Amorites, the mountains west of the Dead Sea, and part of the land of Moab; and that the Perizzites were probably not a distinct nation, but villagers scattered through the country.

V.2-6 – All the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be eliminated. There are some today who will not accept the truth because of this command. Humanism has adulterated the thinking of many people. Now human beings become more important than God. If He is God, then His commands are not only right, but unchallengeable. Total and unquestioning acceptance of God's will is required by everyone who will be called on to play a part in the establishment of the Kingdom. Just as there will be no enemies of Christ allowed to survive while the Kingdom is being set up, there were to be no survivors from the totally corrupt Amorites and their companions – Gen. 15:16. Surviving Canaanites would ultimately corrupt Israel which history shows came to pass.

V.7-9 – Yahweh's love for Israel was because of his covenant faithfulness to their fathers.

V.10-26 – Disobedience to the command to destroy all inhabitants of the land would have massive ramifications. There could be blessing or cursing depending on their choice.

## Ecclesiastes 2

Solomon's experimentation with self-indulgence, folly and tireless labour led to exasperation and disappointment. No one in history could ever again have the scope to experiment like he did, but his conclusion was – V.24 – “There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.” Paul's summation of Solomon's experience was “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6).

## John 19

The cruel and contemptuous treatment of Christ by the Romans was surpassed by the greatest perfidy in Jewish history. God's people could not go lower than this.

V.15 – To Pilate's question “Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, **We have no king but Caesar.**” This was the fulfilment of Hos. 10:3 – “For now they shall say, **We have no king**, because we feared not Yahweh; what then should a king do to us?” The chief priests were incensed by Pilate's writing above the cross and demanded a change to the wording. Pilate aggravated by their obduracy refused.

Vincent's Word Studies comments – “These words, uttered by the chief priests, are very significant. These chief representatives of the theocratic government of Israel thus formally and expressly renounce it, and declare their allegiance to a temporal and pagan power. **This utterance is the formal abdication of the Messianic hope.**”

V.24 – Ps. 22:18 was fulfilled in the disgraceful and callous disposal of the Lord's clothing.

V.25-27 – As a sword pierced the heart of Mary (Luke 2:35) at the foot of the cross, Jesus in great pain does what was he always did – thought of others instead of himself. “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, **Woman, behold thy son!** Then saith he to the disciple, **Behold thy mother!** And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

V.28-30 – Two Scriptures were fulfilled in the last moments of the Lord's life – Ps. 69:21 was fulfilled in the 5th saying on the cross – “I thirst.” The 6th saying was “It is finished” and in these two sayings Christ's lifelong Nazariteship was brought to a successful conclusion. When a Nazarite completed a vow, they could drink wine (Num. 6:20; V.29-30). Ps. 22 was front and centre of Christ's mind on the cross for it provided the most graphic description of crucifixion, and was built around Gen. 22 (Father and Son in the act of sacrifice), so he repeated Ps. 22:1 in the 4th saying and Ps. 22:31 in the 6th – ESV – “he has done it.” In other words, “It is finished.” Messiah in Ps. 22 foresaw the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant (see V.27-31 where the language of the promises made to Abraham is prominent). In his crucifixion, resurrection and glorification he had confirmed the promises made unto the fathers – Rom. 15:8.

V.31-37 – More Scriptures were fulfilled. The legs of the crucified were routinely broken so they could no longer push up for respiration, but Jesus was already dead. Hence, Ex. 12:46 and Ps. 34:20 were fulfilled. The spear was thrust into his side to fulfil 2 Sam. 23:7 and

Zech. 12:10 – “they shall look upon **me** whom they have **pierced**, and they shall mourn for **him**.”

V.38-42 – Two members of the Sanhedrin came out of ‘hiding’ and buried the Lord in a new tomb belonging to a rich man to fulfil Isa. 53:9.

## April 24

### Deuteronomy 8

Deut. 8 contains very important lessons about our walk in the truth. Like Israel, we are in a barren wilderness full of serpents and scorpions (humans of course – Deut. 8:15). The purpose of probation is to prove the worth of individuals in Yahweh’s chosen race. No one receives an inheritance in the Land promised to Abraham without being tested in “the way” (V.2). A life of probation and testing is required before reward – “The cross before the crown” principle.

V.3 – Israel were denied the pleasures and culinary delights of Egypt and fed with manna to test whether they really understood “that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live.” Christ quoted these words to the tempter (Matt. 4:4) after a 40 day fast in the wilderness (echoes of Israel’s experience – Num. 13:34). The question for latter day disciples is “what place is the Word of God given in our life at a time when access to all the world (Egypt) can offer is at our fingertips, for we are not denied these things like Israel?”

V.4 – Most in Israel were probably not conscious that their clothing didn’t fall apart and their sandals never wore out. Sometimes we can take for granted everyday blessings others do not receive, because of the special status God’s servants enjoy (Rom. 8:28,32; 1 Cor. 3:21; 2 Cor. 4:15).

V.5 – “Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so Yahweh thy God chasteneth thee.” Israel was Yahweh’s ‘son’ (Ex. 4:22), and its people were to be treated as His children. So are we – Heb. 12:5-11; Prov. 3:12; Ps. 94:12.

V.6-20 – This special relationship was dependent on obedience. The previous warning about the dangers of prosperity is repeated.

### Deuteronomy 9

In this chapter Moses recounts many of the failures and sins of Israel over the past 40 years. The purpose is to preempt Israel from attributing their success in conquering the Land to their own righteousness. Such is the perversity of human nature that any success is seen as a positive reflection on itself despite a plethora of transgressions in the past (V.4).

The truth was summarized by Moses – Deut. 9:24 – “Ye have been rebellious against Yahweh from the day that I knew you.” They had nothing to boast about. So serious was their sin at Horeb with the golden calf that Moses even smashed the two tables of stone on which the finger of God had written the Ten Commandments (V.17).

Israel would conquer the Canaanites because of Yahweh’s faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (V.5), and because the iniquity of the Amorites was full (V.5; Gen. 15:16), not because of any claim to righteousness they might make.

**Ecclesiastes 3**

V.1	INTRODUCTION - all facets of life governed by fitting times
Vv.2-8	28 PROPOSITIONS - set in opposites
Vv.9-10	TRAVAIL and DESPAIR - Yes! But not without higher objectives
V.11	GOD - a perfect character
Vv.12-13	SIMPLE ENJOYMENT - intended by God
Vv.14-15	GOD: THE AUTHOR OF TIME - cannot be limited by it
V.16	MAN'S PURPOSES - violated by man
V.17	A TIME IS PROVIDED to fulfil every purpose of God
Vv.18-21	GOD INTENDS EVERY MAN TO SEE that he is but a BEAST
V.22	MAN UNDER THE SUN DOES NOT KNOW THE FUTURE - his one real value in life is to enjoy his works

In his vast attainments and relentless pursuit of the “highest good” in this life Solomon was forced to conclude that none would provide the lasting joy and satisfaction he sought. He found by experience that pleasure, prosperity, possessions and power could provide no real satisfaction. They were “vanity and vexation of spirit”.

This conclusion led him to widen his enquiry and to explore what place “time” plays in the experience of human beings. He discovered that all things “under the sun” are governed by time. Man is bound throughout his whole life and in every pursuit by time over which he has no control. In twenty-eight propositions set in fourteen antitheses Solomon reviews the whole range of human activity. In this enquiry he is led to conclude again that “all is vanity”, and yet he sees the “hand of God” at work in this process (V.13-14).

V.11 – “also he hath set the world in their heart” – The word “world” is *olam* – concealed; the hidden period; (practically) eternity. It is translated by RSV, Interlinear Bible and others as “eternity.” What does it mean? How has God set eternity in man’s heart? The answer lies in the creative work of God. He made man in His own image and likeness and gave him dominion over all carnal things (Gen. 1:26-28). Sin marred that likeness and introduced carnality into man’s thinking so that “the heart (of man) is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). And yet sin did not erase the likeness completely. Man has the potential to aspire to higher things, to become like his God, and to seek that timelessness which is God’s. There is in man an inherent tendency to strive after something better, more permanent, and more satisfying than his natural experience. This the animals do not do. They know and feel nothing higher than the carnality which is natural to them and are content with this. Not so man who has “eternity” in his heart and aspires to timelessness. Sadly, very few take up the opportunity to pursue the real eternity because they choose the present.

**John 20**

The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge makes the following comment: Mary Magdalene, as well as Peter, was evidently at the sepulchre twice on that morning of the resurrection. The first time of her going was some short time before her companions, the other Mary and Salome (Matt. 28:1); and observing that the stone had been removed, she returned to inform Peter and John. In the meantime, the other Mary and Salome came to the sepulchre, and saw the angel, as recorded by Matthew and Mark. While these women returned to the city, Peter and John went to the sepulchre, passing them at some distance, or going another way, followed by Mary Magdalene, who stayed after their return. This was her second journey; when she saw two angels, and then Jesus himself, as here related; and immediately after Jesus

appeared to the other women, as they returned to the city (Matt. 28:9-10). In the meantime Joanna and her company arrived at the sepulchre, when two angels appeared to them, and addressed them as the one angel had done the other women (Luke 24:1-10). They immediately returned to the city, and by some means found the apostles before the others arrived, and informed them of what they had seen; upon which Peter went a second time to the sepulchre, but saw only the linen clothes lying (Luke 24:1-10,12; Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-2,9).

V.5-7 – More than 400 years previously, Michael the Archangel and his accompanying angels had a ‘practice run’ on what transpired at 6 pm on the Sabbath day when three days and three nights (Matt. 12:40) had passed since the 14th of Abib (a Wednesday – see notes on Ex. 16 – February 8) when in a figurative parable a fair mitre was placed on the head of Jeshua the high priest before a change of raiment was given to replace his ‘soiled’ clothing (Zech. 3:1-5). This foreshadowed the completion of the Lord’s Nazarite vow. The careful folding/rolling of the napkin that was on the head of Jesus in the tomb (John 20:7) matched the “fair mitre” of Zech. 3:5 and pointed to the source of his triumph over sin and death – the head (his thinking). The discarded grave cloths had been replaced by a new garment provided by the angels and matched the new garments placed on Jeshua symbolizing a change of nature for Christ in the tomb. He left the tomb victorious over death.

V.20 – “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father” has presented problems. Did the Lord mean that he was still mortal some 12 hours after his resurrection? Or is there a simpler explanation? The word for “touch” is *haptomai* – to fasten one’s self to, adhere to, cling to. This was the instant automatic reaction of Mary Magdalene who had been searching desperately for the **body** of the Lord (V.13). He puts her at ease by indicating that not only was he alive (as she could now see), but that he would remain with the disciples for another 6 weeks or so before ascending to his Father as he had informed them he would – John 14:2-3,28. Weymouth’s translation is as good as any – “**Do not cling to me**, said Jesus, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But take this message to my brethren: **I am ascending to my Father** and your Father, to my God and your God.” The ‘ascension’ here is not about an ascension of nature. There is no place where ‘ascension’ is used in that way.

V.22 – There is no Definite Article here – Diaglott – “Receive you a spirit holy.” This refers to their special status as Christ’s representatives carrying forward his spirit (attitude) of holiness.

V.24-29 – Thomas, confronted with the clear evidence of wounds in hands and feet, confessed his lack of faith and understanding. He has been mimicked by millions of Jews ever since and it will take those same wounds to finally convince Jews of the future that their forefathers crucified their own Messiah – Zech. 13:6; 12:10-14.

V.30-31 – It is curious that this summary of why the signs were given should precede the 8th Sign of John 21. That is because the 8th Sign is about where they all end up – the culmination – reward in the Kingdom with Christ as immortals.

## John 21

The 8th Sign of John’s Gospel is a magnificent representation of the culmination of the work of Christ. **Eight** is the number of **immortality** and the haul of great fish is representative of the multitude of the redeemed. For those interested, a document on the 153 great fish can be found in **Appendix 4** for **April**.

V.1-2 – “After these things” – John 21 is a sequel to John’s Gospel. It is designed to wrap up two things; (1) Matt. 26:31-33 – “All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, **I will go before you into Galilee**”; and (2) Matt. 28:7-10 – “tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, **he goeth before you into Galilee**; there shall ye see him.” Surprisingly therefore, there were only seven disciples in Galilee to meet him – Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John and two others. When you add the risen Lord, there are eight present (8 is the number of a new beginning and immortality), and this is the **Eighth Sign**. There is no accident in this.

V.3-14 – “Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing” – In the absence of the Lord, Peter decided to resume his former occupation as a fisherman. Joined by others, the venture was not a success – “that night they caught nothing.” The problem was made clear when the Lord turned up – “when the **morning** was now come, Jesus stood on the shore” – Christ will come at the dawning of new day – the Millennium. His antidote to failure during the night was, “Cast the net on the **right side**.” It is always important to be working on ‘the right side.’ Peter was shown that even hinting at going back to his former occupation was not going to work. They had committed to be “fishers of men.” Peter pulled the net to shore containing 153 great fish. This was the third net in the Gospel records.

1. Luke 5:6 – “And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.” This is the first phase. The gospel is preached in the sea of nations (Isa. 9:1 – “Galilee of the nations”), but many escape the net as it breaks under the weight of the catch.
2. Matt. 13:47-50 – “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” This is the second phase – the Judgement Seat of Christ.
3. John 21:11 – “Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, **yet was not the net broken**.” This is the third and final phase. The net does not break because the “great fish” represent the glorified multitude of the saints. This presages the granting of immortality to the faithful of all ages who are embraced in the Abrahamic Covenant.

The phrase in the Hebrew “the sons of God” – *beni ha-elohim* – has a numerical value of 153; and the NT phrase “heirs of God” in Greek has a numerical value of 1,071 = 7 x 153 (7 = covenant, in particular the Abrahamic Covenant). It was that covenant that Jacob mentioned during his greatest act of faith in Gen. 48 (Heb. 11:21) when he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, saying “let them grow (*dagah* – to spawn like fish) into a multitude (*rob* – abundance) in the midst of the earth.” The margin of the KJV “Heb. as fishes do increase” is accurate. It is an amazing fact that the word *rob* occurs exactly 153 times in the O.T. There is no accident in that either.

V.15-19 – After dining on fish, Christ deals with Peter’s three denials of his Lord with three searing questions about his priorities – “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*agapao*) thou me more than these?” Christ chose to address Peter curiously. “Simon” (Simeon) means

“hearing” and has a numerical value of 118. “Jonas” (Jonah) means “the dove” (symbol of the Spirit) and has a numerical value of 35 (118 + 35 = 153). Inspiration is clearly evident.

For the Lord to question Peter’s loyalty and commitment (for *agapao* means a sacrificial love of the will) was one of the most stinging rebukes possible. Peter was deeply injured and careful not to overstate his position – “Lord; thou knowest that I love (*phileo* – a friend) thee.” Asked a second time, Peter gave the same response. Then came the heaviest blow at the third query – “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*phileo*) thou me?” Now the Lord even questions whether Peter was a good **friend**. This was crushing to Peter, but a necessary purging of his boastfulness that he would never deny his Lord. He would never be the same again. His future role was to “Feed my lambs” and “Feed my sheep” and he would follow his Lord to the cross having no choice due to his unbreakable commitment.

V.20-25 – Peter received another setback when he enquired what would happen to John – “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He is basically told to mind his own business. What he had to realize was that John had not denied his Lord as he had. John went into the high priest’s house (John 18:15-16) and evidently stayed, and stood beside the cross (John 19:25-27). He had not denied his Lord and his reward was that he would live beyond AD 70 – “If I will that he tarry **till I come** (Dan. 9:26), what is that to thee?” and we know he nearly reached the end of the first century.

## April 25

### Deuteronomy 10

Moses continued his recapitulation of incidents that occurred at the giving of the Law, and relates Yahweh’s mercy to acts such as restoring the broken tablets of stone, maintaining the priesthood so giving access to worship, providing Levi as assistants in the work of the Tabernacle, and hearkening to Moses’ intercession on behalf of the people. The chapter concludes by indicating how the people can ‘repay’ the Divine mercy and love. It reminds believers of every age that they have received many concessions and privileges from Yahweh, so much forgiveness and help, that it becomes them to enquire what returns they should make to Him. The key message is found in verses 12-13.

V.12-13 – “And now, Israel, **what doth Yahweh thy God require of thee**, but to fear Yahweh thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Yahweh thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Yahweh, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?” This is echoed throughout Scripture – Mic. 6:8; Josh. 22:5; Mark 12:29-33.

V.16 – Given that sexual immorality had played a part in the sin of the golden calf and again at Baal-Peor this is a call to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

V.19 – “Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” It is wise to always remember what we once were as a corrective to pride and a sense of self-importance – Eph. 2:11-13; Col. 1:21.

### Deuteronomy 11

Moses continues to stress the importance of obedience to Yahweh’s commandments if they wished to have success in conquering the Land.

V.2-7 – He appeals to those who were under 18 when Israel left Egypt. They were now between 40 and 58 years of age having survived 40 years in the wilderness because they were not condemned with their parents in Num. 14. He calls upon them to dredge up the



memories of their experiences as children and teenagers in Egypt as well as the 40 years in the wilderness.

V.9-12 – The land of Canaan was totally different to Egypt. It flowed with “milk and honey” because Yahweh cared for it (V.12) and His eyes were always upon it. Its fruitfulness was due to water – “a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven” (V.11). By contrast, Egypt which has no rain (Zech. 14:18) was dependent on the Nile for its productivity. The Nile flowed perennially and therefore there was no need for trust in God to provide rain in due season. You could water the field nonchalantly with your foot (V.10). Life was easy for the Egyptians who lived adjacent to the Nile.



V.13-15 – Obedience and faithfulness would ensure rain in due season, but the opposite would result in famine (V.16-17). Success or failure was wholly dependent on Israel's obedience to God's Word. It is no different today.

V.29-30 – Instructions were given to go immediately to Shechem where Abraham's sojourn in the Land began (Gen. 12:6). Two mountains, Gerizim (blessing) and Ebal (curse) would frame Israel's future – Deut. 27:12-26; Josh. 8:30-35.

#### **Ecclesiastes 4**

Solomon has been considering factors in man's environment which are beyond his control. Starting with the framework of time, he moves on to view conditions of government and society which can rob life of its value. He is appalled by man's ruthless oppression of man and concludes that the dead have the advantage over the living. He finds that though man suffers from the pressure of society and its oppressions, there is value and comfort in the companionship of fellow man. And following that theme he goes on to show that material aims without friendship are futile toil. The superiority of wisdom over folly is clearly demonstrated in scenes from life as Solomon had observed it.

#### **Summary – Ecclesiastes 4 – Finding the path of joy in the anomalies of life**

- V.1-3      Enjoyment in life can be destroyed by oppressive government.
- V.4-5      How to avoid futility in labour – (a) Success by some produces envy in others – Joy is changed to frustration (b) The lazy fool destroys himself.
- V.6        The great principle of MODERATION – The way to the greatest good.
- V.7-8      Seeking wealth is futile – Much always wants more.
- V.9-12     Companionship gives life substance. Solitude brings desolation.
- V.13-16    Power gives false security. Popularity lacks substance.

**Conclusion** – Life is empty apart from fellow man.

Ecc. 4:12 – “And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” This proved true in Israel's history – 2 Sam. 23:9; Dan. 3:16-17. It is also an important principle for the preservation and success of marriage in the Truth. Where God is the ruling power in the lives of both partners, “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

## Acts 1

Luke the physician adds to his gospel account of the life and mission of Christ with a detailed account of the work of the Apostles and the history of the first century ecclesia up to the imprisonment of Paul in Rome in circa AD 61.

V.3 – “passion” – *pascho* – to experience a sensation or impression (usually painful). A reference to “the sufferings of Christ” – 1 Pet. 1:11.

V.6 – The kingdom of Israel overturned in the days of Zedekiah (Ezek. 21:27) would be “no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.” But he was about to leave and go into heaven. The time was not right. Much still needed to be done in Judea, Samaria and beyond – V.8.

V.15 – “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an **hundred and twenty**”). There must be a reason why the number 120 is provided. The reason is the context of 2 Chron. 5:2-14 when having completed the Temple, Solomon brought the Ark from David’s tent and placed it in the Most Holy place of the Temple. This event had both positive and negative aspects to it.

2 Chron. 5:3 – It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles which pointed to the ingathering of all nations during the Millennium.

2 Chron. 5:10 – “There was nothing in the ark save the **two tables** which Moses put therein at Horeb.” Only that which spoke of the Law of Moses remained in the Ark. Aaron’s rod that budded and the perpetual manna were absent. Aaron’s rod spoke of Christ’s resurrection and immortality by which he became our High Priest. The “hidden manna” (Rev. 2:17) spoke of the eternal life his faithful servants would ultimately share with him.

2 Chron. 5:12-13 – The Levitical singers arrayed in “fine linen” (symbolizing the “righteousnesses of the saints” – Green’s Literal Translation of Rev. 19:8) were accompanied by “an **hundred and twenty** priests sounding with trumpets.” The “trumpeters and singers were as **one**, to make **one sound** to be heard in praising and thanking Yahweh.” This matches Acts 1:14 – “These all continued with **one accord** in prayer and supplication,” and with Acts 2:1,42,46 where “**one accord**” occurs twice – “with **one accord** in the temple” (Acts 2:46).

Acts 1:16-26 – The Law had run its course. Trumpeting priests were replaced by preaching Apostles; Levitical singers by Jewish and Gentile converts to Christ, and the Holy Spirit which had filled Solomon’s Temple (2 Chron. 5:13-14) now rested upon the 12 Apostles at Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks) which spoke of the incorporation of both Jew and Gentile in the purpose of God.

“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out” – The decision was taken to replace Judas Iscariot whose betrayal led to his suicide, fittingly at Gehenna. In V.20 two psalms are cited as being fulfilled – Ps. 69:25 and 109:8. The lot was cast and Matthias appointed from among those who had accompanied them during the Lord’s ministry.

## April 26

### Deuteronomy 12

This chapter primarily concerns the place that Yahweh would choose where sacrifice could be made. The land was full of places of worship and sacrifice of the people who inhabited it (V.2-3). Yahweh knew that if these were not totally destroyed and one place nominated for all sacrifices, that His people would fall victim to false worship and idolatry. Israel could kill and consume clean animals in the gates of their towns (V.15), but all sacrifices had to be offered in the place Yahweh chose (V.5-6,11,14,26-27).

### Ecclesiastes 5

Chapter 5 marks a significant development in the thought and character of the book. Solomon's enquiry has brought him to certain convincing conclusions. Men are bound by time and are subject to vanity by divine appointment. It is certain that man does not exist apart from God, and no true examination of life can exclude God. So, very fittingly, he introduces at this point thoughts on approach to God in worship. For the first time Solomon directly addresses the reader and varies his previously abstract line of inquiry by passages of direct exhortation.

The reason for this change in approach is that Solomon has repeatedly arrived at the conclusion that all that man does is vanity and striving after the wind. But this being a divinely imposed state (Rom. 8:18-25) means that God is in control and is able to use vanity to turn men to a recognition of, and desire for, higher things. When men recognize the real purpose of vanity in life, an entirely new perspective opens to their view. God is working for their salvation. His providence is employed through the ordinary circumstances of man's repetitive and vain life to achieve the greatest good.

In the balance of the chapter Solomon turns to view certain anomalies which demonstrate the futility of desire and the virtue of accepting and enjoying what God has given.

Chapter 5 can be summarized in the following way:

- V.1-7 The three main principles of worship
  - V.1 – Sensitivity in worship – A pure sacrifice
  - V.2-3 – Sensitivity in prayer – From the heart, not the mouth
  - V.4-7 – Sensitivity in making vows – Avoiding hypocrisy
- V.8-20 Viewing anomalies
  - V.8-9 – Corruption in government – The abuse of power
  - V.10-12 – The futility of desire
  - V.13-20 – Virtue found in 'occupation', not in 'gain'

Ecc. 5:6 – “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the **angel** (*malak* – to despatch as a deputy; a messenger), that it was an error: wherefore should **God** be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?” Under the Law, the priest representing Yahweh was the messenger (Lev. 5:4-6), but in Christ the messenger will be the angel conducting the pre-judgement interview at Mt Sinai – Rom. 14:10-12 (note it is ‘God’ i.e. His angel representing Him to whom the account is given).

### Acts 2

V.1-4 – The events of the day of Pentecost matched those of Ex. 19 where Yahweh took His wife Israel. He reminded them of the work of Atonement in redeeming them from Egypt

and informed them of the means whereby they were guided to Mt Horeb – Ex. 19:4 – “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians (Ex. 14:30 – left dead on the sea shore after Israel’s baptism – 1 Cor. 10:1-2), and how I bare you on **eagles’ wings** (symbol of the Spirit – Isa. 40:31), and brought you unto myself.” Christ was forming his bride and the means of establishing the ecclesia would be the power of the Holy Spirit symbolized in Acts 2:3 by “cloven tongues like as of fire” resembling wings (see also Matt. 3:16; John 1:32).

V.4-13 – Language has always been a barrier to preaching thanks to Nimrod (Gen. 11:1-9). This hurdle was overcome due to the gift of tongues enabling those with the gift to speak in any foreign language required (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:22).

V.16-21 – Peter’s citation of Joel 2:28-32 is carefully selected. Christ said that when the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) came (as it had this day) that “he will reprove the world of **sin**, and of **righteousness**, and of **judgement**” (John 16:8). Joel 2:30-31 (cited Acts 2:19-20) refer to the **judgements** of AD 70 now less than 40 years away. In V.23 Peter convinced his audience of their **sin** in crucifying their own Messiah, and in V.24 of the **righteousness** of Christ that ensured his resurrection to life.

V.24 – Peter used the first key of the two keys of the Kingdom – Matt. 16:19 which was “the sufferings of Christ” (Matt. 16:21; 1 Pet. 1:11; 5:1). He used the second key “the glory that should follow” in V.33 – “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted.” He was to repeat the use of these two keys in Acts 10 in the house of Cornelius. Peter had deliberately not quoted the final phrase of Joel 2:32 in Acts 2:21. He reserved it to V.39 – “even as many as the Lord our God shall call” a reference to the call of the Gentiles in far off lands. They too would be recipients of the gifts of the Spirit.

V.25-28 – To fully convince the Jews (the *kosmos* of John 16:8) of the righteousness of Christ, Peter cites Ps. 16:8-11, a Messianic psalm that emphasizes the relationship between Yahweh and His son that led to the victory over sin and death. He notes that the psalm cannot refer to David (the author) because he did see corruption – Acts 2:29-31.

V.32-36 – The citation of Ps. 110:1 was conclusive (Ps. 110 is the most cited O.T. Scripture in the N.T. – 10 times). Christ had used this psalm to demonstrate that he was the son of God – Matt. 22:41-46.

V.37-40 – 3,000 were convinced of sin, righteousness and judgement to come (John 16:8) and sought to save themselves from “this **untoward** generation” – the word “untoward” is *skolios* – warped, crooked, perverse. As judgement time approaches we too live in a totally warped and perverse generation. Paul’s advice is timely – Eph. 5:15-16 – “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

V.41-47 – 3,000 converts were added to the 120 disciples of Acts 1:15 and “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” A new approach emerged – “And all that believed were together, and **had all things common**; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” This sprang out of a sense of unity, but was to bring its own problems in due course because of human nature.

## April 27

### Deuteronomy 13

This entire chapter is devoted to the undermining of the Faith by a variety of apostasies. These included a charismatic false prophet who may seem to have ‘supernatural’ powers (V.1-5); family members or friends (V.6-11); and a city of Israel (V.12-18). Three principles that apply in all ages emerge from this chapter.

1. The Word of God is the arbiter of truth. It matters not what signs or wonders people with extraordinary ‘powers’ may say, if their advice and direction is contrary to the pure teachings of the Word of God they must be summarily dismissed and ignored.
2. The punishment for misleading others and destroying their prospect of eternal life was death (V.5,9-10,15). So it will be when Christ returns – Luke 17:1-2; 2 Thess. 2:8-10. Even after Armageddon when the Kingdom has been established false prophets will be put to death by their own family – Zech. 13:2-3. These facts emphasize the critical importance of maintaining truth and purity of worship. Without truth there is no salvation – Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
3. Deut. 13:14 – “Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and **the thing certain**” is the essential process that must be undertaken on any report of apostasy among those with whom we have to do. The serious actions that were to be undertaken against an apostate city matched the treatment that was to be given to Jericho, the only city devoted to utter destruction in Canaan (V.15-17; Josh. 6:17-18). There is a need for **certainty** in proving apostasy before action is taken.

### Deuteronomy 14

Three matters are addressed in this chapter – (1) Making marks in the flesh; (2) Repetition of the food laws of Lev. 11 and 20; (3) The way the tithes of the increase of the field were to be handled.

V.1 – The Gentile nations not only did these things in honour of their gods, but in grief for the death of a relative – Lev. 19:27-28; Jer. 16:6. Israel were a separate and holy people like the “Israel of God” now (V.2; Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:9). They were not to mimic the nations around them. Marks in the flesh have become a prominent feature in the modern world.

V.3-21 – For some of the lessons involved in the food laws see March 5 comments on Lev. 11 (page 8 of March PDF). For a full review of all the unclean animals and birds see the Deuteronomy Expositor pages 191-199.

V.22-29 – The tithing laws needed modification for the generation entering the Land. The Levite was not to be forgotten (V.27), but their situation would be different than in the wilderness. Hence, these ordinances would be adopted once in the Land. When the nation began to enjoy prosperity they had an obligation to provide tithes for Divine service (V.22-27), and for the relief of others without a provider (V.28-29). Provision was made for distance. Each year the increase of seed tithed, and the firstlings of the herds and flocks were to be taken to the place of the sanctuary. If it were too far from the home of the Israelite he was permitted to sell the produce and the animals and purchase what was required at the sanctuary.

Deut. 26:12-13 further defines this ordinance prescribing a “third year” where particular focus was given to providing for the stranger, fatherless and widow in addition to the Levites. Those listed were those within the community that had no land inheritance or protection (see Deut. 14:28-29). Whereas in the first and second years the tithes were used

for the Levites and sacred feasts (Deut. 14:22-27), in the third year they were given to the Levites and the poor (Deut. 14:28-29).

## Ecclesiastes 6

Solomon continues his theme of the futility of human desire when not rightly directed. He now considers the vanity of riches when there is not the ability to enjoy them. He contrasts the man of chap. 5:19 to whom God had given riches and wealth, and power to enjoy them, with the man who is not given that power. His observations emphasize **the vanity of life lived for its own sake**, and as an end in itself.

Ecclesiastes 6:2,3 – Two men who do not have the “power to enjoy”.

- Young (no heir)
- Early decease
- A stranger enjoys his portion

Both rich, with honour, and lacking nothing.

- Old (100 children)
- No burial (long life)
- Cannot enjoy his portion (soul not filled with good)

This is vanity – a sore affliction (V.2) – Yet common among men (V.1)

Ecc. 6:9 – Rotherham – “**Better what the eyes behold**, than the wandering of desire,—even this, was vanity, and a feeding on wind.” Make the most of what God has given, while you still have it, and are able to enjoy it – Ecc. 2:24; 5:18; 12:1.

## Acts 3

It is likely Christ had seen the cripple who was laid daily at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and if so had left him to be healed by the Apostles as a clear sign of the validity of their preaching – John 15:26-27; 16:13-14. The healing of the cripple led to the conversion of many more – Acts 3:10 to 4:4.

The miracle is an enacted parable. This man had been crippled from birth and never walked. Babies do not learn to walk until around 12 months and then only with initial difficulty. On being healed this man leapt and walked immediately (V.8-9). This pointed to the day of glorification for the saints (Mal. 4:2 – Rotherham – “ye shall come forth and **leap for joy** like calves let loose from the stall”). We are all ‘crippled’ from birth with a nature biased towards sin and condemned to die in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22). If found faithful, we will leap with joy (“Let them praise his name with dancing” – ESV for Ps. 149:3) in a place much more beautiful than the gate at which this man had spent the bulk of his mortal life – Isa. 26:1-3 – “Open ye the **gates**, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”

V.11-26 – Peter’s speech in Solomon’s portico of the temple saw the conversion of another 5,000 people (Acts 4:4). He made three main points; (1) They had ignorantly participated in the death of “the Prince of Life,” but God had raised him, and it was belief in that resurrection to glory that had cured the cripple; (2) Scripture had been fulfilled and would be fulfilled again when he returned from heaven to bring “times of refreshing” and accomplish “the restitution of all things” relating to God’s promises to Abraham; and (3) That they needed to seize hold of their heritage and abandon Judaism by securing the ‘blessing’ of Abraham. The blessing in Abraham is the antithesis of Judaism which aims to achieve life by law and ritual. The Law only condemned (Rom. 7:9-10), it could not save.

The blessing of Abraham was God working with individuals “in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

Forgiveness of sin and walking in a newness of life leads to eternal life – Rom. 6:22-23.

This would prove true for both Jews and Gentiles – V.25; citing Gen. 22:18.

## **Acts 4**

V.1-22 – After the healing of the lame man in chapter 3, Peter and John were apprehended and imprisoned to be brought before the Sanhedrin the next day. Their preaching had made about 3,000 converts and the authorities were worried about where it might lead. Before the Sanhedrin the question was asked, “By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” and Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, launched into a dissertation on “Jesus Christ of Nazareth” whom they had crucified but whom God had raised from the dead, and who is the only “name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Set back by the boldness of Peter and John, and with the healed man in their midst, “they could say nothing against it.” After a private conference they commanded the apostles “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” which Peter and John rejected saying, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” With additional threats, they were released.

V.23-31 – “being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them” – Their report produced an outburst of praise to God and a curious citation from Ps. 2:1-2. That psalm is about the Second Advent of Christ, when after Armageddon the Catholic nations will rebel against Christ and fight against him. While their citation concerns the folly of Jewish and Roman leaders at that time, there is a link because the Judaism of ‘converted’ Pharisees ultimately led to the development of the apostasy within the ‘Christian’ community. That eventually created the Catholic Church which is deeply involved in Ps. 2 (see the links between Ps. 2 and Rev. 2:18-29).

V.27 – “of a truth against thy holy child Jesus” is translated correctly by most translators as “holy servant” because the word *pais* does service for a child or a servant.

V.31 – Their prayer was attended by an earth tremor and bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

V.32-37 – Such was the enthusiasm and commitment of the recent converts that a new approach emerged – (Weymouth) “Among all those who had embraced the faith there was but one heart and soul, so that none of them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything they had was common property.” Inevitably, this would prove a test for some, but for others like Barnabas (“the son of consolation”) there was no diffidence to commit all.

## **April 28**

### **Deuteronomy 15**

The seventh year is incredibly important in the Divine scheme of things. Seven, the Abrahamic covenant number; the number of the Spirit (cp. Rev. 4:5 with Eph. 4:4), and the completion of a cycle established at the time of the Creation (Gen. 2:2-3). Seven by seven year cycles brought a time of release in the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:8-10). At the turn of each seventh year in that cycle a release of debt was also proclaimed (V.1).

Deut. 15:2 – Rotherham – “And, this, shall be the manner of the release, Every creditor who lendeth ought to his neighbour, **his hand shall release it**,—he shall not exact it of his neighbour or his brother, because there hath been proclaimed a release unto Yahweh.” The **hand** plays an important role in this law of release. This chapter is one of the foundations of the principle of the Sabbath so beautifully expounded in Isa. 58. The word “creditor” in the KJV is actually three Hebrew words *baal mashsheh yad* – Lit. “master of the lending of his **hand**.” *Yad* occurs again in V.3 “thine **hand** shall release”; and V.7 “nor shut thine **hand**”; again in V.8 and 11 – “thou shalt open thine **hand** wide”; and in V.10 “thine **hand**.” Lenders had a choice to ‘open wide their hand’ to release the debt of their brethren, or ‘shut their hand’ (like a clenched fist) as they could lawfully do to strangers (V.3).

V.9-10 – Yahweh knows the heart of man better than anyone (Jer. 17:9-10) and warned “Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, **the year of release, is at hand**; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto Yahweh against thee, and it be sin unto thee.” Judaisers in the time of Isaiah fasted on the Sabbath, but were known for clenching their fist in violent arguments between themselves (Isa. 58:4), while hypocritically having their foreman drive on their labourers in the field on the Sabbath – Rotherham – Isa. 58:3 – “Lo! in the day of your fast, ye take pleasure, But all your toilers, ye drive on!” What Yahweh wanted on the Sabbath was an **open hand** – Isa. 58:6-7 – Rotherham – “Is not, this, the fast that I must ever choose—To **unbind** the tight cords of lawlessness, To **unloose** the bands of the yoke,—and To let the crushed **go free**, and That every yoke, ye **tear off**? Is it not to **break** unto the hungry, thy bread, And the thrust-out oppressed, that thou **bring** into a home,—When thou seest one naked, that thou **cover** him, And from thine own flesh, shalt not hide thyself?” None of these things can be done with a clenched fist. We must be like Yahweh whose “**hand is not shortened** (by clenching the fist), that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear” – Isa. 59:1. See Ps. 145:16 – “Thou **openest thine hand**, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

V.12-14 – An enslaved Hebrew man or woman was to be released in the seventh year, but not empty-handed. His master was to “open wide his **hand**” and give him as much as he needed to begin his independent life.

V.16-17 – In the rare instance of a slave wanting to stay with his master his ear was pierced with an aul (see comments on Ex. 21:6 on February 11, page 5). The greatest example of this was Jesus Christ whose hearing ear was fixed to his Master – See Ps. 40:6-8 which is cited in Hebrews 10:5-10.

V.19-23 – It is interesting that the chapter concludes with a repetition of the laws concerning the firstlings of herd and flock and emphasizes that the offering to Yahweh was to be without blemish of any kind. The blemish that most disturbs the Almighty is a **closed hand**.

## Ecclesiastes 7

In a series of aphorisms (a concise statement of principle) Solomon offers advice for happier living for those who live under the shadow of death. Solomon’s quest for “good” is a search for practical good, not that which is abstract or idealistic. Good is that which proves to be so in the experience of life. And though the tone of his essay on desire in the previous chapter is negative and pessimistic, his question in chapter 6:12, “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?” suggests that there is scope to raise the idea of good to a new plane. Solomon shows that by facing realities there is a deepening of man’s character



which brings a new poise and stability in life that is not only good but glad. Despite the vanity that attends all human labour and the emptiness of unsatisfied desire, there are some things that are better. The flow of Solomon's thought can be illustrated as follows:

**Things that are better under God (not under the sun)**

- V.1 A GOOD NAME – Life has substance
- V.2 A sober view of life is better than to laugh life away
- V.3-4 Suffering instructs and improves the heart
- V.5-7 Frivolity is without substance – It hides a sad end
- V.8 PATIENCE is a virtue:
- V.9 (a) It assesses all the facts
- V.10 (b) It resists premature anger
- (c) It seeks out opportunity now
- V.11-12 **A CONCLUSION**  
Wisdom adds to life as it is lived now and provides the way to future reward
- V.13-14 God's work is unalterable
- V.15-18 God's way – amid dangerous extremes
- V.19-22 Wisdom – A STRONGHOLD
- V.23-24 Ultimate wisdom unfathomable
- V.25-29 Wisdom reveals wickedness in its true character

V.1-5 – The Humanistic world we live in has no concept of the truth of these words.

**Acts 5**

V.1-11 – “The love of money is the root of all evil” was proved true in the case of Ananias (“whom Yahweh has graciously given”) and Sapphira (“a sapphire”) who hypocritically joined in the fervor of selling property to contribute to the common fund for reasons of personal aggrandizement and with a deceitful heart. It does not pay to deceive God. They were not compelled to sell their property (V.4), and even if they did, were not required to contribute to the common fund. It was the deception that brought them undone – “thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

V.12-16 – More miracles were performed in Solomon's portico with similar results – the conversion of multitudes, some of whom came from distant places. The Sanhedrin, dominated by the Sadducees, were so apoplectic that the Apostles were arrested and thrown into prison only to be released by angelic intervention (V.17-24) leaving the members of the Sanhedrin incredulous and doubtful as to where all this would end.

V.25-32 – The trial that followed produced one of those statements that is valid for all time – “We ought to obey God rather than men” (V.29). We are required to obey earthly authorities unless they require us to disobey God – 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

V.33-42 – Only the intervention of Gamaliel, Paul's mentor saved the Apostles from death at the hands of a furious Sanhedrin. Recounting the failure of past insurrections, he made the valid point – “But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (V.39). Reluctantly agreeing with the logic, they beat the Apostles and ridiculously commanded them not to preach in the name of Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven whereby men might be saved – Acts 4:12. The Apostles did the unusual and actually rejoiced at the privilege of being able to suffer for Christ (V.41).

## Acts 6

It was not very long before tensions arose between believing Jews and Gentiles over the equitable distribution of aid to widows in the community. This untidy scene teaches that even in the early days of enthusiasm and unity, human nature can get in the way of harmony. The appointment of seven faithful and dedicated brethren to oversee the distribution brought resolution. Among these was Stephen whose trial, magnificent defense and ultimate murder is recorded in Acts 7.

One important statement is made in Acts 6:4 – “But we will give ourselves continually to **prayer**, and to the ministry of the word.” These ecclesial leaders, though Spirit guided, nevertheless rated prayer as their first priority. This underscores the absolute importance of prayer in the daily guidance and ‘feeding’ of the believing community. It is also an acknowledgement that we do not have of ourselves what is required for successful leadership – “it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

V.8-15 – A coterie of hardline Judaisers set themselves to destroy Stephen, among whom was a freeborn Jew of Cilicia named Saul (later Paul). They dragged him before the Sanhedrin and made four false charges against him – (1) Blasphemous words against the temple; (2) and against the Law of Moses; (3) That “Jesus of Nazareth” would destroy the temple; (4) and change the customs of the Law. They were put on notice when they saw Stephen’s “face as it had been the face of an angel.” This was not going to be comfortable for them.

Bullinger comments on the synagogue of the Libertines – During the Civil Wars many Jews had been enslaved, and afterwards set free by their masters. A manumitted slave was called *libertinus*. These were probably the descendants of such freedmen who had returned to Jerusalem, after the decree of Tiberius expelling the Jews from Rome about 20 A.D.

## April 29

### Deuteronomy 16

Deuteronomy (‘the second law’) is mostly a reiteration of what has gone before, but breaks new ground here and there because of the imminence of entering the Land of Promise. So it is in this chapter. Ordinances concerning the three major feasts repeat the ordinances of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers and add some new stipulations. One of these was the command that the Passover lamb was only to be offered “in the place which Yahweh shall choose to place his name there” (V.2,5.6). Similarly, with the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), it was restricted to the same place and was to involve rejoicing with family, slaves, Levites, strangers, fatherless and widows (V.11) because of the past (v.12).

These new elements led to the summary – Deut. 16:16 – “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Yahweh thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.”

V.18-20 – Absolute honesty and integrity was to be applied in all matters of judgement, just as it is today (Mic. 6:8).

V.21-22 – Any mimicking of the worship of the former inhabitants of the land was to be eschewed. Idolatry is fatal to futurity – Eph. 5:5.

## Ecclesiastes 8

Continuing to test the value of wisdom, Solomon now turns to consider wisdom when subject to higher powers. The arbitrary power of kings provides a special test for wisdom in its practical manifestation. Similarly, the moral governance of God calls for reverence and humble submission, for the righteous are in the hand of God. Inexorably, as Solomon proceeds he is drawn to include more and more into his considerations the supremacy and righteousness of God; a trend which has already been evident in chapter 7. His study of the vanity of life and the value of wisdom is compelling him towards his final conclusion: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole man" (Ecc.12:13).

The contents of the chapter can be summarized as follows:

### Ecclesiastes 8

#### THE TEST OF ONE WHO BEHOLDS THE SUN (7:11)

- V.1 Wisdom can be seen in the physical countenance
- V.2-8 Wisdom: circumspect under authority
- V.9-13 Know that God is the final arbiter of moral qualities
- V.14 Don't wrestle with anomalies
- V.15 Mirth (gladness) is better than anxiety
- V.16 – 9:1 The final analysis reveals a real advantage for the wise – They are in the hand of God. = **PROVIDENCE**

V.8 – "and there is no discharge in that war" – The word for "discharge" is *mishlachath* signifying, release. Rotherham renders it "furlough" (or leave – cp. Deut. 20:1-8). The word for "war" is *milchamah* – battle. There is no release from man's battle with death. It is man's constant and ever present enemy, and there is never a moment in mortal life when he is free from the contentions of sin and death (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 7:14-24).

V.11 – "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Much evidence of the truth of this statement is seen today. It will not be so in the Kingdom – Isa. 30:20-21.

## Acts 7

Stephen's defense is a masterpiece of Scriptural exegesis that could not be contradicted by the doctor's of the Law, the priests or the Pharisees. Their only answer was to murder him. An outline of Acts 7 may assist.

V.1 – The high priest opens the trial

V.2-16 – The Patriarchal period – The Land of Israel not essential for acceptable worship

V.17-36 – The life of Moses – The Law not essential for acceptable worship

V.37-43 – The warning of Israel's past failure

V.44-50 – The Temple not the final phase in worship

V.51-53 – Stephen's condemnation of the Sanhedrin – guilty of false witness and murder

V.54-60 – In rage Stephen is stoned

V.1 – "Then said the high priest, Are these things so?" Remembering the charges made against Stephen – (1) Blasphemous words against the temple; (2) and against the

Law of Moses; (3) That “Jesus of Nazareth” would destroy the temple; (4) and change the customs of the Law – Acts 6:13-14.

V.2-16 – Stephen shows that God was worshipped acceptably by Abraham in Mesopotamia and that he received no inheritance in the Land, and was told his seed would serve God in Egypt. Similarly, Joseph was rejected by his brethren (like Christ), but exalted in Egypt by God and became the saviour of Israel there. Therefore the Temple was not the only ‘holy place’ where God could be worshipped acceptably. That addressed charge number 1.

V.17-36 – Israel prospered in Egypt and Moses was born there and was raised and educated by Egyptians, and then rejected by his brethren (like Christ). After being called by God at Horeb (a ‘holy place’ – Ex. 3:5), he was sent back to redeem his wayward brethren. This addressed the initial accusation in Acts 6:11 that he had spoken against Moses and God. Their great law-giver was born, prepared and called in places far from the Temple.

V.37-43 – Moses prophesied of one like unto himself whom it would be imperative to believe. Israel rejected God’s Word delivered through Moses and rejected him as their deliverer desiring to return to Egypt. Their idolatry in the wilderness was repeated throughout their history until captivity in Babylon. This answered the charge that Stephen had spoken against the Law of Moses. It was they who had rejected both Moses and the greater prophet he preceded. Israel’s apostasy had changed the customs of the Law.

V.44-50 – Stephen then brilliantly shows the temporary nature of Herod’s temple that they said he had blasphemed. Moses’ Tabernacle was superseded by David’s tent to house the Ark when it was brought to Zion. It in turn was superseded by Solomon’s Temple which was later destroyed by the Babylonians. The Second Temple of Zerubbabel and Jeshua was repaired by Herod the Great, but it too, like Solomon’s was not a place that could confine Yahweh (V.47-48). This addressed the charge of blasphemy against the Temple and that Christ would destroy it.

V.51-53 – Stephen turns the charges back on them – “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye.” It was they who had rejected the Law of Moses and murdered the “prophet like unto Moses” and would again prove themselves to be murderers by having Stephen stoned.

V.54-60 – Stephen’s vision – “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man **standing** on the right hand of God” was too much for them. In rage and fury, they had him stoned, appointing Saul of Tarsus to supervise the murder. The next thing Stephen will know is the one he saw **standing** at the right hand of God ready to return to the earth, sitting on a throne of glory at the Judgement Seat – Matt. 25:31.

## April 30

### Deuteronomy 17

V.1-7 – Additions are made to the legal process of dealing with the same kind of apostasies listed in Deut. 13. The need for diligent enquiry to establish the facts is again emphasized (V.4; Deut. 13:14), and the legal forms laid out, namely, a public place where justice was dispensed – the gate of the city (the place of judgement – V.5; Gen.19:1); and ensuring there were sufficient reliable witnesses to the crime who would be “first to cast a stone” – V.6-7; John 8:7.

V.8-13 – Legal cases too difficult for local leaders to resolve were to be taken to the priests and judges at the place Yahweh chose. The judgements made there were not to be ignored on the pain of death (V.12) for they were Yahweh's representatives – see 2 Chron. 19:5-11.

V.14 – Yahweh was Israel's King, but He knew Israel would one day want to be like the nations around – 1 Sam. 8:5-7. So, ordinances are laid down for kings. He must be an Israelite approved by Yahweh; must not return to Egypt to acquire horses (symbol of human strength – Ps. 147:10); nor multiply wives and silver and gold as Solomon did – V.16-17.

V.18-20 – The most important thing in the life of a king was to be the Word of God, as it was for any leader in Israel – Josh. 1:7-8. He was to write out his own personal copy of the Law and it was always to be with him so that he might read from it every day. It would keep him humble despite his exalted status and allow him to make right judgements for himself and his people. It is one of the great ironies of the period of the kings of Israel and Judah that it is said of **only one king** “that he turn(ed) not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left,” and that was **Josiah** who did not have a copy of the Law to write out for himself – 2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chron. 34:2.

## **Ecclesiastes 9**

Chapter 9 to verse 16 is essentially part of the same argument which has occupied Solomon's mind since he began his reconsideration of wisdom in chapter 7:15. Diligently he has picked his way through a maze of anomalies and enigmas in life “under the sun”, and slowly but surely there is emerging a certainty and assurance that the righteous are in the hand of God, and that, despite all the perplexing anomalies, it shall ultimately be well with them that fear Him.

The contents of this chapter, and its relationship to chapter 8, can be summarized as follows:

### **Ecclesiastes 9**

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| V.1     | The wise – in the hand of God                                    |
| V.2     | “Time and chance” – A law allowed by God – Its seeming injustice |
| V.3-10  | An aside – Attitudes determine destiny                           |
| (a)     | The wicked – To perish   |
| (b)     | The righteous – Sojourners with an ultimate objective            |
| V.11-12 | Ambition brings sure frustration                                 |
| V.13-16 | Wisdom – does not necessarily bring worldly honour               |

### **FUNDAMENTAL AND RELATED TRUTHS OF CHAPS. 8 & 9**

1. God: the moral governor of the world
2. There is a judgement to come
3. There is a future for the righteous

Ecc. 9:8 – “Let thy **garments** be always **white**; and let thy **head** lack no **ointment**.” Keeping our garments “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27), and our head in the Word are keys to enjoying the happiness of V.7 and 9.

V.11 – “but time and chance happeneth to them all” – Interlinear Bible – “for time and occurrence happen to them all.” Rotherham – “for time and accident happened to them all.” The word “chance” is *pega* – impact; from the root *paga* meaning to impinge, by accident or violence. Consistent with his proposition earlier in the chapter (V.1-3) that “all things come alike to all”, Solomon observes that all men “under the sun” are subject to

events and occurrences of which they have no warning, and over which they have no control. This must include the righteous who “are in the hand of God” as experience shows. Mortality (or life “under the sun”) exposes man to the “one event unto all” (V.3) which may strike suddenly and unpredictably. The essential difference between the righteous and the wicked is that while death means oblivion and a complete end for the wicked, the righteous are in the hand of God and are subject to His will and purpose in their end. They alone can have confidence amidst the vagaries of mortal life “that it shall be well with them that fear God” (Ecc. 8:12), for “he that feareth God shall come forth of them all” (Ecc. 7:18).

The following extract from "The Ways of Providence" by Bro. Robert Roberts is worth reading carefully, as indeed is the whole chapter on Providence (pgs.1-7).

#### TIME AND CHANCE

There is such a thing as chance, as distinct from what God does. The Bible declares this (Ecc. 9:11) and the experience of every day teaches it. Every moment teems with the incidents of chance. The whirl of a cloud of dust before the windy gust coming round the corner of the house illustrates the point. God has control of all chance; but all chance is not controlled. It is controlled when His purpose requires it. His purpose does not require Him to decide which shells every or any child on the sea-shore shall pick up and which throw away, unless the incident be a link in the purpose being worked out, and then the hand of the child will be guided. This illustration touches a great fact which it is important to see clearly.

A first idea to be mastered in apprehending the ways of providence is the relation of the universe to God. All things are in Him, and He, though personally located in the highest heaven, is everywhere present by the Spirit, which is His substance in diffusion, so to speak. Nevertheless, God is different from His works. Creation, as organised by Him and in Him has a fixed nature, in virtue of which it has, by His appointment, an independent action, so to speak. Results ensue from certain conditions without His volition participating in the results. For example: you place a strip of paper in the candle flame: ignition follows. The ignition did not require the will of Almighty God to produce it. It resulted from conditions originally established by His will, but now having permitted independence of action. The same thing is illustrated in the million occurrences of everyday experience. It is essential to recognize it. It constitutes the platform of evidence. There could be no such conception as providence if everything were due to direct Divine volition. This conception requires that some things are God's doing, and some are not. All things are of God, as regards the establishment of the conditions and affording the power-basis of their existence; but the play of the conditions is the affair of what is called chance.

#### Acts 8

V.1 – “And Saul was **consenting** unto his death.” Paul acknowledged this in Acts 22:20 – “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and **consenting** unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.” Persecution of the members of the ecclesia in Jerusalem immediately followed, scattering believers to other parts of the land, including Samaria. This was the beginning of the fulfillment of Christ's commission to the Apostles (Acts 1:8 – “ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”).

V.2 – “devout” – *eulabēs* – taking hold well; carefully and surely; cautiously. That is, they acted circumspectly due to the imminent danger of persecution.

V.3 – ESV – “But Saul cruelly harassed the Ecclesia. He went into house after house, and, dragging off both men and women, threw them into prison.” The KJV – “havock” – *lumainomai* = to treat shamefully or with injury, to ravage, devastate, ruin. God allowed this vicious treatment of the believers in Jerusalem in order to spread the message of the Gospel far and wide. As Paul himself was to find out after his conversion, the preaching of the truth brings with it suffering and difficulty (Acts 9:16). It is part of the process. The message is more important than the messenger.

V.4 – “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” This was the purpose of the persecution, for it was designed to eradicate the Truth, but had the reverse effect in spreading it far and wide consistent with the Lord’s words in Matt. 10:23 – “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.”

V.5-25 – Philip was one who went further afield to preach and had an enormous impact in Samaria. V.12 has always been important in defining what the Gospel message contains – “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” Even the popular sorcerer Simon was ‘converted’ until he saw an opportunity to enhance his trade and was severely rebuked.

V.26-40 – All men come from three families – Shem, Ham and Japheth, and the preaching of the Gospel in Acts was to each of those families in that order – to the Jew first (Shem), then to the Ethiopian eunuch (Ham), and finally to Cornelius the Roman centurion and his house (Japheth). The eunuch, a proselyte, was returning home after a visit to Jerusalem when Philip was directed to join him in the way. The “eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure” was reading Isa. 53 sitting in his chariot as it rumbled southwards through the Negev. Philip approached and asked the question – “Understandest thou what thou readest?” to which the quizzical eunuch replied, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” and Philip obliged. After considerable instruction, and water being encountered, the eunuch requested baptism and “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” As a proselyte, the eunuch clearly understood the fundamentals of the Jewish religion, including the promise of Messiah and the Kingdom of God. He now understood and believed that other essential element of V.12 – “the name of Jesus Christ.” A descendant of Ham having been added to the Christ ‘body,’ Philip was snatched away to Ashdod some 25 miles (40 kms) away.

## APPENDIX 1

### EXPOSITIONAL NOTES ON “A SWEET SAVOUR”

The phrase “sweet savour”<sup>1</sup> first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where the two words *nîychôach* *rêyach* appear together. This first occurrence in Gen. 8:21 of the two words used together provides, in the context, the key to its meaning.

#### The meaning of the words

“sweet” – *nîychôach* – Strong # H5207 – From H5117; properly restful, that is, pleasant; *abstractly* delight. This word occurs 43 times in the O.T. In forty-two of those it is found in tandem with *rêyach* (only once does it stand alone – Lev. 26:31, where it is rendered “sweet odours”).

“savour” – *rêyach* – Strong #7381– From H7306; odor (as if blown). BDB – scent, fragrance, aroma, odour. There are 58 occurrences of this word in the O.T., 42 of those in tandem with *nîychôach*.

#### No rest for the Creator

The Antediluvian apostasy had grieved the Creator “at his heart” (Gen. 6:6), because “every imagination of the thoughts of his (i.e. man’s) heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). These two verses see the first use of the word “heart” (*leb* – 598 occs.) in the O.T. The next two occurrences are in Gen. 8:21 (another obvious link). Yahweh had no rest and there was no pleasant savour for Him as He wrestled with almost universal wickedness (Gen. 6:3 – “my spirit shall not always strive with man”). This is the lot of the parents of a disobedient child – Prov. 17:21,25 – there is no rest and no sweetness.

A literal translation of these words would be “a fragrance of rest”, i.e. a pleasant period of rest from contention. When men walk in harmony with Yahweh, He has rest from frustration and anger – “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day (Ps. 7:11), hence, “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). Yahweh preserved Noah and his family from the judgements that fell in the Flood.

#### The reason why burnt offerings produced “a sweet savour”

Gen. 8:20 – “And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered **burnt offerings** on the altar.”

The next three occurrences of the phrase “a sweet savour” occur in Ex. 29:18,25,41 in relation to the consecration of the Aaronic priests and the institution of the continual burnt offering. All involve burnt offerings.

The next three occurrences are in Lev. 1:9,13,17 in relation to the offering of burnt offerings. Beyond that, the next three occurrences are in Lev. 2:2,9,12 in relation to the meal offering that had always to accompany a burnt offering. This requirement is important in understanding the full extent of what is really meant by the phrase “a sweet savour”.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural quotations made in this document are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated. The UK English spelling of the KJV is also employed in this document.



Burnt offerings spoke of the desire to dedicate oneself to God. Accordingly, there was a precise order by which the offering was wholly consumed by fire, and some exclusions. The head of the offering was always first on the altar. Yahweh wanted the intellect (the mind = mental powers) of the offeror first; then the fat around the vital organs (the inner man = moral sentiments); followed finally by the inwards and legs (the active parts = physical actions or works) – Lev. 1:8-9. The skin fell to the attending priest (Lev. 7:8). It was not burnt on the altar, Yahweh thus indicating He was not interested in the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7).

There are another 10 occurrences of the phrase “a sweet savour” in Leviticus, all identified with burnt offerings. Four are in relation to burning the fat of the offerings on the altar, and four to the burning of the meal offering. This has particular significance for what follows.

### **Numbers 15 – An appeal to the generation that would enter the Land**

Numbers 14 records the condemnation of all over the age of 20 to perish in the wilderness in the ensuing 38 years, except for Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14:22-24; 32:11-12). True to the character of Yahweh, He extends to the younger generation an invitation to endure the next 38 years with faith and patience and to enter the Land of Promise. Then He makes an appeal (“speak unto the children of Israel” – Num. 15:2), to do what their fathers did not do – i.e. give Him “a fragrance of rest.”

The phrase “a sweet savour” occurs six times in Numbers 15 – Vv.3,7,10,13,14,24. Verses 1-16 constitute the first section of the chapter. This is an appeal (“speak” V.2, not command as is often the case in the Law).

**V.2** – “When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you.” This is a promise that Yahweh would fulfil His promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:13-16). Some would finally enter the Land promised to Abraham (Heb. 4:6).

### **Voluntary offerings sought**

**V.3** – “And will make an offering by fire unto the LORD” – These are specified as burnt and peace offerings (vow and freewill). Both required a meal and a drink offering to be offered in conjunction with them.

### **A compulsory requirement for meal and drink offerings**

**V.4** – “Then shall he that offereth...” – If one chose to make offerings indicating a desire to dedicate oneself (burnt), or to make commitments (vow and freewill – peace), then they had to also make an attendant meal (flour) and drink (wine) offering. This was compulsory. Why?

### **A fundamental requirement of service**

When an offeror made a burnt or a peace offering under the Law, all that was required was to select an unblemished animal from herd or flock and take it to the priest at the place of sacrifice. He may be required to place his hand on the head of the offering to identify with it, but the priest did the rest. Not a great deal of effort on the offeror's part was required. However, bringing along a meal and drink offering was quite a different story.

To produce fine flour takes many months of labour. There is ploughing (in cold wet weather); patient maintenance as the crop grows; harvesting in the heat of summer; threshing; winnowing; grinding; sifting, and preparation of the meal offering from fine flour.

Similarly, to produce wine takes many months, and a lot of work. What was Yahweh teaching here?

The obvious lesson was that good intentions and a desire to commit to Him were not enough of themselves. Yahweh wants ongoing dedication in the form of labours and ministration to others, works of faith and commitment to produce fruit. This is consistent with many Scriptural declarations and appeals:

- James 1:22 – “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”
- John 15:1-2 – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”
- 1 Cor. 15:10 – “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”
- 1 Tim. 5:10 – Concerning widows – “Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”
- 2 Pet. 3:11 – “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (manner of life) and godliness.”
- Rev. 22:12 – “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Numbers 15:13-16 reveal the breadth of this requirement. Not only were Israelites to keep this ordinance, but also “strangers” (i.e. Gentiles) who attached themselves to Israel as “sojourners” (a word used 3 times in this bracket of verses). That is exactly our spiritual position if we are in Christ. The principle applies equally to us.

The meal and drink offerings of old are matched by the bread and wine of the table of remembrance in our experience. In baptism, we identified with the sacrifice of Christ, the fulfillment of all the altar sacrifices. Our responsibility is to daily take up the cross sharing his sacrifice – Luke 9:23 – “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

Hence, the Apostle counselled the Corinthian believers – “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28). In so doing, we indicate that we understand the implications of our commitment in baptism and intend to follow through with works of faith and labours of love after our Lord’s example.

### **The necessity of surrender**

None of the above was likely to happen without willing surrender to God’s requirements. Hence, the next section of Numbers 15 (Vv.17-21) introduces the heave offering that was to be made from the same fine flour as their meal offering. A heave offering is exactly what the word suggests. It was lifted up towards heaven with two hands to be surrendered to Yahweh (see Lam. 3:41 – “Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens”). Heave offerings were sometimes associated with a wave offering which was waved in the hands of the priest. This was to draw God’s attention to the offering (so to speak). It spoke of consecration.

### Laws about sins of ignorance and blasphemous sin

Numbers 15:22-31 deal with the treatment and offerings to be made for sins of ignorance. These are based on, and find their source in the stipulations of verses 1 to 16.

Num. 15:24 – “Then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a **burnt offering**, for a **sweet savour** unto the LORD, with his **meal offering**, and his **drink offering**, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.”

Note that the bullock offered is a “burnt offering.” One feature of a burnt offering is that it also “made atonement” (Lev. 1:4), as well as indicating the desire to dedicate oneself. These two aspects made it “a sweet savour” unto Yahweh. And, as required, both a meal and a drink offering accompanied it. Additionally, a kid of the goats as a sin offering pointed forward to Christ. Gentiles were to do precisely the same as Israelites (V.29), pointing to us.

However, where presumptuous sins were committed despising and reviling the word of God (V.30-31), there was no sacrifice.

Num. 15:30-31 – “But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.”

“reproacheth” – Strong #H1442 – *gâdaph* – A primitive root; to hack (with words), that is, revile.

“despised” – Strong #H959 - *bâzâh* - A primitive root; to disesteem.

This is equivalent to the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit – Matt. 12:31-32. It is a sin against the Spirit which both spoke the word of God through Moses to Israel, and verified in the production of manna six days a week, except for the Sabbath, the very day deliberately and rebelliously chosen by the man found gathering sticks.

### The man found gathering sticks on the Sabbath

Numbers 15:32-36 is introduced to illustrate the principles of the preceding laws.

It is fascinating that only two incidents are recorded of the entire 38 years of aimless wandering by Israel in the wilderness in the record between Num. 14 and 20. This incident, and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (designed to find a captain to lead them back to Egypt). Set side by side, they appear to be somewhat incomparable. Surely the sin of gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath cannot compare with the massive rebellion of Num. 16? However, the sin of this lone man was just as egregious, for he was a microcosm of the entire generation who had just been condemned to perish in the wilderness. He represented all those who despised the promise of rest in the Land (Ps. 95:8-11). The Sabbath pointed to the Millennial rest of the Kingdom – the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and his seed. To despise and revile this is to reject God’s offer of salvation which is what the condemned generation had done. This one rebellious man became a representative of the older condemned generation, but also of the company of Korah who spurned the Land of God’s promise to Abraham and sought to return to Egypt.

### Fringes on the borders of garments

At first it may appear that the way Numbers 15 concludes may have little relationship to what has gone before, but this is not the case. Verses 37-41 confirm the primary theme of this chapter. It is an appeal to willingly surrender to the will of God, and to walk consistently within the bounds of His laws on the journey to the Promised Land.

Num. 15:38 – “**Speak** unto the children of Israel, and **bid** them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue.”

“Speak”, not “command” indicates that Yahweh is seeking willingness to submit and not the motivation of fear, duress or compulsion. This is emphasized by the word “bid” which suggests the same thing.

The focus is normally on the ribband of blue, but it is actually an accessory. It is the “fringe” that is important as careful reading reveals.

“fringe” – Strong #6734 - *tsîytsith* - fringe, tassel, lock. This word occurs only 4 times in the O.T. – three here and in Ezek. 8:3 (“lock”). It is in the feminine form in the Hebrew.

This word is cognate with *tsîyts* (Strong #6731) which first occurs in Ex. 28:36 of the “plate” of pure gold on the high priest’s ‘holy crown’ on which was inscribed “Holiness to Yahweh.” The same word occurs again of that crown in Ex. 39:30; Lev. 8:9 (there are 15 occs. in the O.T.). It is in the masculine form in the Hebrew.

It is not difficult to see the relationship to Christ (our High Priest) and ourselves (his ‘body’ and future bride wandering in the wilderness of life) walking towards the Land of Promise. Our walk must be governed by his mind (Phil. 2:5), and our feet kept within the bounds of his commandments (John 14:15,21; 15:10).

This is why the focus was on the fringe. The ribband of blue used to tie the golden plate to the high priest’s mitre spoke of the binding influence of heaven, but the fringe represented the commandments of Yahweh to His people (Num. 15:39-40). It is evident that the Lord had something similar on his garment during his ministry – Matt. 9:20; 14:26.

### **The appeal to us to produce “a sweet savour”**

Having made the appeal to the Ephesians to “put off the old man” and by a change of attitude “put on the new man,” a creation of God (Eph. 4:22-24), the Apostle alludes to the principles behind “a sweet savour” in Eph. 5:2. One commentator says, “Christ hath loved us, and given himself for an offering and a sacrifice to God for a Sweet-Smelling Savour;” where the words *οσμην ευωδιας* of the apostle are the very words used by the Septuagint in this place (Clarke).

We are called upon to imitate (V.1 – “followers” – *mimetes* – imitators) our God as was His son who willingly gave himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour and followed through to the death of the cross. He understood the meaning of always making a meal (bread) and drink (wine) offering with burnt and peace offerings brought together in the one great sacrifice that embraced all that was taught by the six altar offerings.

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

Author: Jim Cowie – 23 April 2024

## APPENDIX 2

### PROVERBS 30 – “The burden of the gatherer”

Vv.1-6 The burden of the Gatherer

Vv.7-10 Two essential requests

Vv.11-14 Four wicked generations

Vv.15-17 Four insatiable things

Vv.18-20 Four untraceable things

Vv.21-23 Four intolerable situations

Vv.24-28 Four creatures little but wise

Vv.29-31 Four which excel in motion

Vv.32-33 Warning against self-justification

- ❖ The Book of Proverbs has 8 parts – the words of Agur form the 6<sup>th</sup> part (6 is the number of man).
- ❖ The authorship of Solomon is concealed by a pseudonym in order that its content might be representative of all men who have harvested wisdom from the experiences of life.
- ❖ The name Agur means “gatherer” from the root *agar* – to harvest.
- ❖ Jakeh means “obedience”. Youngs Literal – “Words of a gatherer, son of an obedient one”.

**Ithiel** means “El is with me” (Ges.). **Ucal** means “I shall prevail” (Oxford). This spells out the lesson Solomon as a “harvesting warrior” had learnt in his struggle against human nature – If “El is with me”, “I shall prevail”.

V.2 – “brutish” – *ba’ar* – like a beast; brutishness, stupidity.

Agur knew by experience – all men, from great (*ish*) to lowly (*adam*), are like beasts (Ecc. 3:18).

### HOLY ONES KNOWN – V.3

Ygs. Lit. – “Nor have I learned wisdom, Yet the knowledge of Holy Ones I know.”

The Creator and His son are the “holy ones”! – Int. Bible – “...surely you know.”

### Principles

The spiritually wise know they are beasts – only fools believe that man is inherently wise.

The greater God becomes in our estimation, the more wretched our natural state appears.

### EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE – V.5-6

V.5 - “Every word of God (*Eloah* – the mighty one) is pure (*tsaraph* – to fuse metal; refine).”  
Interlinear Bible – “tested”.

“shield” – *magen* - a small shield or buckler. Needs to be deployed effectively by user.

“put their trust in him” – Int. Bible – “to seekers of refuge in him”.

V.6 – “Add thou not unto his words” – man automatically seeks to justify himself.

Roth. – “lest he convict thee and thou be found false”.

### REQUEST FOR TWO ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS BEFORE DEATH – V.7-9

V.8 – Truthful simplicity and integrity, and freedom from hypocrisy. These are essentially the same.

### THE STRUCTURE OF PROVERBS 30:11-31

There are 6 groups of 4 things (with Acrostic structure) to the end of the chapter.

The characteristics of the **4 generations** listed in vv.11-14 are expanded in the groups that follow:

**V.11** – Disobedience – amplified by the examples of insatiability - **vv.15-17**

**V.12** – Hypocrisy – amplified by the hunters of **vv.18-20**

**V.13** – Pride – amplified by the intolerable oddities of **vv.21-23**

**V.14** – Oppression – amplified by the relentless warriors of **vv.29-31**

All except the foundation group (vv.11-14) and group 5 (vv.24-28) begin with, “There be three things....yea four...”. This Hebraism signifies sufficient and more than enough (see Amos 1).

### **THINGS THAT ARE NEVER SATISFIED – V.15-17**

Horseleach – a blood sucker (takes ‘life’) – 2 daughters with the same name! “Give, Give”.

1. The grave – mortality never says “sufficiency”.
2. Barrenness is never content.
3. The earth – the source of mankind is never done (earth + water = clay).
4. Fire consumes – symbol of judgement. There is a never-ending supply for it.

All these relate to Adamic nature! Hence...V.17 – Disobedience leads to judgement.

### **THE INSIDIOUS WAY OF HYPOCRISY – V.18-20**

“too wonderful” – *pala* – to separate; distinguish. The sense is, “things hidden”, i.e. too hard to fully understand.

1. “The way of an eagle in the air” - A silent hunter whose path is untraceable, but there is always a victim.
2. “The way of a serpent upon a rock” - Not a comfortable hunting ground, but a necessary environment for seeking prey – the path of the hunt however is untraceable!
3. “The way of a ship in the midst of the sea” - The way of a trading ship, or a pirate ship, on the sea is untraceable, but there are always victims.
4. “The way of a man (*geber* – warrior) with a maid” - The soldier with the defenseless maid can do as he pleases – he leaves a tragic victim, but moves on and is untraceable.

V.20 – “**Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.**”

### **THE EARTH DISQUIETED BY PRIDE – V.21-23**

V.21 – “disquieted” – *ragaz* – to quiver. Int. Bible – “quakes” (V.13 – “O how lofty are their eyes!”).

“it cannot bear” – Int. Bible – “it is not able to bear up under”.

1. A slave exalted to become king. The leap is too great for human nature to cope with.
2. “fool” – *nabal* – stupid; wicked – but well fed (see Ecc. 2:19).
3. “an odious woman” – *sane* – hateful (e.g. Prov. 21:19). Int. Bible – “hated one”.
4. A handmaid who becomes heir to her mistress – cp. Hagar – Gen. 16:4.

### **THE RELENTLESS OPPRESSORS – V.29-31**

V.29 – “comely in going” – Int. Bible – “that go well in a march” – for warfare and destruction.

1. A lion “strongest” (*gibbor*) turns not away “from facing all” (Int. Bible).
2. “A greyhound” – Roth. (mgn.) “war-horse”. Horse = war – Job 39:19-22; Rev. 19:11.
3. “he goat” – *tayish* – to butt or buck. Aggressive, revengeful and unforgiving.
4. An invincible king – see Christ’s parable - Luke 14:31-33.

### **FOUR CREATURES LITTLE BUT WISE – V.24-28**

The fifth (Grace) group of four (vv.24-28) is distinct (there is no “three things, yea four, just “four” the Scriptural number for righteousness and God manifestation). Theme – wisdom seen in action.

V.25 – Ants reveal wisdom by diligence – They never waste opportunities to serve others.

V.26 – Conies reveal wisdom by humility – They have no confidence in their own strength.

V.27 – Locusts reveal wisdom by obedience – They know the value of holding with their own.

V.28 – Gecko (taken in the hand) reveals wisdom by dependence on a safe environment.

All these creatures are conscious of their weakness and vulnerability and act wisely because of it (see vv.1-3). They are all seekers of refuge (v.5).

### **THE DANGER OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION – V.32-33**

Silence is the only option when confronted by the pure and tested words of God – Vv.5-6.

## APPENDIX 3

### Summary of the purpose of the Book of Ecclesiastes

The book opens with the forthright challenge to all who live – **“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”**.

It would seem from this statement that there is not much more to say, and that the only possible reason for our short existence is to keep a population on planet Earth! But, Solomon, armed with all the necessary qualifications for the task, proceeds to logically set forward a very grand purpose in the established order of things, and by looking at every viewpoint available to him, was able to provide an accurate answer to the timeless question – “What is the purpose of life?” In the early section of chapter 1 Solomon clearly emphasises the fact that mankind is only part of a complete system subject to seemingly endless, repetitive cycles, and that even the elements follow the same pattern. After establishing this fundamental fact of life, Solomon begins his search. He exposes the lack of satisfaction that comes from all of man's diverse adventure.

Central to his discoveries is the unavoidable reality that our life is governed by a whole range of "times and seasons" over which man has no control. If we try and fight against this reality, we will only bring sorrow and frustration upon ourselves. He then turns to reflect upon the main reason for frustration and unhappiness – **Selfishness!!**

We are shown that selfishness often destroys the very things we are trying to achieve. The conclusion is then, that man is unqualified to direct his destiny, and we must look beyond human wisdom to find the answer to the question posed above. Solomon states without hesitation that the answer lies with God, and it is our responsibility to search for Him and to listen to His advice. It is then time in his deliberations for an important warning - **Don't ever think that riches and power will bring happiness - it is normally the reverse!!**

Many people waste their whole life storing up for the future in a materialistic way, and never live to “enjoy it”, as the saying goes. Don't waste the best years of your life gathering up for a time that may never eventuate! To put it simply – **Enjoy what God has given to you – now!!**

Even understanding this, the real issues of life are not always easy to see, or to accept, and most of life's real priorities are often the opposite to what we first expect. Solomon then gives us one of the most important rules for making life easier – **Learn to submit to authority!!**

If we look carefully around us, our own experience will show us that the “righteous and the wicked” experience “vanity” of human existence, so therefore our happiness and fulfilment is not related to length of days, or to the number of possessions we have. Death will eventually claim us all, so if there is any purpose in life, it must lie beyond the grave! The only answer then, to make life complete, is to accept God's wisdom, knowing that this will cause us to be rejected by the majority of mankind. Knowing the situation we will find



ourselves in, Solomon gives us some simple, yet powerful advice, about things that are not easy to see. Above all else – **Be a faithful optimist at all times!!**

Without God in our life, we are incomplete, unsatisfied, frustrated, and search for things which we can never hold.

**Solomon's conclusion** – The best years of our life are without doubt the years of our youth, so don't waste them on fleeting pleasures. Use the wisdom of God to make your youth a time of joy and happiness, recognise the vanity and decay of the years to come and set your sights on the Age when we will be forever young!

## SUMMARY OF ECCLESIASTES

Perusal of writings on the Book of Ecclesiastes shows various ways of dividing and summarizing the essential arguments. The following table sets out in general terms the principal issues addressed in the Book.

**Objective** - "What profit hath a man of all his labour?"

Section	Ecclesiastes	Theme
1(a)	1:1-11	Title and Purpose
(b)	1:12-2:26	The Author and his experiences
2	3:1-22	The natural limits of man's world - The framework of time
3	4:1-16 5:1-20	Looking Objectively (a) Lessons from life (b) Living with God
4	6:1 - 7:29	What to avoid and what to follow
5	8:1 - 9:2	The test for one who beholds the sun
6	9:3-10	Attitudes determine destiny
7	9:11 - 11:6 11:7 - 12:14	The superiority of wisdom over folly (a) Observations of wisdom and folly (b) Wisdom fears God

## APPENDIX 4

### 153 GREAT FISH

**John 21:11** – "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken."

This is the 8th Sign of John's Gospel. 8 is the number of a new beginning and immortality in Scripture. There are three nets in the NT:

1. **Luke 5:6** – "And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake." This is the first phase. The gospel is preached in the sea of nations (Isa. 9:1 – "Galilee of the nations"), but many escape the net as it breaks under the weight of the catch.
2. **Matt. 13:47-50** – "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." This is the second phase – the Judgement Seat of Christ.
3. **John 21:11** – "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." This is the third and final phase. The granting of immortality to the faithful of all ages who are embraced in the Abrahamic Covenant.

This is all prefigured in Jacob's greatest act of faith (Heb. 11:21) in Gen. 48. In the context of the allegory here where the natural firstborn Manasseh ("causing to forget" – Jer. 2:32 – Israel after the flesh) is superseded by the younger, Ephraim ("double fruit") representing spiritual Israel consisting of Jew and Gentile on the basis of an Abrahamic faith (Gen. 48:19; Cp. Gen. 17:4-8). The words of Jacob in Gen. 48:16 are the foundation of the 153 great fish of John 21:11.

Gen 48:16 The Angel<sup>4397</sup> which redeemed<sup>1350</sup> me from all<sup>4480, 3605</sup> evil,<sup>7451</sup> bless<sup>1288</sup> (853) the lads;<sup>5288</sup> and let my name<sup>8034</sup> be named<sup>7121</sup> on them, and the name<sup>8034</sup> of my fathers<sup>1</sup> Abraham<sup>85</sup> and Isaac;<sup>3327</sup> and let them grow<sup>1711</sup> into a multitude<sup>7230</sup> in the midst<sup>7430</sup> of the earth.<sup>776</sup>

Note the word "grow" here is *dagah* in Hebrew. See Strong's Concordance meaning below and note the root from which it comes.

#### H1711

דָּגָה

dâgâh

daw-gaw'

A primitive root; to move rapidly; used only as a denominative from H1709; to spawn, that is, become numerous: - grow.

The root of *dagah* is *dag* (see below). Both words infer the activity (especially the breeding activity) of fish. Hence, the Oxford KJV margin for Gen. 48:16 is quite accurate when it says for the phrase "grow into a multitude" – Heb. "as fishes do increase".

## H1709

דָּג דָּג

dāg dā'g

dawg, dawg

From H1711; a fish (as *prolific*); or perhaps rather from H1672 (as *timid*); but still better from H1672 (in the sense of *squirming*, that is, moving by the vibratory action of the tail); a *fish* (often used collectively): - fish.

The word for "multitude" in Gen. 48:16 is *rob* (see Strong's below).

## H7230

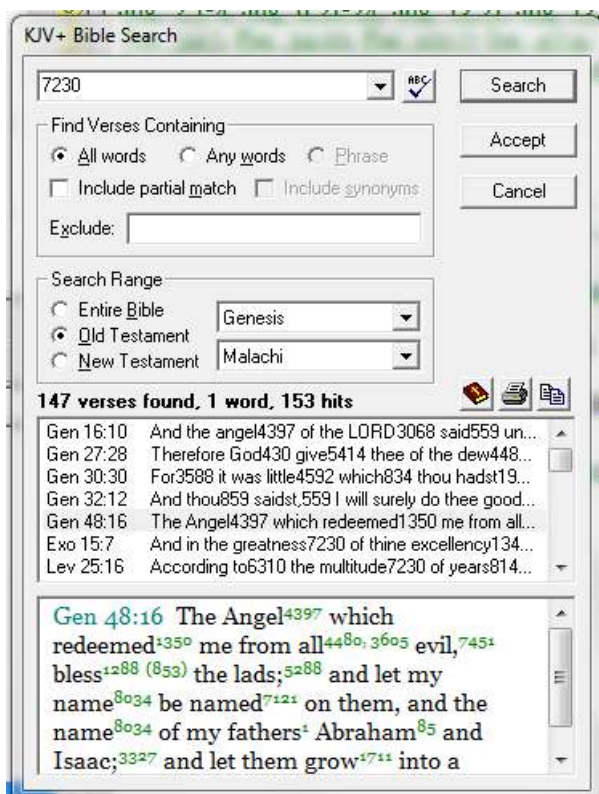
רֹב

ròb

robe

From H7231; *abundance* (in any respect): - abundance (-antly), all, X common [sort], excellent, great (-ly, -ness, number), huge, be increased, long, many, more in number, most, much, multitude, plenty (-ifully), X very [age].

This Hebrew word *rob* just happens to occur 153 times in the Old Testament (see e-Sword search on Strong's number 7230 - *rob*). This is probably not accidental given the context!



It is therefore no surprise that the phrase in the Hebrew “the sons of God” – *beni ha-eloheim* – has a numerical value of 153; or that the NT phrase “heirs of God” in Greek has a numerical value of 1,071 = 7 x 153 (7 = covenant, in particular the Abrahamic Covenant). Nor is it therefore surprising that 153 is a particularly significant number in the Divinely designed science of mathematics. To a Hebrew the number 17 is very important. It is of course, 7 plus 10. 7 speaks of completion (a full cycle), inter-alia, while 10 stands for all.

Therefore, when 17 is used it speaks of absolute completion (that is, you need no more emphasis on completion). There are a number of clear Scriptural examples of the importance of 17 in the Divine scheme of things, namely e.g., Gal. 5:19-21 where Paul enumerates the works of the flesh; and Rom. 8:35-39 where he lists the things that should not separate us from the love of God. Again in Heb. 12:18-24 when the inspired writer (who I believe was Paul) set out the contrast between the Mosaic Covenant and the new or Abrahamic Covenant, he lists 7 things in relation to the Mosaic delivered at Sinai and 10 things that demonstrate the superiority of the Abrahamic Covenant (see Heb. 11:9,16 and compare Heb. 12:22-23).

Why then this focus on the importance of 17? Because, when you add the numerals 1 to 17 together (1 plus 2, plus 3, etc. down to 17) you arrive at the aggregate number 153. How could Yahweh give any clearer demonstration that the work He would accomplish in His son through the Abrahamic Covenant would culminate in a numerous company of glorified saints like the stars of heaven for multitude and consisting of both Jew and Gentile?

One final word on this matter. 17 is the seventh Prime Number (that is a number which can only be divided by itself). 7 = covenant, completion of the cycle, and it is the Spirit number as well (Eureka Vol. 3 pg. 206 - Logos Edition). The sixth prime number is 13 = rebellion (Gen. 14:4; Nimrod - "we will rebel" the 13th generation from Adam, etc.), and 11 is the 5th Prime Number (11 = failure and inadequacy which is met by Divine grace to produce a multitude of great fishes from the sea of nations for the glory of God). 7 is the 4th Prime Number (4 = righteousness and God manifestation). There is more, but that is sufficient for the time being.

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