

## COMMENTS ON THE DAILY READINGS

### November 1

#### 2 Chronicles 30

V.1 – “Hezekiah sent to **all Israel** and **Judah**, and wrote letters also to **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**, that they should come to the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto Yahweh God of Israel” – The northern kingdom of Israel was only 6 years away from going into captivity under the hand of the Assyrians. It is said there were less than 30,000 people left in the nation (based on Sargon’s inscription claiming he took 27,290 captives). Hezekiah knew the situation well and made a special effort to involve anyone that was willing to come to the delayed Passover. The temple was not adequately cleansed until 16th Abib, and the priests were not prepared.

V.2-4 – Provision for a second Passover was made because of the immolation of Nadab and Abihu on the very first day of the operation of the Mosaic system (Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 9:7-11). They were buried by relatives on the 8th day of Abib (Lev. 10:4), and those men were unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11,14,16; 31:19), so could not keep the Passover on the 14th. Some of the priests in Hezekiah’s time were spiritually ‘dead’ due to Ahaz’s apostasy and forsaking of the temple (2 Chron. 29:34; 30:3,15). There was therefore a fitness to the Passover being delayed to the 14th day of the second month.

V.5-11 – “So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, **from Beersheba even to Dan**, that they should come to keep the passover” – The oft-repeated phrase “from Dan to Beersheba” is reversed here and occurs for the final time. It tells a story. “Dan” means ‘judgement’ and “Beersheba” means ‘the well of the oath’ memorializing the conversion of Abimelech in Gen. 21. Sadly for Israel in the north, the apostasy established in Dan (Judges 18) employing the grandson of Moses, and then Jeroboam’s similar apostasy (1 Kings 12) had now reached its denouement. From entry into the Land through the Abrahamic promises under Joshua (Yah’s salvation) to judgement is the sad outcome of apostasy. The invitation to come down to Jerusalem was a final opportunity for redemption.

“So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah” – Hezekiah’s heartfelt appeal is quite direct. He recounted the long history of apostasy and made an appeal for repentance and reformation. As the messengers visited every inhabited city they were mostly laughed to scorn, but a few from “Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.”

V.12-16 – It was different in Judah for “there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation” – The enthusiasm was so great that it initiated a purge of “the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.” The remnants of Ahaz’s pervasive apostasy were removed.

V.17-18 – “there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified” – We now learn that “many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Yahweh pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God.” So, it is evident that many more had changed their minds from their original reaction to Hezekiah’s invitation. And “Yahweh hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.” They kept “the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness.” The

Levites taught and sacrifices and confessions were made, and so fulsome was the spirit of the people that they readily “kept other seven days with gladness.” The “strangers” from the north were fully involved and “there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.”

## Daniel 10

V.1 – “In the **third year** of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel” – This needs to be reconciled with Dan. 1:21 where we read, “Daniel continued even unto the **first year** of king Cyrus.” Cyrus was king of the Medo-Persian Empire and after conquering Babylon placed Darius the Mede on the throne in Babylon while he continued his campaigns westward. After two years, he returned and took up the throne (confirmed by the Septuagint translation: “In the *first* year of Cyrus”). The first year of his sole reign was BC 536 when the decree of Cyrus was issued. It was also the year of Daniel’s death which is why there is a graphic portrayal granted to Daniel of his approaching death, then his ultimate resurrection and glorification, a fitting denouement for such an outstandingly faithful servant of Yahweh. That his name should be advanced by God in such testimonies as Ezek. 14:14 – “Though these three men, Noah, **Daniel**, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord Yahweh,” (repeated V.20), and in an ironical way in Ezek. 28:3 – “Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee?” reveals his standing while he was still living. It is unsurprising therefore that at his resurrection the angel will immediately say to him “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved” (V.11). Few proved more worthy.

A thing was revealed to Daniel and “faithful was the matter, but concerned **a great warfare**” (Rotherham). The prophecy of seventy weeks (9:24-27) had turned Daniel’s mind from the short term prospects of his people (return from captivity) that had caused him to look closely at Jer. 25 to a much longer time period. A long and great warfare would be involved, and this is the subject matter of chapters 11 and 12. The last words of chapter 12 are “thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” and that is the content of this chapter.

V.2-4 – “I Daniel was mourning three full weeks” – Daniel was deeply concerned about the future of his people and earnestly sought more information on what God intended for them. He fasted for three weeks while God was actively at work through His angel to secure the Decree of Cyrus. This was not an easy task as is indicated in V.13 as the intervention of Michael the archangel was required. It seems Cyrus was not as inclined to issue the decree as might first be thought due to the influence of the “liars” and “diviners” among his courtiers (Isa. 44:25). 2 Chron. 36:22 implies as much – “Yahweh **stirred up the spirit** of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing.” This doubtless included Daniel making known to Cyrus the prophecies concerning him (Isa. 44:24-28; 45:1-5), but it also required three weeks of hard work by angels to manipulate circumstances and achieve the outcome.

V.5-6 – “a certain one” (Young’s) – The two words are *echad ish*. The margin renders the phrase: “one man” or, more literally, “the man of one,” described by Bro. Thomas as “the man of the One Eternal Spirit” (Eureka Vol. 1, pg. 168). It was a symbolic representation of the Multitudinous Christ, the saints in glory (Rev. 1:13-16). This was an implicit promise to Daniel that he would be a member of that glorious multitude. The “linen” (righteousness – Rev. 19:8); “fine gold of Uphaz” (tried faith – 1 Pet. 1:7); a body like “beryl” and “his face as the appearance of lightning” and “his eyes as lamps of fire” (the saints work as judges – Ezek. 1:14,16; Zech. 9:14; Rev. 1:14; 11:19); feet like “polished brass” (immortality – Rev.

1:15); and “the voice of a multitude” (an immortal army – Ezek. 1:24) are all features of the glorified Christ ‘body’ that Daniel will be part of “at the end of the days.”

V.7-21 – “I Daniel alone saw the vision” – The vision of the glorified multitudinous Christ was exclusively for Daniel and for his people (not natural Israel), those “found written in the book” (12:1). He passes through a typical death, resurrection, judgement and glorification as illustrated at right. To be “in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground” is to be in a figurative state of death, but then a hand touched him and set him on hands a knees. To “stand upright” is to have been raised from the dead. The word “resurrection” in the N.T. is *anastasis* – to stand up from the dead.

**Daniel's typical death, resurrection and glorification**  
**Daniel's death – Dan. 10:8-9**  
**3 stages of Daniel's resurrection**  
**1. Reformed and given life, but is enfeebled – Dan. 10:10-11,15**  
**2. Strengthened and stands up for judgement – Dan. 10:16-17**  
**3. Accepted and immortalised – “strong” – Dan. 10:18-19; 12:13**

However, there is a hint here of the state of those raised from the dead to appear before the Judgement Seat. They are enfeebled – “I stood trembling” (V.11), and “I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.” This will be necessary to keep the multitudes who will be raised only to be rejected from causing any trouble in the process of judgement. Imagine the trouble men like Esau would make if they had all their strength! When the time comes for interview and appearance before Christ, like Daniel speech will be granted for the purpose – an angel “touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake.”

The final stage is a figurative change of nature – “O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.” We will never be stronger than when the change of nature comes, and then we will have the privilege of undertaking work like that that the angel now set out on himself – “now will I return **to fight with the prince of Persia** (see above – BC 536): and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia (BC 334) shall come” (200 years apart). Only immortals can do that kind of work.

## Acts 10

The story of the conversion of the centurion Cornelius and his household is well known. He was clearly an outstanding character and his prayers had “come up for a memorial before God” (V.4), so an angel was sent to direct him to Peter. It reveals an important fact that if someone is genuinely looking for truth, God will ensure it crosses their path. However, there is another important theme in this record, and that concerns Peter.

The prevalence of the number **three** in Acts 10 and 11 is too prominent to ignore. Beginning with Cornelius's vision at the **9th** hour (V.3,30), and Peter's in the **6th** hour (V.9) which was done “**thrice**” (V.16); “**three** men” arrive from Caesarea (V.19; 11:11) and Peter then took “**six** brethren” with him to Caesarea (Acts 11:12). In referring to Christ there he says, “Him God raised up the **third** day.” Why this emphasis on three?

Peter's whole life as a disciple was framed by **three**. There were **3 calls**; firstly as a disciple – John 1:42; then as a companion – Matt. 4:19-20; and finally as an Apostle – Mark 3:14-16; Luke 6:13-14. There were **3 confessions** by Peter – Matt. 14:24-33; 16:13-20; John 6:66-69. There were **3 denials** recorded **3 times** – Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-22. There were **3 declarations** of love – John 21:15-19. These were matched by **3 stages** of development in Peter's life – (1) Training; i.e. discipleship; (2) Leadership – Acts 2:14; 3:12; Gal. 2:9; (3) Shepherding of the flock – John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 5:2.

Three is the Biblical number for fruit, results and outcomes – see Gen. 1:11-12 where “**fruit**” occurs **three times** for the outcomes of the **third day** of Creation. The fruit comes from seeds producing fruit after their own kind. This is why Peter wrote – 1 Pet. 1:23 – “Being born again, not of corruptible **seed**, but of incorruptible, by **the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever” – see context V.22-25 and 2 Pet. 1:3-8 where incremental character development comes by the power of the Word. Only the Word of God can make the huge changes that took place in Peter’s life, and that was now the prospect for Cornelius. The dramatic changes that overtook the entire household of Cornelius were effected by the power of the Word of God supported by the evidence of the resurrection of Christ.

V.1-8 – “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band” – This was a cohort of the Roman legions with a serious reputation, and this centurion was a remarkable character – “A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” In a vision of an angel he was directed to Peter in Joppa because as the angel said, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God,” i.e. he had no covenant relationship with God, but possessed the necessary requirements for one.

V.9-33 – Peter’s threefold vision of a great sheet of unclean animals which he was invited to eat was designed to remove his Jewish aversion to have any dealings with Gentiles (John 4:9). The timing was perfect because as he was ruminating on the meaning of the vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrived at the door. Peter went with them next day to Caesarea.

V.34-43 – Peter’s use of the two keys of the Kingdom mentioned in the comments for April 26 (page 55) dominate Peter’s speech. The keys of the Kingdom are “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet. 1:11). The sufferings of Christ (“whom they slew and hanged on a tree”) culminated in, “God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly.” It is obvious what is recorded here is a slim version of the actual speech.

V.44-48 – Any lingering doubt in the mind of Peter and the six brethren with him about the inclusion of Gentiles in the purpose of God was instantly removed when “while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word.” This was before they were baptized! Little wonder “they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter,” for “they heard them speak with tongues” like Peter and the apostles had done in Acts 2 (the previous time the ‘keys’ had been used). The amazement of Peter and his companions is understandable. The challenge for Peter now was to convince his Jewish brethren in Jerusalem as chapter 11 reveals – “they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.” That would be a challenge.

## November 2

### 2 Chronicles 31

V.1 – One of the signs of the success of a reformation is the cleaning up of the detritus of former ways of life. This is what happened in the wake of the rededication of the Temple and the keeping of the Passover – “**all Israel** that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces.” So thorough was their campaign that they carried it into “Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all.” Some had come from these parts (30:18), and many unsuspecting of imminent events returned home to the northern kingdom, though some wisely stayed behind in Judah (V.6). Six years later the Assyrians took all that remained alive in Israel into captivity.

V.2-21 – Hezekiah set about completing the restoration of temple services and its ministers who were marshalled in accordance with the courses David had established (1 Chron. 24 and 25). The interesting phrase “to praise in the gates of the tents of Yahweh” (V.2) may hint at the camp like structure of the temple compound and its surrounds at this time as temporary accommodation and storage were erected, “for the thing was done suddenly” (2 Chron. 29:36). Certainly, storage had to be found for the massive quantities of “the offerings and the tithes” that were given by the people (V.4-11).

The chapter concludes with an assessment of Hezekiah that is an exhortation to all the servants of God in every era – “in **every work** that he began **in the service of the house of God** (the ecclesia – 1 Tim. 3:15), and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, **he did it with all his heart**, and prospered.”

## Daniel 11

V.1 – “Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him” – The angel reflects on the work of the last two years mentioned at the end of chapter 10. Much lay ahead for this angel and his companions being managed by Michael.

V.2-4 – These verses describe the transition from the Medo-Persian Empire to the Grecian Empire and its break up into four parts after the death of Alexander the Great. “Behold (spoken in the third year of Cyrus, B.C. 536) there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” **Fulfilment** – After Cyrus, there reigned three Persian emperors, Cambyses, Smerdis and Darius. Then came XERXES, notorious in history as the richest of all the Persian monarchs, the leading event of whose reign was the fitting out of an immense naval and military expedition against Greece. This was the beginning of a war which lasted through several Persian reigns, and ended in Persian overthrow.

V.3 – “And a mighty king shall stand up that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.” **Fulfilment** – On the Greek side, there rose up Alexander the Great, who trampled down the power of Persia and established an immense empire (reaching as far as India) which he ruled with despotic authority.

V.4 – “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken and shall be divided towards the four winds of heaven **not to his posterity**, nor according to his dominion which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up even for others besides those.” **Fulfilment** – When Alexander had finished the conquest of India and returned to Babylon, he came to a premature end at a feast; and **his empire**, after a regency of 13 years, was partitioned among his four generals – Ptolemy Soter, Seleucus, Lysimachus and Cassander—none of whom were family relations of Alexander (“not to his posterity”). Of these, Ptolemy Soter became King of Egypt, or “King of the South,” in relation to Palestine at that time; and Seleucus King of Syria, or “King of the North.”

Then from verses 5 to 35 the history of conflict between the ‘king of the south’ and the ‘king of the north’ between BC 323 and 133 when the Romans inherited Pergamum is prophesied. This produced the development of ‘the little horn of the goat’ – Dan. 8:8-10. The detailed and complex prophecy of the unfolding history of conflict between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms is well expounded in the paraphrase of this chapter by Bro. Thomas found in **Appendix 1** pgs. 106-110.

V.36-39 – Any attempt at correctly interpreting V.40 depends on identifying who the “him” of that verse refers to. Bro. Thomas deals with the “king” of this bracket of verses in chapter 18

of the Exposition of Daniel – “The second section of the revelator’s discourse, which commences at the thirty sixth verse and ends at the thirty-ninth inclusive, is a more amplified description of the Little Horn power than that previously given in the eighth chapter.” Again in Elpis Israel pg. 400 he says – “...the Little Horn of the Goat, and in the thirty-sixth verse, styled ‘THE KING.’” A key to interpretation is this statement by Bro. Thomas that the “him” of V.40 is the occupier of Constantinople (Istanbul today) at any given time – “It matters not whether they be Pagan Romans, Catholic Greeks, Moslem Turks, or Greek-Catholic Russians, the power that rules in Constantinople and plants its standard in Assyria, is the Little Horn of the Assyro-Macedonian Horn of the Goat” (Elpis Israel pg. 392). When Russia takes control of Constantinople as required by V.40, it will see a restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church to its original home. So how did/will this come about?

Listen to Bro. Thomas in The Exposition of Daniel – “In studying the nature of the Little Horn power it must not be regarded as a purely civil and military, or as an ecclesiastical power *per se*. It is both; but in describing it two classes of administrators are personified, the one as ‘the king’ and the other, as a god of guardians whom his (pagan) predecessors knew not and therefore ‘a strange god’ (page 46).”

- “the king” refers to pagan Roman government in Constantinople.
- “god of guardians” refers to the Papacy supported by ‘Christianized’ eastern emperors.

“This ecclesiastical policy of the Constantinopolitan Autocracy is enlarged upon in the description of it set forth in the eleventh chapter, where it is more particularly regarded in its catholic constitution without taking into the account the division of the Babylonian superstition into Greek and Latin catholic churches” (pg. 46).

“As far as the Greeks were concerned, their sovereignty was abolished A.D. 1453. The Greek dynasty of the power gave place to the Turkish, while the horn itself remained” (pg. 47).

“The prophecy concerning ‘the King’ in the eighth chapter is evidently descriptive of the Latino-Greek power in its pagan constitution, known in history as the destroyer of Jerusalem, and Judah ‘the people of the holy ones;’ but with a hint also of its future ecclesiastical peculiarity, as appears from the testimony that ‘through his policy he shall cause falsehood to prosper by his power.’” (pg. 46).

V.40 – “And at the time of the end the **king of the south** push at **him**” – This proved to be the era of the First World War (1914-18) and in particular 1917, resulting in the Balfour Declaration and the freeing of Palestine from Turkish rule. Britain occupied Egypt from 1882 to 1954. As a foreign occupying power of Egypt, Britain used it as the base of operations against the Turks who ruled Palestine in 1917. The “him” is the king of V.36-39. Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire in AD 324 but was overtaken by the Turks in 1453.

It is important to recognize that whichever foreign power rules Egypt becomes “the king of the south” and that includes Christ. Bro. Thomas wrote in Exposition of Daniel pg. 60 – “This attack, then, upon the Ottoman regime of the kingdom of Babylon, by the King of Egypt, indicates the beginning of the Time of the End.” And again in Eureka Vol. 5 pg. 185 (Logos Edition) saying Christ also becomes “king of the south” – “My present conviction therefore, is, that the gathering together of the national armies against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2) is after the appearance of Christ in the South; that is, in Teman; where he begins his career as “THE KING OF THE SOUTH” (Dan. 11:40).”

“the **king of the north** shall come against **him** like a whirlwind” – When Russia takes control of the region from Syria to Pakistan (Indus River) required by Ezek. 38:5 (“Persia”), it becomes “king of the north” assuming control of the Seleucid kingdom. It will also then control the territory of ancient “Assyria.” A “whirlwind” indicates a rapid and overwhelming attack. The “him” is the same = the occupant of Constantinople = the Turks.

“with chariots, and with horsemen” – Indicates land based forces; while “with many ships” indicates naval forces from Russian Black Sea and two Syrian ports controlled today.

“he shall enter into the countries” – The invasion of Turkey involves the eventual invasion of other countries as well, including Egypt as the primary target (V.42-43), although countries east of the Jordan are bypassed. The phrase “and shall overflow and pass over” implies a continuing campaign to firstly overrun Turkey and then use it as a base for operations further to the south. However, “the king of the north” (Gog), drawn out of Egypt by the activity of Christ to the east and many nations to the north, will meet his end on the mountains of Israel at the hands of “the prince of princes” (Dan. 8:25).

Bro. Thomas aligns “the king of the north” with “Gog” in the Exposition of Daniel pg. 71 – “It is impossible that Nebuchadnezzar’s Image can represent any other imperial confederacy of nations than that under the King of the North in the time of the end. The names given in Ezekiel’s list of Gog’s army, are representative of the countries known to have existed under the dynastic rule of the gold, the silver, the brass and the iron.”

## Acts 11

V.2-3 – “Thou wentest in to men **uncircumcised**, and didst eat with them.” This objection to Peter entering the house of Cornelius sowed the seeds for the Jerusalem Conference about 6 years later – Acts 15:1-2. It underscored how deep Judaism was ingrained in many converts. Ultimately, it was this problem that led to the development of the apostasy that almost expunged the truth from the earth.

V.4-18 – Peter recounted the story of what happened in Joppa and Caesarea. The most convincing argument was that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the Gentiles before they were baptized. That surely was the Divine imprimatur on their acceptance.

V.19-30 – The vicious persecution that followed Stephen’s murder caused many to flee and some made Antioch in Syria their new home. Many Jews were converted and the Gospel then spread to the Gentiles. Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to support the work and he sought out Paul (still known as Saul) in Tarsus to assist him. This was the beginning of a companionship that lasted nearly a decade before it was broken by a dispute over John Mark (Acts 15:36-39).

## Acts 12

V.1-5 – Herod Agrippa I was a grandson of Herod the Great and the latter had cruelly killed Aristobulus his father. After the banishing of Archelaus and Herod Antipas to Gaul and Spain, Agrippa was granted their tetrarchies by Emperors Caligula and Claudius (AD 43) and became ruler of basically all that Herod the Great had ruled. He was very powerful as V.20 indicates. Being a Jew (with Edomite heritage) he was a meticulous observer of the Law, and was anxious for the good opinion of the Jews. Hence, the persecution that led to the killing of “James the brother of John” and the imprisonment of Peter (with 16 guards – “four quaternions”). It was Passover time (“Easter” – *pascha*). The ecclesia feeling helpless leaned on the power of prayer “without ceasing” – *ektenēs* – intently, earnestly, assiduously.

V.6-11 – The themes of the Passover dominate the events leading to the release of Peter from prison. Like Israel, Peter was bound in chains in a prison (Deut. 4:20); the angel of Yahweh who had brought the ninth plague of darkness on Egypt for three days appeared to Peter in the prison (Cp. Ex. 10:22-23 – “And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt **three days** [as there was for the Roman soldiers]: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for **three days**: but all **the children of Israel had light in their dwellings**” [as there was for Peter]. Christ had spent 3 days in the tomb from Passover to resurrection); The angel “smote Peter on the side, and **raised him up**, saying, **Arise** up quickly” as did Christ after 3 days and nights when the “chains” of mortality fell from him; “Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals” was the instruction given to Israel for the evening of the Passover – Ex. 12:11; “Cast thy garment about thee, and **follow me**” is redolent of the angel guiding Israel out of Egypt by the movement of the cloud in which he dwelt (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19,24; 19:9).

V.12-19 – The great lesson of the almost hilarious events at the house of John Mark where Rhoda (“rose”) failed to convince those inside continuing to pray for Peter’s release that their prayers had actually been answered. We need to have confidence in earnest prayer (James 5:15-18). Our prayers may not always be answered in the way we seek, but there will always be an answer for the faithful, even if that is ‘silence’ from heaven. In their incredulity, they suspected it was his “angel” (V.15). Did they mean a simple human messenger as the word can mean, or were they referring to the angel appointed to each ‘heir of salvation’ – Heb. 1:14? Whatever, that angel will soon say to Peter in the grave, “Arise up quickly” and his companions will come to collect us for the Judgement Seat. The 16 soldiers killed by Herod Agrippa for suspected treason will never see the light of day again (V.19).

V.20-23 – Herod’s pride and brutality finally brought him undone. Fearful of retribution, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon declared him a god when he spoke to them. He accepted the plaudits and was immediately struck by an angel with an infestation of worms. All through Scripture proud men are consumed by worms – Isa. 14:11; 66:24; Mark 9:44-49. Josephus records Herod Agrippa died after 5 days at age 54 (it was AD 44).

## November 3

### 2 Chronicles 32

V.1 – “After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah” – Not unlike the early reign of Asa, God allowed time for the consolidation of the reformation, but then the test of faith came. In 2 Kings 18 and 19, and Isa 36 and 37, there are two parallel accounts of this war in the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign which threatened the existence of the kingdom of Judah. The crisis revealed that for all the enthusiasm shown in the first year or two of his reign, there were some very different attitudes still in the nation.

V.2-8 – There is nothing wrong with preparing the defenses of the city, and they “stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?” but the attitude of some of those involved brought a rebuke from Yahweh through Isaiah (Isa. 22:8-11), for after digging Hezekiah’s tunnel, knocking down houses to use the stone to build a wall, and similar activities, Yahweh said, “but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.” This did not apply to Hezekiah himself, for the testimony of 2 Kings 18:5 is clear – “He trusted in Yahweh God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.”



The reformation had not run deep in many in Judah, for when in this crisis Yahweh made a “call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth;” what did He get? – “behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: **let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die**” (Isa. 22:12-13). As Isaiah said, that problem can only be cured by death! Hezekiah’s faith was revealed in his exhortation to his people to trust in God – “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him.” That was true, but not everyone believed it. Some made merry, and some like Shebna dug his own grave (Isa. 22:15-19). The lesson for our generation when the mantra “we are not here for a long time, so let’s make it a good time” is gaining traction, is to be ready when the same scenario will be played out again. We need to stay focused on the outcome when our Lord Jesus Christ will “be for a throne of glory to his father’s house” (Isa. 22:23).

V.9-19 – “Doth not Hezekiah persuade you” – Sennacherib’s attempt to undermine the peoples’ confidence in Hezekiah as a result of his reformation is understandable given that Ahaz his father had honoured the Assyrian king and adopted his worship, but when he compared Yahweh to the non-existent gods of the nations that he had destroyed, he sealed his own fate – “how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?” The chronicler expresses the folly of such an approach – “they spake of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men’s hands.” It was to cost Sennacherib not only the failure of his campaign, but his life at the hand of his own sons who clearly didn’t regard him as a god (V.20-23).

V.24-33 – “In those days Hezekiah was sick even unto death: and he prayed unto Yahweh; and he spake unto him, and gave him a sign” – The drama of this crisis is spelt out in greater detail in the companion accounts, but is included here to lead into the only real mistake that Hezekiah made, which itself is not detailed here. However, there is a very important lesson in the testimony that “God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” Pride was the stumblingblock for Hezekiah in the visit of the Babylonian emissaries, and it is usually the last stronghold of human nature we have to deal with in life (which is probably why it comes last in 1 John 2:15-16). Hezekiah’s manifesting of humility and acceptance of God’s judgements saw the chronicler focus primarily on his great achievements, for he “prospered in all his works.” There is no mention here of the fact that Hezekiah had not married and produced an heir to the throne prior to the Assyrian invasion, or of the 15 year extension of life granted to set that right. But one very important statement is made concerning his “goodness” (*chesed* = lovingkindness). We are called to manifest Yahweh’s character and He uses *chesed* of His “goodness” in Ex. 34:6 and “mercy” V.7.

## Daniel 12

V.1 – “And **at that time** shall Michael stand up” – The phrase “at that time” occurs twice in this verse and this determines the timing involved. Some assume that in view of the fact that chapter 11 ends with the invasion of the Land of Israel by “the king of the north” (clearly the same power as Gog of Ezek. 38), that this comes next in chronological order, but this cannot be so. The resurrected and glorified saints will be with Christ at the time of Gog’s destruction (Zech. 14:5; Mal. 4:1-3) and the second use of the phrase in this verse is about the reward granted to those who were “found written in the book” who have been subject to resurrection (V.2). The saints will have been raised a decade before Armageddon. This chapter concerns a different subject to chapter 11. It is about the reward awaiting faithful servants of God like Daniel. The “Michael” (“he who is like El”) of the piece is the Lord Jesus Christ who

assumed the role of Michael the archangel when he arrived in heaven. Like Michael he is charged with determining destinies (Ex. 23:20-23) and can forgive or condemn (John 5:21-29), hence V.2-3 (Rotherham) – “they who **make wise**, shall shine like the shining of the expanse,—and, they who **bring the many to righteousness**, like the stars to times age-abiding and beyond.” “The time of trouble such as never was” refers to the 10 year period between the resurrection of the responsible dead (and our removal to judgement) and Armageddon. The chaos and dislocation that will overtake the world in the absence of “light” (Isa. 60:2) will exceed anything witnessed since the Flood. It will be part of the judgements coming on the earth as the ‘monster’ created by Humanism and moral depravity is unleashed on mankind. Those rejected by Christ will be dismissed into this awful time.

V.4 – “shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: **many shall run to and fro**, and knowledge shall be increased” – The phrase “run to and fro” is one word *shut* and Gesenius says the word *shut* is used metaphorically to run through a book; i.e. to examine thoroughly. It implies that a fuller understanding of Daniel’s prophecies would come by diligent study at the time of the end with the value of hindsight. Bro. H.P. Mansfield wrote in the Daniel Expositor – “It is nevertheless true, also, that the Scriptures have been opened up to a greater extent than formerly; printed expositions and commentaries abound, and the passage of history has verified most prophetic details. Yet there is a lack of true understanding.” The above interpretation is confirmed by V.8-9.

V.5-7 – Daniel saw again the man clothed in linen (multitudinous Christ) from chapter 10:5-6 with a companion on either side of the Hiddekel (Tigris). The imagery of the vision seems to be picked up in Rev. 10:5-6. The time period involved in “a set time and times and a half, and, when the dispersion of a part of the holy people, is brought to an end, then shall come to an end all these things” (Rotherham) is 1,260 years (Dan. 7:25). The “holy people” in the context is a reference to Israel (Dan. 8:24). The end of dispersion for “a part” of them could be related to the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. That event signaled the beginning of the “end of all these things.” Unsurprisingly, Daniel did not understand.

V.8-13 – “the abomination that maketh desolate set up” – There have been three ‘abominations’ set up on the Temple mount. These were; (1) The Grecian under Antiochus Euphron; (2) The Roman – Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; and (3) The Muslim Dome of the Rock. It is evident the third is referenced here. The problem has always been determining a start date for the 1,290 and 1,335 year time periods involved. What can be said is that we are on or about the termination of the latter time period when the sanctuary will be cleansed. Daniel will soon stand in his “lot at the end of the days.”

## Acts 13

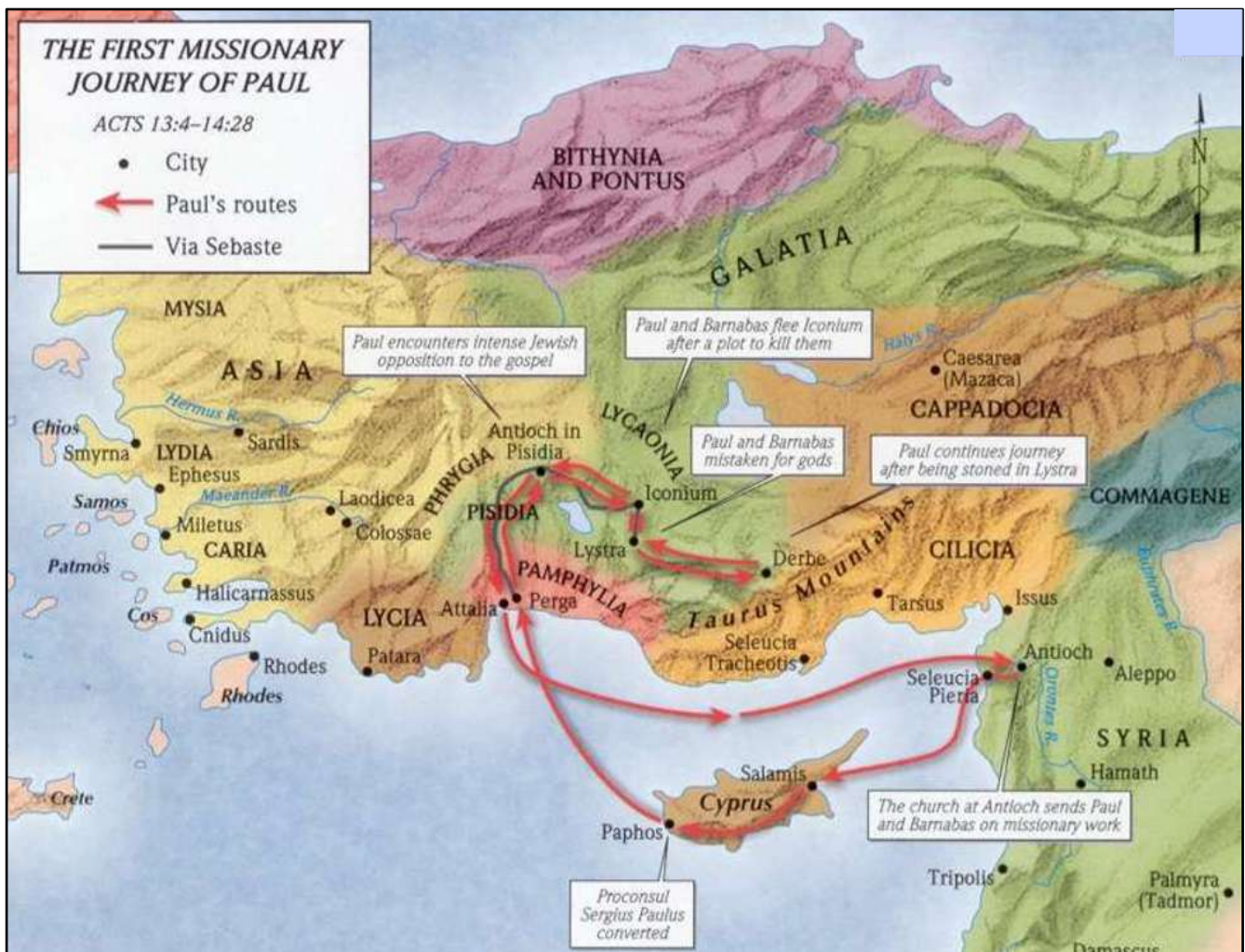
V.1-3 – The ecclesia in Antioch was prospering with many coming from different parts to share the work. These included “Manaen, which had been **brought up** with Herod (Antipas) the tetrarch.” The word *suntrophos* denotes one who is educated or nourished at the same time with another (perhaps a foster brother). It is not used elsewhere in the N.T. Heaven intervenes to call Barnabas and Saul for the upcoming missionary journeys.

V.7 – “deputy of the country” – *anthupatos* – a proconsul; the emperor Augustus divided the Roman provinces into senatorial and imperial. The former were governed by proconsuls; the later by legates of the emperor, sometimes called *propraetors* (Thayer Definition). The Proconsul Sergius Paulus was “a prudent man” (*sunetos* – intelligent, having understanding, wise, learned) and responded to the preaching of Saul and Barnabas when the false Jewish

prophet “Elymas the sorcerer” was blinded (V.8-12). This was an auspicious start to the campaign, but disappointment awaited the Apostle across the sea.

Perga was the capital of Pamphylia situated a few miles up the River Cestrus, which flows into the bay of Attalia. The lowlands near the coast were a swampy area that bred mosquitoes and malaria was a common disease. Paul probably contracted malaria here (Gal. 4:13 – “Ye know how through **infirmity of the flesh** I preached the gospel unto you at the first”) as he refers to the Galatians being willing to “pluck out your own eyes, and have given them to me” (Gal. 4:15 – malaria can affect the eyes in various ways). There is no record of preaching on arrival in Perga, only the departure of John Mark. Paul may have been too unwell to preach and Mark may have taken fright when he saw Paul’s condition. What is not in question is that Paul saw his premature departure as unwarranted (Acts 15:38-39).

The following map will assist to establish locations.



V.13 – “Now when **Paul** and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and **John** departing from them returned to Jerusalem.” A name change occurred in V.9 – “Then Saul, (who also is called Paul).” Saul means “desired” (Thayer) or “demanded” (Hitchcock), and Paul means “small, little.” Paul may have been small of stature (2 Cor. 10:10), but it is more likely he had made the name change due to his remorse over the past and its resultant humility (1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:7-8).

V.14-41 – “when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day” – Invited to speak, Paul delivered a lengthy address in which he covered the call of the Patriarchs and the deliverance from Egypt leading to the time of the Judges; the demand for a king and the ultimate accession of David. All this to introduce David’s promised son – “Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.” The balance of the address is about the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ; his death, resurrection and glory in fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers of Israel and to David. Doubtless reading the body language and whisperings in the Judaistic congregation of law-keeping Jews, he concluded with a warning and rebuke should they reject his words. There are some things needing comment along the way.

V.18 – In the margin for “suffered he their manners in the wilderness” we read “he fed them as a nurse beareth or feedeth her child” with reference to Deut. 1:31 – “Yahweh thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son.” This is also consistent with Yahweh’s title “El Shaddai” (a nourisher of the Abrahamic family – Gen. 17:1; 49:25-26), and Moses’ words in Num. 11:11-12 – “as a nursing father beareth the sucking child.”

V. 21 – On pages 23&24 of Chronikon Hebraikon (an appendix to Elpis Israel), Bro. Thomas under a heading “A reign of forty years impossible for Saul” says – “All the chronologies extant, as far as I am informed, assign 40 years to Saul’s reign. They are led into this egregious mistake by a misinterpretation of Acts 13:21,” and then proceeds to provide the Scriptural evidence. He postulates that Saul could not have reigned any longer than 13 years and 4 months and explains that the 40 years is from the 13th year of Eli. Careful study of the records of the life of Saul strongly suggest his reign was not 40 years.

V.33 – “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that **he hath raised up Jesus again**; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” – Is the citation from Ps. 2 about God raising His son from birth, or from the grave? Certainly, Paul had been labouring the point – “But God raised him from the dead” in the previous verses, but this is not the only time Paul cites Ps. 2:7. He does so in Heb. 1:5-6; and 5:5 where the context is clearly about begetting and being raised up from birth. It seems Paul is using Ps. 2 in the same way here, as the next verse begins, “And as to His having raised Him from among the dead” (Weymouth); i.e. a change of subject suggesting the former was about begetting, not resurrection.

V.42-52 – The outcome was mixed – “many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas,” but perhaps the most encouraging aspect was the response of the Gentiles who “besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.” However, this request stirred envy and anger among the Jews who “spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming,” causing Paul and Barnabas to claim (rightly) Isa. 49:6 to themselves and go to the Gentiles. A surge of persecution organized by recalcitrant Jews saw them expelled to Iconium.

## November 4

### 2 Chronicles 33

V.1 – “Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem” – 50 years of darkness fell on Judah upon the death of Hezekiah. Whether it was the influence of corrupt courtiers in the palace, or Manasseh despising his heritage and perhaps even his disfigured father who had passed through the fire to Molech in childhood (Isa. 52:14), we are not told. What we are told is that despite Manasseh’s genuine personal repentance and reformation in later life, it was his corruptions

that led to the demise of Judah and the kings who sat on David's throne – Jer. 15:4 – “And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, **because of Manasseh** the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.”

V.2-9 – “he did the thing that was wicked in the eyes of Yahweh, according to the abominable ways of the nations” (Rotherham). Manasseh restored the horrors of the Amorites whose iniquity was full when Israel conquered the Land (Gen. 15:16). There was a Babylonian astral flavour to Manasseh's idolatry that was to influence his punishment later. Every form of idolatry and corrupt imagery subtly blended with witchcraft completely blinded his people to the truth concerning their God, and anyone who stood in his way, or objected, was eliminated (2 Kings 21:16 – “Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin.” Ahaz had been Judah's worst king up to this point, but Manasseh exceeded him in callous wickedness. The pinnacle of his evil was in setting up “a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God” on which the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge comments – The Targumist says, “He set up an image, **the likeness of himself**, in the house of the sanctuary.” In the parallel passage it is, “a graven image of the grove,” or rather, Asherah or Astarte.

Manasseh's name means “causing to forget” and he made his people forget Yahweh (Jer. 2:32 – “my people have forgotten me days without number”). From this predicament they were not able to be saved despite Manasseh's repentance and Josiah's subsequent reformation.

V.10-20 – “the host of the king of **Assyria**, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to **Babylon**” – In the Divine allegory of Gen. 48, Manasseh represents natural Israel. Manasseh as king of Judah represented his nation. So, in the events of his captivity in Babylon there was a foreshadowing of what would happen later to his people. The intervention of providence is revealed in the curious fact that the Assyrians carried Manasseh to Babylon to imprison him. Assyria and Babylon rarely got on, but God made sure of it because there was a type involved. Judah would be carried into captivity to Babylon in less than 70 years in order to have idolatry purged from them. It is a fact of history that when the captives returned from Babylon in BC 536 the Jews never again worshipped idols of wood and stone (to be sure, the Jews have found other ‘idols’ to bow down to, but not the gods of Babylon). Manasseh was their forerunner. He was cured of idolatry by being taken to its home. Sometimes, it is only when men have to live under the grinding slavery of idols that they perceive the folly of them.

They “took Manasseh among the **thorns**” – The word *bachochim* may possibly here signify with fetters or chains, as the kindred word *chachim* denotes in Ezek. 19:4.

V.12-13 – “when he was in affliction, he **besought** Yahweh his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and **prayed** unto him: and he was intreated of him” – The repeated emphasis on Manasseh's prayer should be noted. See again in V.18 (“and his **prayer** unto his God”), and V.19 (“His **prayer** also, and how God was intreated of him”). There is a clear message in this. It would be difficult to imagine a more ‘unforgivable’ collection of sins than that committed by Manasseh, not to mention the disgrace brought upon the name of God, and the millions of people who will not be in the Kingdom because of him, although he himself may well be (if he maintained his reformed life). We must never underestimate the willingness of God to forgive where there is genuine repentance and the upholding of His righteousness. Accordingly, he was released and returned home as a remnant from Judah were under the Decree of Cyrus.

V.21-25 – Manasseh's successor, twenty two year old Amon set about restoring the idolatry that Manasseh tried to undo and dismantle. It is a curious thing that Amon would have been born when his father was 45. Nothing is said of any other earlier sons, or what may have happened to them. Perhaps earlier sons had been immolated to Molech (V.6; 2 Kings 21:6). Amon was assassinated by his own zealous servants who in turn were slain by the people who anointed another boy king to the throne of David, probably thinking they could manipulate him. How wrong they were.

## Hosea 1

Yahweh raised up three prophets in the northern kingdom of Israel before its demise in the 6th year of Hezekiah. They were Hosea, Jonah and Amos. All were seriously challenged by their call, but the experience of Hosea was among the most harrowing of all God's prophets. He was called upon to model Yahweh Himself in the matter of marriage and it brought as much heartbreak to him as it did to his God.

V.1 – Unbroken prosperity characterized the days of Jeroboam II and Uzziah king of Judah. That prosperity shows through in this book – “my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink” (Hos. 2:5,8,9; 4:11; etc.), and is one of the causes of apostasy.

Hosea's name means “deliverer” and his father's name “Beeri” means “my well” or “welling forth,” hence Yahweh sent a saviour to Israel who could provide them with a cure to their evils – the power of His Word (Jer. 2:13). It largely made no difference.

V.2-5 – “Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms” – From the days of Jeroboam and his golden calves in Bethel and Dan, Israel (Yahweh's wife) had committed adultery against Him. Now Hosea was to mimic his God by taking a harlot for a wife. This is what Yahweh had in fact done when He called Israel out of Egypt – Ezek. 23:3. For those who think this is unfair, or not what God would ask one of His servants to do, consider Christ's words in Matt. 10:24-25 – “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.” Hosea obeyed, and married “Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son” who was named “Jezreel” (“God sows”). This is curious because the rest of the verse goes on to speak of God destroying, not sowing. The savagery of Jehu in destroying the dynasty of Ahab would be avenged. Jehu was commended by God and given four generations on the throne for his thoroughness in disposing of Ahab's regime, but it was his relish for the task and his brutal and cold bloodthirstiness that was to be avenged, for that very same attitude prevailed after him in Israel – see V.5 – “I will break **the bow of Israel** in the valley of Jezreel” and compare Hos. 2:18.

V.6-11 – “she conceived again, and bare a daughter” – Sadly, she was not Hosea's child, nor was the next son born (V.8). We know this by two things. Hos. 2:4 is clear – “I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms,” and their names tell that truth. The name Loruhamah means “no mercy” and Loammi means “not my people” and much is made of the meaning of these names in the context. Hosea's generation would receive no mercy from their God as He would not count them as His people, but the future would be different when He finally recovers them in the latter days (the subject of much that follows) – V.10-11 – “Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves **one head** (namely, Christ), and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of **Jezreel**.” God will indeed sow Israel in the earth under the righteous rule of His “only begotten Son.”

The important adjunct to the restoration of Israel and Judah under Christ is the way the Gentiles are included by the Apostle Peter who cites this context in 1 Pet. 2:10 – “Which in



time past were **not a people**, but are now the people of God: which had **not obtained mercy**, but now have obtained mercy.” Similarly, Paul cites Hos. 2:23 in Rom. 9:24-26 for the same purpose. God has already sown (Jezreel) and Christ has included both Jew and Gentile in his bride, which is why Peter had just cited Ex. 19:5-6.

## Acts 14

V.1-7 – Success in converting both Jews and Gentiles at Iconium was attended by bitter persecution as the city was divided. Increasing persecution and riots made flight to Lystra and Derbe necessary.

V.8-18 – The healing of an impotent man (some think Timothy) at Lystra sparked a riot as Paul and Barnabas were declared to be gods – “they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.” The “priest of Jupiter” prepared sacrifices to worship them, and only by frantic appeals did they dissuade them. During the appeal, Paul made a statement worth noting – **“he left not himself without witness**, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” The Lord Jesus Christ had made a similar observation in the Discourse on the Mount – Matt. 5:35 – “he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Paul was to weave this same message into future epistles; e.g. Rom. 1:20 – “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse,” and 1 Tim. 2:1 – “I exhort therefore, that, **first of all**, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and **giving of thanks, be made for all men.**” One thing we can be sure about today is that few people in the world give thanks for the abundant blessings we have, and still largely enjoy in the lands where we live. If **we** do not thank God for His daily blessings showered upon us and those around us, who will?

V.19-23 – Typical of the fickleness of human emotions, Paul not long before having been declared a god was stoned by the same people on the arrival of extremist Jews from Antioch and Iconium (2 Cor. 11:25 – “once was I stoned”). Left for dead, his grief stricken companions marveled as Paul arose and dusted himself off and continued with the work (V.20), pressing on eastwards to Derbe, and then retracing his steps to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (the source of persecution) he set about confirming the believers and setting in order arrangements for the establishment of the ecclesias. Paul was not concerned for his own well-being, but rather the eternal well-being of his brethren – 1 Cor. 10:24,33; Phil. 2:4. It was typical of the Apostle that as he preached in these places following his near death experience he could say with unchallengeable genuineness – “that we must through much tribulation (*thlipsis* – pressure) enter into the kingdom of God.”

V.24-28 – Returning to Antioch in Syria after finally getting to preach in Perga, the report delivered to the sponsoring ecclesia was very positive, but Paul and Barnabas needed rest and recovery so “they abode long time with the disciples.”

## Acts 15

It is evident a couple of years passed before the major challenge to the truth that inspired the Jerusalem Conference came along. It arose from ingrained Judaistic converts visiting Antioch in Syria to peddle their new doctrine (V.1-2). It is thought the Jerusalem Conference was convened in circa AD 51. It was undoubtedly a crucial crossroad for the fledgling 1st century Brotherhood. The contributions of Paul, Barnabas and Peter had a moderating effect on the extremist sect within the community with strong Pharisaical heritage, but the issue was not

resolved until the intervention of James. His speech is a marvel of the use of Scripture to defend the truth and resolve complex situations.

V.1-3 – “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” – This huge issue arose from converted Jews who had not left behind elements of the Law of Moses and Jewish tradition. The determined opposition of Paul and Barnabas to the Judean brethren in Antioch gave rise to the call for a conference to resolve the dispute. On the way to Jerusalem the group from Antioch related to all they met the conversion of the Gentiles in many parts. It is significant that the term “Gentiles” occurs 7 times in the context – Acts 15:3,7,12,14,17,19,23. Seven is the covenant number, particularly the Abrahamic Covenant – “And in thy seed shall **all the nations** of the earth be blessed” – Gen. 22:18.

V.4 – “they declared all things that God had done with them” – The Antioch delegation continued to emphasize Gentile conversion without a demand for circumcision.

V.5-6 – “there rose up certain of sect of the **Pharisees**” – So called from *perishin*, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word, *perushim* meaning “separated”. This class was ultimately to lead the apostasy that corrupted the Truth in the late 1st century and during the 2nd century – Gal. 1:6-7; 2 Tim. 1:15. Their call was “to command them (the Gentile converts) to keep the law of Moses” which was an additional requirement to V.1. The gravity of the issues at stake necessitated a conference at the highest levels of the Brotherhood.

V.7-12 – The conference began with “much disputing” (*suzetesis* – mutual questioning, disputation, discussion) until “Peter rose up” as he perceived the need for personal testimony – “God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel.” Surely this would bring an end to the dispute, for God had clearly acted to include Gentiles by “giving them the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:44-45), a unique event in the conversion of Cornelius and his household. However, Peter’s testimony did not resolve the issue, but did bring silence allowing Paul and Barnabas to recount their experience among the Gentiles as well, supporting Peter’s testimony. The issue however was not resolved by personal testimony, and this teaches an important lesson. Personal testimonies may have their place in certain circumstances, but it is only sound exposition of God’s Word that resolves issues of this magnitude. That is what James provided.

V.13-18 – “And after they had held their peace James answered” – James the Lord’s half-brother was “a pillar” in the Jerusalem ecclesia (Gal. 2:9). He first summarized Peter’s testimony of events in Cornelius’s house, and added, “And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, **After this I will return.**” This is the first of two citations. This phrase is from Jer. 12:15 – a citation of genius. The context concerns Gentile nations around Israel (Jer. 12:14) who were judged by God for their treatment of Israel and Judah (V.15) – “after that I have plucked them out” – i.e. Yahweh would judge the nations who oppressed His people, but the time would come when “**I will return**, and have compassion on them.” Yahweh looked to the time when He would have compassion on Gentile nations. When might that be? Quite obviously, by the call of the Gospel they were now receiving through the work of the Apostles. Jer. 12:16 says, “if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to **swear by my name**, Yahweh liveth.” It is not difficult to see why James cites this passage – “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (V.14). Even the phrase “**built** in the midst of my people” in Jer. 12:16 is relevant to Acts 15:15 – “I will **build** again.” Prophecy was being fulfilled.

Next came Amos 9:11-12 – “and will build again **the tabernacle of David**, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the **Gentiles**, upon whom my name



is called (V.14 – “a people for His name”), saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.” The context of Amos 9 is remarkable and important. Amos 9:13 envisions the abundance and plenty of the Kingdom Age, while V.14 foresees the restoration of Israel through the mission of Elijah and their settlement in an abundant inheritance. V.15 prophesies the fulfilment of the primary promise made to David (2 Sam. 7:10), namely, Israel’s permanent inheritance. The context is clearly about the Kingdom Age, so its citation by James in the context of the ecclesia is curious. Why would James quote Amos 9:11-12 given this context?

The context of Amos 9 before the passage that James quoted provides the reason and addresses the issue at stake, namely **circumcision**. Look at V.7 where “Ethiopians” (*kushiy* – i.e. Cushites – Gen. 2:13; 10:8-10 = Babylonians) come into view. God is saying His people were like Babylonians to Him. God also brought “the Philistines from Caphtor.” At the same time Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt He was bringing Philistines from Crete to be their closest neighbours, as well as “the Syrians from Kir” as Israel’s next closest neighbour to the east.

The point Yahweh makes is that His people were behaving like the children of Nimrod through the adoption of Babylonian idolatry and practice. At the same time as Yahweh was fulfilling His promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:13-16) He was also bringing the Philistines and Syrians from afar to be Israel’s closest neighbours. He was suggesting He could have been more successful in the spiritual realm with uncircumcised Philistines and Syrians than He was with Abraham’s children, just as David had been in erecting his tabernacle to house the Ark for the purpose of including uncircumcised Gentiles into the Hope of Israel without the restrictions of the Law. Truly he could now add, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the age.” James’ conclusion seals the matter at issue. Yahweh had intended the inclusion of Gentiles from the beginning. When Yahweh made the promise to Abraham to bring Israel out of Egypt (Gen. 15:13-14) he was not circumcised (Rom. 4:10). The “Tabernacle of David” ended all debate about “uncircumcised” Gentiles needing to keep the Law for salvation.

V.19-31 – The decree of the Jerusalem Conference settled the matter as to whether the converted Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the Law. This outcome must be regarded as the most important event in the 1st century since the resurrection of Christ.

## November 5

### 2 Chronicles 34

A summary of Josiah’s life, reign and character was provided in comments for 2 Kings 22 on September 22 page 48. He was the most remarkable king in the history of the divided nation.

V.1 – “Josiah” – Heb. “Yahweh his foundation.” Josiah was one king who lived up to the meaning of his name as later years were to show. If Amon had named him he certainly did not have any control over the matter, for Josiah’s name had been predetermined by God 340 years before (1 Kings 13:2). Having Yahweh as his foundation amidst the apostasy of Judah was most necessary if he was to succeed in the task before him.

V.2 – “and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left” – Kings were required to copy out their own book of the Law (Pentateuch) when they came to the throne (Deut. 17:18-19), but no copy of the Law was found until temple repairs in Josiah’s 18th year when he was 26. Of no other king is it said that he “declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left,” only Josiah! There is irony in that. When he finally had a copy of the Law, he introduced a thorough reformation to destroy all remaining idolatry after the previous one in his 12th year, and held a Passover like no other in history for its exactitude in following the Law. Of him it could be written – 2 Kings 23:25 – “And **like unto him was there no king before him**,

that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; **neither after him arose there any like him.**" That is some epitaph when you consider the mountain of idolatry and apostasy that confronted him, having been told there was nothing he could do to prevent the judgements falling on Judah.

V.3 – "in the **eighth year of his reign**, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the **twelfth year** he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem" – Eight year old boys with a father like Amon do not start seeking God at age 16 unless they have been influenced by sound guides. Thankfully, Josiah had two very influential mentors. One was Hilkiah the high priest (almost certainly the father of Jeremiah the prophet). The other was Shaphan the scribe who had built a largely faithful family amidst general apostasy in Judah. They clearly had a positive influence on the boy king as Jehoiada had on Joash who became king at age 7. The difference between Josiah and Joash was that Josiah became 'Yahweh dependent' while Joash was 'Jehoiada dependent'. Once the book of the Law was found, there was no turning Josiah around as sadly happened with Joash.

V.4-7 – All overt idolatry was targeted in his 12th year (aged 20, BC 628) along with the desecration of its priests' and devotees' graves, and this campaign was extended into the territory of what was once the northern kingdom of Israel (in captivity since BC 722). What Josiah was not successful in achieving was cleansing idolatry from the hearts of his people, then and later through a much more thorough purge. This is testified in Jer. 3:10.

V.8-21 – Josiah, "in the eighteenth year of his reign" gave the command to "repair the house of Yahweh his God." It was a fateful decision because in the course of the repairs of the structure, the book of the Law was found. It was the practice to cement a scroll in one of the corners of the building as important documents are archived today. Copying out the Pentateuch was no easy task, and without means of printing (taken for granted today), there were not many copies available. Manasseh had made sure he got rid of any copies he knew about, and even they were scarce because of the desecrations of Ahaz before him. Orthodox commentators argue about whether it was the whole Law or just Deuteronomy that was found, but the case for the latter doesn't stand up under close scrutiny. The statement that "Hilkiah the priest found **a book of the law** of Yahweh given by Moses" seems conclusive. Some have quibbled that reading the whole book would have taken hours, but that is not what happened. Rotherham translates V.18 – "Shaphan, **read therein**, before the king." This does not require reading every word. Shaphan was a scribe. He knew what parts to read. Places like Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 would have been high on the list. The impact on Josiah was enormous. He sent a delegation to Huldah the prophetess.

V.22-33 – The delegation of faithful men sent to Huldah received what appeared to be a very impersonal message – "Tell ye the man that sent you to me," with a particularly personal outcome for Josiah. His reformation would be a failure; the judgements pronounced by Isaiah and Jeremiah (prophesying for 5 years) would come, and Josiah would be mercifully taken out of the way so that he would not see them. The way that he responded to this message was a revelation of his character. Many would say, 'well, what's the point? Whatever!' Josiah did the opposite. He gathered the people together and read the whole book of the Law that had been found, and then made a solemn covenant before God. The words "with all **his** heart, and with all **his** soul" should be noted. It was his covenant, and while he caused the people to stand to it, therein lay the problem. Josiah undertook another purge and "**made** all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve Yahweh their God." You cannot **make** anyone serve God. That is an individual choice, and we know it didn't work – Jer. 3:10 – "her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith Yahweh."

## Hosea 2

V.1 – “Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi (“a people as a congregated unit”); and to your sisters, Ruhamah” (“to love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate”) – The play on names continues, but now it is a multitude being addressed – note “brethren” and “sisters” (both plural). Now the ramifications for Israel arise from the personal experiences of Hosea.

V.2-13 – (LITV) “Strive! Strive with your mother, for she is not My wife, and I am not her husband.” Yahweh remonstrates with His people who repeatedly throughout their history committed spiritual adultery against Him. She was incorrigible, and judgements were coming. So, the names come into play – “I will not have **mercy** upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms” (implicit proof that the second and third children of Gomer were not Hosea’s). Yahweh had provided everything for Israel, but they attributed their blessings to the nations and false gods with whom they consorted. The time had come to remove all blessings.

V.14-23 – The prophecy sweeps on to the latter days and the mission of Elijah in the Second Exodus to redeem Israel and “turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26). Elijah’s mission is to bring scattered Israel “into the wilderness of the peoples” (Ezek. 20:35) after he has warned them pre-Armageddon (Mal. 4:5); lured them after Armageddon; and gathered them into Europe (the “wilderness” of Rev. 17:3), hence, “behold, I will lure her and bring her to the wilderness, and speak to her heart” (V.14).

Tragedy struck Israel under Joshua in “the valley of Achor” (Achan = troubler) on their way into the Land because of idolatry, but joy came when they finally defeated Ai and Bethel and made their way to Shechem to fulfil Deut. 11:29; 27:12, where they made a solemn covenant with their God. The same outcome awaits scattered Israel in the future, when after 40 years in “the wilderness of the peoples” they are brought into “the bond of the covenant” (Ezek. 20:37). The valley of Achor will again be “for a door of hope” as the redeemed nation consisting mainly of the younger generation make their way towards the Temple to meet their Messiah after the pattern of Joseph and his brethren.

V.16 – “it shall be at that day, saith Yahweh, that thou shalt call me Ishi (“my husband” LITV); and shalt call me no more Baali” (“my owner”) – The message of Elijah to scattered Israel will be very clear – Jer. 3:14 – “Turn, O backsliding children, saith Yahweh; **for I am married unto you**: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” Yahweh is still a husband to Israel. He gave her “a bill of divorce” (Jer. 3:8) to remove her from His ‘house’ until she repented of her adultery, but did not seek another wife. It will be a lengthy separation of over 2,750 years, but when repentance comes there will be restoration of the ‘marriage’ – “I will **betroth** thee unto me for ever; yea, I will **betroth** thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” and they will then be His “people” (*am*) again – “I will sow (Jezreel) her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had **not obtained mercy** (Loruhamah – 1:6); and I will say to them which were **not my people** (Loammi – 1:9), Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God” (fulfilling Gen. 17:7-8).

## Acts 16

V.1-5 – Paul’s second missionary journey (see map below) with Silas brought them to Derbe and Lystra where they delivered “the **decrees** for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem” that had arisen from the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:19-29). At Lystra, Paul seconded Timothy from a faithful family (2 Tim. 1:5) and circumcised him so that his Greek paternity would not be a hurdle with Jews along the

way. This was consistent with Paul's policy – "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews" (1 Cor. 9:20).

V.6-10 – After confirming the Galatian ecclesias, the Spirit guided them to Troas where Paul had a dramatic vision during the night – "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into **Macedonia**, and help us." This brought Paul's company to Macedonia with Luke the physician (V.10 – no longer "they" but "we").



V.11-15 – The conversion of the itinerant "seller of purple" Lydia from Thyatira and her companions brought into existence the ecclesia at Philippi which supported the Apostle throughout his difficult time in Macedonia and Greece (Phil. 4:14-16).

V.16-24 – Philippi being a Roman colony full of retired veterans of the legions was not a friendly place to religion. Superstition made money; religion brought persecution as the healing of the demented "slave girl" (ESV) demonstrated. The over-zealous magistrates cast Paul and Silas into prison because they were Jews without inquiring whether they were actually among the two-thirds of the Roman world who were slaves.

V.25-40 – Bleeding and in pain from a brutal whipping, Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise unto God until an earthquake opened the prison. About to commit suicide, the jailer interrupted by Paul did what all who can see judgement coming should do – "he called for a **light**, and **sprang in**, and came **trembling**, and **fell down**....and said, Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**" Care for the beaten, and careful listening to the Gospel message led to the conversion and baptism of his whole house (V.31-34). Meanwhile, the over-zealous magistrates had had a restless night (earthquake and all) wondering whether they had overstepped the mark. By-passing an embarrassing public trial, they sent a message to release Paul and Silas immediately. However, Paul was not going to miss the opportunity to

seek some respite from persecution for the fledgling Philippian Ecclesia. He asserted his freeborn status as a Roman citizen knowing the abuse they had received could have serious consequences for the magistrates, which they knew as well. Fearful, the magistrates attended the prison and gently appealed to Paul and Silas. However, Paul deliberately went to Lydia's house where the ecclesia met, for two reasons – to comfort and confirm them, and to make sure the authorities knew that any future persecution might have ramifications.

## Acts 17

V.1 – “when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews” – Fruit abounded to the Gospel message in Thessalonica, but not without much tribulation. Unlike Philippi with its predominantly Roman population, this city was a kaleidoscope of nationalities, and not the least of these was the strong Jewish contingent. Macedonians were tough nuts as Philip I and Alexander the Great had shown. Violence and bullying were common among them, and the shallow worship of Greek gods who were alleged to inhabit the 52 peaks of Mt Olympus visible off to the south west captivated them. It was not going to be easy once Paul and his companions were offside with the local Jews.

V.2-9 – After three Sabbaths preaching Jesus as Messiah in the synagogue, a measure of success was attained when “some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” But the intransigent Jews revolted and hired the lay-about bullies of the market place to harass them, and this led to a riot and the involvement of city leaders before whom these Jews repudiated their Messiah and king as their brethren in Jerusalem had done (John 19:15).

V.10-15 – There being no option but to move on, Paul and Silas came to Berea where they preached in the synagogue. “These were **more noble** than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word with all readiness of mind**, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so. **Therefore many of them believed.**” What an encouraging example this was to all successive generations. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21) remains as important today as it ever was. We must let the Word of God speak for itself and not do what so many do – impose upon it what they want it to say, or “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). But the extremist Jews from Thessalonica gave Paul no peace and arrived to disrupt his labours. While some of his companions conducted him to Athens for safety, Silas and Timotheus stayed in Berea for a time until he called them later to join him in Corinth (Acts 18:5).

V.16-21 – Paul was no stranger to Greek philosophy and idolatry, but he was deeply stirred by what he encountered in Athens – “his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” He disputed with Jews in the synagogue seemingly without much success, and daily in the Agora (market place) stirring the passions of legally minded philosophers of two diverse groups – the Epicureans and the Stoicks.

Barnes makes the following comment firstly about the **Epicureans** and then the Stoicks – “This sect of philosophers was so named from Epicurus, who lived about 300 years before Christ. They denied that the world was created by God, and that the gods exercised any care or providence over human affairs, and also the immortality of the soul. One of the distinguishing doctrines of Epicurus was that pleasure was the summum bonum, or chief good, and that virtue was to be practiced only as it contributed to pleasure. By pleasure, however, Epicurus did not mean sensual and groveling appetites and degraded vices, but rational pleasure, properly regulated and governed. But whatever his views were, it is certain that his followers

had embraced the doctrine that the pleasures of sense were to be practiced without restraint. Both in principle and practice, therefore, they devoted themselves to a life of gaiety and sensuality, and sought happiness only in indolence, effeminacy, and voluptuousness. Confident in the belief that the world was not under the administration of a God of justice, they gave themselves up to the indulgence of every passion the infidels of their time, and the exact example of the frivolous and fashionable multitudes of all times, that live without God, and that seek pleasure as their chief good.

And of the **Stoics** – This was a sect of philosophers, so named from the Greek *στοά* stoa, a porch or portico, because Zeno, the founder of the sect, held his school and taught in a porch, in the city of Athens. Zeno was born in the island of Cyprus, but the greater part of his life was spent at Athens in teaching philosophy. After having taught publicly 48 years, he died at the age of 96, that is, 264 years before Christ. The doctrines of the sect were, that the universe was created by God; that all things were fixed by Fate; that even God was under the dominion of fatal necessity; that the Fates were to be submitted to; that the passions and affections were to be suppressed and restrained; that happiness consisted in the insensibility of the soul to pain; and that a man should gain an absolute mastery over all the passions and affections of his nature. They were stern in their views of virtue, and, like the Pharisees, prided themselves on their own righteousness. They supposed that matter was eternal, and that God was either the animating principle or soul of the world, or that all things were a part of God. They fluctuated much in their views of a future state; some of them holding that the soul would exist only until the destruction of the universe, and others that it would finally be absorbed into the divine essence and become a part of God. It will be readily seen, therefore, with what pertinency Paul discoursed to them. The leading doctrines of both sects were met by him.”

If we were looking for counterparts in our time for the successors of the Epicureans it would be those imbued with Humanistic ideology. There are four pillars to Humanistic doctrine. They are; (1) Man is not natively depraved; (2) The end of life is life itself, the good life on earth instead of the beatific life after death; (3) Man is capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth; and (4) The first and essential condition of the good life on earth is the freeing of men’s minds from the ignorance and superstition, and their bodies from the arbitrary oppression of the constituted social authorities.

Both these sects felt sufficiently threatened by Paul’s teaching to take him up the Acropolis to the Areopagus (the Mars’ hill of V.22), the highest court in Athens.

V.22-34 – “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too **superstitious**” – Paul began by pointing to an altar bearing the “inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” which he had passed on the journey to the Areopagus. Using Gen. 14 as his source (“seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth” – Gen. 14:19,22) he declared the greatness of the God who “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” and “hath made of **one blood all nations** of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath **determined the times before appointed**, and **the bounds of their habitation**” an allusion to Deut. 32:8 which is an explanation of what happened when God confused the language of the builders of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Paul’s mind is dwelling on Melchizedek and the purpose of God surrounding him. It has been suggested that Paul was at a low spiritual ebb in Athens, citing local poets and frustrated by idolatry and philosophy. Nothing could be further from the truth. His address on Mars Hill is one of the finest in the N.T. as it brilliantly says more about O.T. testimonies than many others.



V.31 – “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which **he will judge the world in righteousness** by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath **raised him from the dead**” – This is one of the most ‘loaded’ verses in the N.T. The phrase “he will judge the world in righteousness” is cited from Ps. 9:8, an Armageddon psalm because it has in it the title “Most High” (*elyon* – V.2). This title of God first occurs in Gen. 14 where it is used of “Melchizedek priest of the Most High God” (*el elyon*) and wherever it occurs in both the O.T. or the N.T. (in its Greek equivalent form – *hupsistos*) the subject matter of that context is drawn from Gen. 14. The themes of righteousness, a throne of righteous judgement, and particularly of Armageddon (see V.3,19-20) permeate Ps. 9. Paul’s mind is here so he alludes to many verses in the psalm. Note V.6 – “their memorial is perished with them” (Acts 17:22-23); V.11 which is what he does in Acts 17:23-28; V.12 – “the cry of the humble” (Acts 17:16); V.16 – “the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands” (Acts 17:23,29); V.17 – “all the nations that forget God” (Acts 17:30). It is not hard to see where Paul’s mind was on that day. There is also clear reference to Melchizedek in V.31. The Melchizedek order has two vital characteristics; they are “righteousness” (moral); and immortality (physical – see Heb. 7:2,16). These are found in Paul’s concluding words cited above.

## November 6

### 2 Chronicles 35

V.1-19 – Josiah’s Passover went down in history as the greatest since Samuel – “And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept” (V.18). This was because of its strict adherence to the specifications of the Law, not because of the spirit of the people which was seriously flawed – Jer. 3:10.

In V.3 a curious command is given by Josiah to the priests – “Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now Yahweh your God, and his people Israel.” Some suggest that the Ark had been removed while repairs were made to the temple, but there may be another explanation. Adam Clarke makes the following observation – “It is likely that the priests had secured this (the Ark) when they found that the idolatrous kings were determined to destroy everything that might lead the people to the worship of the true God. And now, as all appears to be well established, the ark is ordered to be put into its own place.” Certainly, during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon the Ark would have been in great danger. The priests involved in its security were not able to fulfil their appointed role, but now could.

V.20-27 – (ESV) – “After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to meet him” – When Pharaoh Necho went to support weakening Assyria against the rising power of Babylon, Josiah perceived that Judah would likely become a vassal of Egypt (which they did). He had held his great Passover which celebrated Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It was incongruous to him that his nation should return to that servitude. God knew Josiah. He knew he could not resist going out against Necho and the result was his early death in the battle. This fulfilled the merciful promise of Yahweh through Huldah – “I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.” We may wonder about a 39 year old faithful and dedicated servant of God being taken so early in life, but Isa. 57:1-2 is helpful – “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that **the righteous is taken away from the evil to come**. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his

uprightness.” If the reward of eternal life is the next thing he will know, that is a just and welcome outcome for such a servant of Yahweh as Josiah.

V.25-26 – “all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah” – Jeremiah had lost a close friend and compatriot in the work. This lamentation is separate to his Lamentations over the destruction of Judah, but there is a pretty clear reference to Josiah in Lam. 4:20 (ESV) – “The breath of our nostrils, Yahweh’s anointed, was captured in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the nations.” As in the epitaph of Hezekiah, the same thing is said of Josiah – “and his goodness” (*chesed* – Ex. 34:6-7). To this can be added Jer. 22:15-16 – “did not thy father (Josiah) eat and drink, and **do judgment and justice**, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith Yahweh.” Josiah was a manifestation of the character of God in both its aspects (mercy and truth), and so must we be.

### Hosea 3

V.1 – “Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of Yahweh toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.” – Gomer, Hosea’s harlot wife modelled Israel, Yahweh’s wife, and just as He had set forth in chapter 2 that He would seek to redeem her in the latter days, so Hosea was now to do the same with his wife.

V.2 – “So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of **silver**” – Silver is the Biblical symbol for redemption. Fifteen is ‘the fruit of grace’ (3 = fruit and 5 = grace), and was half price for the purchase of a slave (Ex. 21:32). The homer and half-homer of barley were the allowance of food for a slave. Barley was the offering of one accused of adultery, and, being the food of animals, betokens that she was “like horse and mule which have no understanding.” It was an allowance, whereby he bought her back from her evil ‘freedom,’ not to live as his wife, but to be honestly maintained, until it should be fit, completely to restore her in the marriage. This is indicated in V.3 (Rotherham) – “Many days, shalt thou tarry for me, thou shalt not be unchaste, neither shalt thou become another man’s,—moreover also, I, will tarry for thee,” i.e. there would be no cohabitation. That would have to wait until she was proven loyal. This is exactly what Israel returning under Elijah will go through – 40 years of testing and proving while the rebels are purged out (Ezek. 20:37-38).

V.4 (ESV) – “For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods” – Israel’s long dispersion has seen them without these things, but their ‘Husband’ is waiting for them, and when ungodliness is turned away from Jacob will accept them again (V.5), but it will not be until “the latter days.”

### Acts 18

V.1-17 – Paul’s long and productive relationship with fellow tent makers Aquila and Priscilla began in Corinth after Claudius evicted all Jews from Rome. Paul spent 18 months in Corinth preaching, initially in the synagogue, but when stiff resistance forced change, he went next door. The eventual conversion of “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue” saw a dangerous situation arise necessitating Divine reassurance (V.9-10). The volcano of Jewish hatred finally erupted and Paul was dragged before Gallio the Proconsul of Achaia. He had no interest in religious disputes and dismissed the case with corporal punishment being dispensed to “Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue” which did the latter no harm.



When Paul later wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:1), he included in his opening greeting Sosthenes who had obviously been converted himself. Sometimes a hiding helps.

V.18-23 – Paul visited Ephesus briefly with Priscilla and Aquila leaving them there as he hastened to Jerusalem to keep a feast (probably the Passover). After returning to Antioch in Syria he began his third missionary journey from there (V.23) – see map below. Travelling through Galatia and Phrygia, he strengthened the ecclesias that had been formed during his first missionary journey.

V.24-28 – Meanwhile, “a certain Jew named **Apoll**os, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.” Knowing only the baptism of John, Aquila and Priscilla filled out his understanding and he became a powerful ally of Paul in the work – 1 Cor. 3:5-6; 4:6; Titus 3:13.



## Acts 19

Paul spent two years in Ephesus with extensive results all through Asia Minor as is testified in V.10 – “this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

V.2-10 – Paul’s first encounter was with 12 disciples of John the Baptist who having been informed of the need for baptism into Christ immediately obeyed and received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. After three months “disputing and persuading the things concerning the

kingdom of God” in the synagogue and finding stiff resistance from hardened Judaisers, Paul adjourned to “the school of one Tyrannus” where he preached for two years.

V.11-20 – “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul” – The scandal of the sons of a Jew named Sceva arose when certain “vagabond Jews, exorcists” sought to replicate Paul’s miracles and took upon themselves “to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus.” It didn’t work and they almost met a sticky end when one mentally unwell man said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” Incidents like this only increased the exposure of Paul’s labours and resulted in “the name of the Lord Jesus” being magnified. Many believed and confessed their conversion by burning huge quantities of pagan books – “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” Ephesus was being turned upside down like Thessalonica (Acts 17:6). It led to an unmanageable riot.

V.21-41 – Paul was already planning his next moves after two productive years in Ephesus when there “arose no small stir about that way” which culminated in the famous riot in the Amphitheatre in Ephesus. The “love of money is the root of all evil” and the local silversmiths led by Demetrius “which made silver shrines for Diana” had experienced a serious downturn in profits from their trade due to Paul’s success in converting many Ephesians. They fomented strife and ended up in the Amphitheatre (picture at right) with a multitude of pagan devotees shouting for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” after a Jew named Alexander tried to defend the



Jewish position. Initially, confusion reigned and many who went along with the crowd did not know what was going on. Paul saw this as an opportunity to preach, but his brethren and some wise leaders in the community with whom he enjoyed a strong relationship prevailed upon him to stay away. The town clerk finally appeased the people with the declaration that Diana remained the god of Ephesus and declaring there was no legal basis for the riot, and that the defendants were not temple robbers (“churches” in KJV) or blasphemers of Diana (her temple pictured at right).

## November 7

### 2 Chronicles 36

V.1-16 – The chronicler uses only 16 verses to deal with the last four kings of Judah. He notes that upon the death of Josiah the people appointed Jehoahaz as his successor although he was the second oldest. They bypassed Jehoiakim who was the firstborn because of his wretched character. When Pharaoh-Necho deposed Jehoahaz and carted him off to Egypt, he put Jehoiakim on the throne knowing he would ruthlessly exact the huge tribute placed upon Judah. The unscrupulous character of Jehoiakim is denounced in Jer. 22:13-15.

Nebuchadnezzar dealt with him 11 years later and within 3 and a half months returned to carry off Jehoiachin his son to Babylon (note V.9 says he was 8 years old – this should read 18 as in 2 Kings 24:8). Zedekiah, the third son of Josiah ruled miserably for 11 years and refused to respond humbly to Jeremiah's repeated warnings and offers of redemption. He even broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar after extending his hand to seal it (Ezek. 17:16-18). Yahweh sent messengers (prophets), "but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

V.17-21 – The time for judgement came in BC 587. After an 18 month siege, Nebuchadnezzar breached the walls of Jerusalem; burnt the temple and all the 'great houses' after slaughtering many of its inhabitants and carting off others into captivity. The vessels of the house of God, and anything else worthwhile was carried off to Babylon and Jerusalem left a smoking ruin. At last the Land could enjoy its sabbaths in accordance with Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 25:11-12).

V.22-23 – One encouraging note concludes the book. The Decree of Cyrus prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 44:26 to 45:6) was only 50 years away from the destruction of Jerusalem and the chronicler leaps to that time (to be considered in Ezra 1).

## Hosea 4

Having presented a glimpse of the future of Israel in the latter days when Yahweh will recover His 'wife,' the prophecy now turns to list the scandalous behaviour that characterized Israel's 'spiritual adultery' that led to their dispersion. It is not a pretty picture.

V.1 – "Yahweh hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no **truth** (*emeth*), nor **mercy** (*chesed*), nor **knowledge of God** in the land" – That the two principal words used of the character of God in Ex. 34:6-7 occur here in reference to the "knowledge of God" is significant. Knowing God is actually about manifesting His character (Jer. 22:16), and as Christ said in his prayer, "this is life eternal, that they might **know** thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." So it is not academic knowledge alone that is critical (although that is the source and foundation), but rather being motivated thereby to weave into our lives the character of God – "For it is God which worketh in you both to **will** and to **do** of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

V.2 – The antithesis of God's character was revealed "by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery" all of which were common practice in Israel due to the apostasy of Jeroboam, and later of Ahab and Jezebel.

V.3 – "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish" – Corrupt societies eventually collapse under the weight of their own wickedness, "for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth" (ESV for Rom. 1:18). We see around us today a civilization stumbling under the weight of its own corruption and foolishness.

V.4-11 – Priest and prophet were corrupt. That is because Jeroboam's priests were drawn from the whole range of the people according to who could pay the highest price to buy office. The Divinely prescribed role of the Aaronic priests and the Levites was to educate and instruct (Mal. 2:7 – "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth"), but Jeroboam's priests, and Ahab and Jezebel's prophets, were ignoramuses, hence, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (V.6). Not only were 'the blind leading the blind' (Matt. 15:14), but "they eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity;" i.e. the false priests made a gain of the sins of the people, lived



upon them and by them, conniving at and upholding the idolatries of the people, partaking in their idol-sacrifices and idolatrous rites – “Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart” (V.11).

V.12-19 – It is characteristic of false religions to practice immorality using ‘religion’ as a cloak. There have been many examples of that in the past. Paul warned of it in 2 Tim. 3:5-6 – “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.” However, in ancient pagan worship, fornication was openly practiced as part of the ‘services’, and it is this aspect that dominates the conclusion of this chapter – “they have committed whoredom continually,” so spiritual adultery was manifested by actual adultery and fornication which head every list of what emanates from human nature.

## Acts 20

V.1-6 – When the riot in Ephesus had been quelled, Paul escaped to Macedonia and visited the fledgling ecclesias there as he had planned (Acts 19:21). Then after 3 months in Greece (mostly in Corinth) it became too dangerous as extremist Jews were plotting to kill him. That imminent danger altered plans to take ship from Cenchrea to Syria. Paul with at least 8 companions decided to travel through Macedonia and take ship from Philippi to Troas after keeping the Passover with the ecclesia there. The record says seven brethren (mostly Gentile converts) preceded him and Paul sailed later with Luke who had been in Philippi for some time (V.5-6 – note the pronoun “we”).

V.7-12 – The resurrection of Eutychus gave real meaning to one of the longest memorial meetings of all time. After seven days in Troas and on the day before Paul’s departure, the ecclesia came together – V.7 – “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.” Given that Eutychus fell from a third floor window at midnight, and that Paul continued to speak “till break of day” (5 am there), and then departed, it may be that the meeting started at the end of the Sabbath at 6 pm when the Jewish “first day of the week” began. When the young man was revived and they had “broken bread” (partaking of the emblems) “they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.” Few memorial meetings have been attended by such excitement, relief and gratitude. The death and resurrection of Christ had been graphically portrayed in the remarkable events of that long night.

V.13-16 – Paul, keen on walking, went by foot from Troas to Assos (36 miles/58 kms) and took ship there to a number of ports, including Miletus. In a hurry to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost, Paul had decided to bypass Ephesus, but wanted to see the leaders of the ecclesia. He knew he would not see them again (V.25).

V.17-31 – Having reminded the elders of Ephesus of the effort and tribulations of three years of labour amongst them, Paul gave a parting exhortation of unparalleled significance typical of a ‘father’ who will not see his ‘family’ until the resurrection. In his absence, they had a solemn responsibility (Rotherham) V.28 – “Be taking heed unto yourselves, and unto all the little flock in which the Holy Spirit hath set you, as overseers,—to be shepherding the assembly of God which he hath acquired through means of **the blood of his own**” (namely, Christ). Then looking at their surprised countenances he warned of coming apostasy – “For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves** enter in among you, **not sparing the flock**. Also **of your own selves** shall men arise, speaking **perverse things** (*diastrepho* – to distort, i.e. to misinterpret. The root *strepho* means to twist), to draw away disciples after them” (V.29-30). Such is the perversity of human nature.

V.32-38 – In one sentence, Paul sums up the keys to finding an eternal inheritance in the day of account – “And now, brethren, I **commend** you to God, and to **the word of his grace**, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” Two things are absolutely critical – (1) A genuine personal relationship with God. The word “commend” is *paratithēmi* – to place alongside, beside or near; i.e. present. This is consistent with Rom. 5:1-2 – “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also **we have access by faith into this grace** wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (2) The power of “the Word of God’s grace which is able (*dunamai* – powerful) to **build**” us up (*epoikodomeō* – to build upon, build up) and to set us apart from the world. This is a threefold cord that is not easily broken – God, His Word and a receptive believer.

Finally, Paul advances his own selfless example after the pattern of Christ and concludes with words of the Lord Jesus Christ that are not recorded in any other place – “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Human nature does not naturally think that way, but practicing it proves its truth. Strong emotions attended the separation of the Apostle and the brethren of Ephesus, somewhat different to those that will be experienced at the Judgement Seat when Paul’s warning of apostasy will be seen to have come true – 2 Tim.1:15 – “This thou knowest, that **all they which are in Asia be turned away from me**; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”

## November 8

### Ezra 1

Ezra 1:1 – “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia” – i.e. the first year of his sole reign – BC 536; that “the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled” – Jeremiah prophesied Judah would serve Babylon 70 years – Jer. 25:11-12 – BC 609-539. There would be 70 year desolations for: (1) The people in captivity – Jer. 29:10 – BC 606-536; and (2) The Temple – 2 Chron. 36:19-21 – BC 586-516.

“Yahweh **stirred up** (*ur* – through the idea of opening the eyes; to awaken) the spirit (i.e. the attitude) of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing” – This was doubtless aided through Daniel enlightening Cyrus (cp. V.5). However, Dan. 10:13,20 indicates that this was not a pushover for the angels involved (“the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me”). This is how God works among the nations to achieve His purpose. Circumstances are manipulated; men are forced to choose a path that they might not have preferred.

V.2 – The Decree of Cyrus was foreshadowed in Isa. 44:26-28, so it was always going to happen. This physical document was to prove crucial in the rebuilding of the Temple. A lone copy was found at Ecbatana in Media – Ezra 6:2.

V.3 – “Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem” – Cyrus presented a challenge to ‘comfortable’ captives. Captivity can be comfortable (Jer. 29:4-7). Less than 50,000 responded to the call.

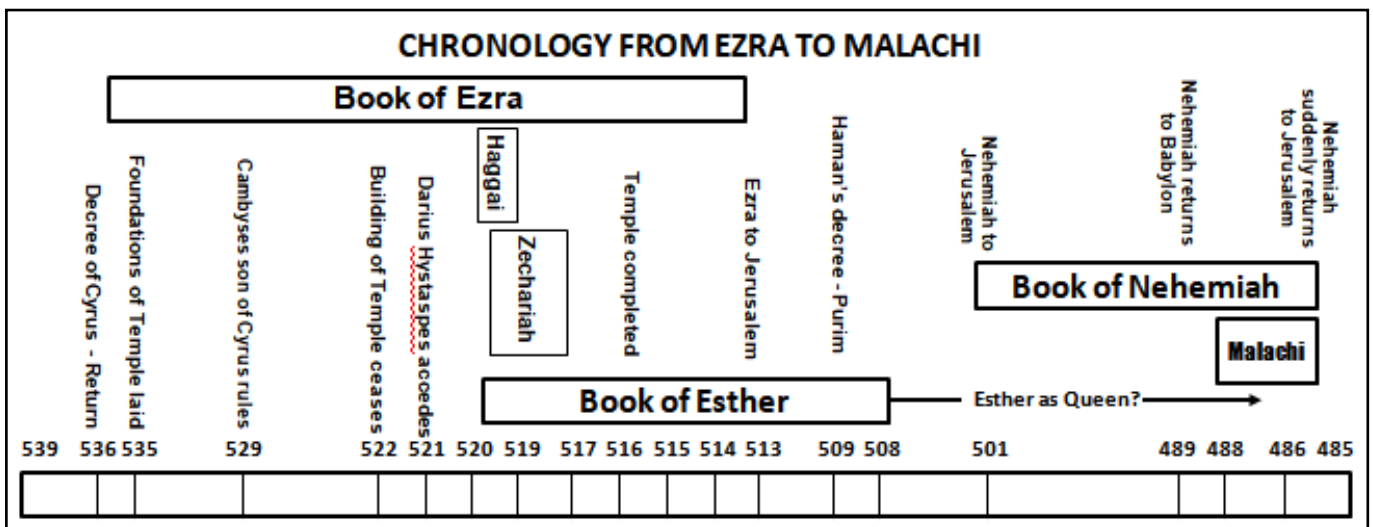
### The books of returning exiles

- ❖ Nehemiah records the last historical incidents of the Old Testament, for Nehemiah was contemporary with Malachi.
- ❖ In the Hebrew Bible, Nehemiah forms part of the Book of Ezra, and together with Esther provides a trio setting forth the Divine purpose with Israel – Esther = Preservation; Ezra = Restoration; Nehemiah = Reconstruction.
- ❖ The prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi reside in this historical era.

V.4-11 – The decree called upon the locals to support any Jews who wanted to return to their land, and Cyrus himself brought out all the vessels of the house of God that Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon (and Belshazzar had foolishly drunk from) and delivered them to “Sheshbazzar (“worshipper of fire”), the prince of Judah” (V.8). This is Zerubbabel (‘sown’ or ‘born in Babylon’) called the Tirshatha (title of a Persian deputy or governor) – Ezra 2:63. He was a descendant of David (1 Chron. 3:19) and so is called a “prince” (*nasi* – an exalted one; prince or chief).

Much help was given by Cyrus to the willing captives who wished to return. It is interesting that the name “Ezra” means ‘help’. This is the basic theme of the book bearing his name. The root word *ezrah* occurs 26 times in the O.T. A helpful example is Ps. 46:1 – “God is our refuge and strength, a very present **help** in trouble.” This theme is revealed in two phrases – “But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews” (Ezra 5:5), and “the good hand of his God upon him” (Ezra 7:9 and 8 times in all in Ezra and Nehemiah).

In our comments we will employ the chronology of the times set forth by Bro. H.P. Mansfield in his writings of the return of the exiles. It is set out in the following time chart. For a more detailed ventilation of the subject and the reasons why the traditional chronology fails some critical tests, see **Appendix 2**.



## Ezra 2

This chapter contains a list of the names of those who accompanied Zerubbabel and Jeshua (the high priest) on the long journey from Babylon to the Land of Judah – a journey of 1,300 kms (or 780 miles). This list is duplicated in Neh. 7.

Both Zerubbabel and Jeshua were ‘men of sign’ – Zech. 3:8. As joint types of Christ they represent Christ as both king and priest. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel (“I have asked God”) was a royal descendent of David – Ezra 3:2; Matt. 1:12. The crowning of Jeshua (“Yahweh’s salvation”) in Zech. 6:11-13 completes the type presented by these ‘men of sign’.



V.43-58 – Some Nethinims are named – 392 returned. There is a great irony in this because the Nethinims appear to be the descendants of the Gibeonites who deceived Joshua and Israel in Josh. 9 and were ‘condemned’ to temple service and ‘lower end’ duties in Israel. Now that the rebuilding of the temple was the mission with much ‘lower end’ work ahead, they were ready to contribute, leaving behind the relative luxury and peace of Babylon. The irony is that they had proved, and would continue to prove, more faithful than many in Israel.

V.61-63 – Among the priests were some who could not prove their genealogy and were excluded from partaking of the tithes offered by the people until “there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.” He hasn’t yet come.

V.64-70 – “The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore” to which were added 7,337 servants (aggregate 49,697), together with numerous beasts of burden. On arrival at Jerusalem, some gave generously to the preparations made to commence the building of the temple and all settled into scattered residences.

## Hosea 5

V.1 – “Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O **house of the king**; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on **Mizpah**, and a net spread upon **Tabor**” – Jeroboam II reigned during Hosea’s prophecies. He had struggled to restore peace and prosperity to Israel and his heir Zachariah was probably corrupted by it. One commentator describes him as “a weak, pliant, self-indulgent, drunken scoffer, who, after eleven years of anarchy, succeeded his father, only to be murdered” (this must be from Jewish historical records). As for Mizpah, there were several of them. The earliest of all is the heap of stones, piled up by Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:48), on Mount Gilead when they made a covenant (Gen. 31:25). Tabor is Mt Tabor, and both places are spoken of as being involved in snaring animals or birds. There is an old Jewish tradition, that lyers-in-wait were set in these two places, to intercept and murder those Israelites, who would go up to worship at Jerusalem against the will of Jeroboam. This tradition gains some countenance from the mention of slaughter in the next verse.

V.2-15 – The fierce condemnation of spiritual whoredom that follows is directed at both Israel and Judah. This is amplified in V.8 when the “cornet” (*shophar*) of alarm would be blown in Gibeah to warn of the arrival of the invading army, and the silver “trumpet” (*chātsôtserâh*) in Ramah, and attendant cry in Bethaven (Bethel) to warn that Judah would be next in line.

V.14 – “For I will be unto **Ephraim** as a **lion**, and as a **young lion** to the house of **Judah**” – The Assyrians were symbolized by a lion (Dan. 7:4) and would cart away the residue of Israel in BC 722, and its whelp Babylon (the young lion) would do the same to Judah between BC 606 and 586. It ultimately came to pass – Jer. 50:17 – “Israel is a scattered sheep; **the lions** have driven him away: **first the king of Assyria** hath devoured him; and **last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon** hath broken his bones.”

## Acts 21

As seen in Acts 20, all through the areas where Paul had preached, vicious opposition had arisen to him among the Jews. He doubtless knew this was true of Judea as well. On arriving at Tyre, disciples there warned him through the Spirit of the mood in Jerusalem (V.4). Again, at Caesarea in the house of Philip a prophet from Judea named Agabus gave him an enacted warning that he would be bound in Jerusalem (V.8-12). Deflecting the emotional appeals from

the brethren, Paul said – “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to **die** at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Paul had reached that point in life expressed to the Philippians – Phil. 1:21 – “For to me to live is Christ, and **to die is gain**” and Phil. 1:23 – “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having **a desire to depart**, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” However, God and Christ his Master had a different plan for him. His work was not yet complete among the Gentiles, though it would yield little fruit among the Jews.

V.17-26 – The visit to James in Jerusalem was not encouraging. Though the brethren received him gladly and rejoiced at the outcomes of his preaching to the Gentiles, it became clear very quickly that the whole situation was on a knife edge. Jerusalem was about to erupt. They prevailed upon Paul to implement his mantra “unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews” (1 Cor. 9:20). Having four men who had taken and completed a Nazarite vow (Paul had done so himself in Cenchrea – Acts 18:18), they asked him to accompany them into the temple as a demonstration that the rumors that he had abandoned the Law were untrue. The public performance did not work.

V.27-36 – A riot erupted as false accusations of Paul bringing an uncircumcised Gentile into the temple were made. He was only saved from being torn apart by the intervention of the chief captain of the Roman garrison in the Tower of Antonio. Chained and carried overhead by Roman soldiers for safety, Paul typically asked permission to address the riotous crowd (see Acts 19:30-31). He would miss no opportunity to preach and receiving permission stood on the stairs to do so – V.37-40.

## Acts 22

V.1-21 – Quieting the crowd below in the court of the temple as he spoke in Hebrew, Paul recounted his life from childhood right through to his persecution of believers and dramatic conversion on the way to Damascus, and then his subsequent visit to Jerusalem. They listened until he repeated the warning of Christ, “Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” That was the end. The mention of Gentiles threw them into a foaming rage and Paul was whisked away into the tower – V.22-24.

V.25-29 – Only Paul’s freeborn Roman citizenship saved him from a brutal scourging, and the chief captain who was a redeemed slave was fearful he had overstepped the mark. The next day he commanded the Sanhedrin to convene and brought Paul down to them (V.30).

## November 9

### Ezra 3

After a journey of about four months (cp. Ezra’s journey – Ezra 7:9), the returnees arrived in the middle of the year and settled in to available places of residence in and around Jerusalem (2:70). The time came in the seventh month (the most important in their religious calendar) for an assembly. This was the time of the “memorial of blowing of trumpets” on the first day (Lev. 23:24); the Day of Atonement on the 10th (Lev. 23:27); and the Feast of Tabernacles from the 15th for seven days (Lev. 23:34).

V.1 – “the people gathered themselves together as **one man** to Jerusalem” – Jeshua (“Yah’s salvation”) as high priest was the “one man” representing the people. Given that he and Zerubbabel were “men of sign” (Zech. 3:8) there is a type presented here. We are “one body” in Christ (Rom. 12:5), and like the returned captives need to be builders in “the house of God” (the ecclesia – 1 Tim. 3:15) by labours of love and commitment.



V.2-7 – “builded the altar of the God of Israel” – In the 7th month (V.1), while the foundation of the temple was laid 7 months later (V.8-10). The first great need in building in the house of God is sacrifice, so the altar is prepared first. There were ever-present dangers lurking among the surrounding nations, so they acknowledged their dependence on God (V.3). They kept the Feast of Tabernacles with attendant sacrifices according to the Law, and instituted the continual burnt offerings morning and evening. Having set their worship in order, they began to assemble craftsmen and materials from near and far using the license provided by the Decree of Cyrus. This extended to acquiring materials from Tyre and Zidon.

V.8-13 – “when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Yahweh, after the ordinance of David king of Israel” – The foundation of the temple was laid in the second month of the second year and elaborate arrangements for praising God were made. However, the praise was hindered by a negative response from some of the older generation who had seen Solomon’s temple. The younger generation rejoiced while the elders wept, despite the fact that this building was twice the size of Solomon’s temple – Ezra 6:3; 2 Chron. 3:3-4. The problem was the poverty of the circumstances surrounding the project. It was very much “a day of small things” (Zech. 4:10) in terms of grandeur and organization. There is an important lesson in this for us. The recovery of the truth from the rubble of Catholic and Protestant apostasy in the middle of the 19th century was “a day of small things” and it could be argued that it still is when compared with the way the Truth spread from the Day of Pentecost onwards in the 1st century. We need to recognize the state we find ourselves in at any given time and commit ourselves to building in the house of God, and rejoice in the positive things that happen because there will be many negatives. There is wisdom in the counsel of Ecc. 7:10 – “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.”

#### **Ezra 4**

V.1 – It did not take long for “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” to oppose the work, but they did so deceptively seeking to undermine the project from within.

V.2-6 – “Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, which brought us up hither” (RV) – The Samaritans became a thorn in the side for the returned captives from BC 535 to the times of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem because they were able to insinuate themselves into the lives of some prominent Jews, but not Zerubbabel and Jeshua – “Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God.” The amazing thing about this record is that it is the subject of Zech. 3 and Jude 9 which provide an insight into what was happening behind the scenes. Michael the archangel was there with other supporting angels and the Decree of Cyrus was the principal document (essentially the Word of God in this case) that upheld the **unheard** words of Michael – “Yahweh rebuke thee, O Satan; even Yahweh that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.” Jude’s reference to this incident is to reinforce the exhortation to “contend earnestly for the faith” by upholding the Word of God – if we do not do that, who will? The angels present are not authorized in this era to put words into our mouth. The repudiation of the Samaritans led to opposition in various forms – “the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,” and they “hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose.” This went on “all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

Cyrus died in battle in BC 529 and was succeeded by his son Cambyses who died in circa BC 523-2. A usurper to the Persian throne named Gomates took power for seven months until overthrown and replaced by Darius Hystaspes. It was in that brief period that the Samaritans succeeded in having the work on the temple stopped. Gomates is the Artaxerxes (a title meaning 'Great King') of V.7.

V.7-24 – 14 years of deceptive and grinding opposition from the Samaritans culminated in a decree by the usurper to the Persian throne (Gomates) to stop the building “by force and power” – V.21,23 – “Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius (Hystaspes) king of Persia.” There were other reasons why the building stopped. Haggai 1:2 reveals the justification for slowing the building work and excusing the cessation. There were those who reasoned the temple had to remain desolate for 70 years and that was still 6 years away; and Haggai 2:3 reveals another problem – a lack of enthusiasm by the elders who were disillusioned by “a day of small things.” Men can find reasons to cease building in “the house of God,” and justify it.

## Hosea 6

In this chapter Yahweh puts words in the mouth of His people “in the latter days” (Hos. 3:5) when they will be redeemed and ungodliness will be turned from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). They are represented as speaking collectively, **encouraging one another** to respond to the opportunity for redemption. Then in the latter portion of the chapter, the antithesis that was displayed on every hand in the prophet's time is laid out – cities “work iniquity”; “troops of robbers” steal and “priests murder in the way by consent” as they encouraged one another in evil, violence and injustice. How different it will be when the Redeemer comes to Zion?

V.1 – “Come, and let us return unto Yahweh: for he hath **torn**, and he will heal us; he hath **smitten**, and he will bind us up” – Yahweh was tearing them and hewing them by the prophets (V.5), but it was not working, so He would send the Assyrians to take them away (5:14). If His people had hearkened to the prophets they could have been saved, but that will have to wait until the latter days when these words will be heard from those who Elijah and the saints gather from dispersion throughout the earth.

V.2 – “**After two days** will he revive us: in the **third day** he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight” – This is a prophecy where the formula of 2 Pet. 3:8 is employed – “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in BC 722. Well after two millennia of dispersion, persecution and pogroms stirred some Jews to seek refuge in the Holy Land during the 19th and 20th centuries, culminating in the State of Israel being established in 1948. Their final redemption will occur in the present century. From BC 722 to somewhere in the middle of the 21st century would mean a period in the vicinity of 2,800 years. That is near the end of the “third day” when Yahweh “will raise” them up as the head of the nations – Deut. 28:13.

V.3-7 – “if we follow on to know Yahweh: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” – The figure of clouds and rain is introduced to contrast the solidity of God's promises and actions with the ephemeral attitudes and actions of Israel. When clouds appeared in season, God provided the former rain for planting and the latter rain for ripening (Joel 2:23-24). It resulted in fruitfulness and abundance. But not so His people. Their “goodness (was) as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (V.4); i.e. like misty clouds (fog) and dew in the morning, they dissipated when the sun arose. There was nothing in them – “clouds they are without water, carried about of winds” (Jude 12). The word “goodness” is

*chesed* – lovingkindness (the primary characteristic of Yahweh – Ex. 34:6-7). This is the same word “mercy” in V.6 – “For I desired **mercy**, and not sacrifice; and the **knowledge** of God more than burnt offerings.” Israel were called to be “a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory” (Jer. 13:11) for Yahweh, as indeed we are (Acts 15:14). This required them to manifest His character in attitude and actions, for this is to **know** Him (Jer. 22:16). Israel offered empty sacrifices and refused to mould themselves on their God. Accordingly, He “hewed them by the prophets” and slew them with the words of His mouth (V.5). Rotherham for V.7 – “But, they, like **Adam**, have transgressed a covenant,—There, have they dealt treacherously with me.” Made in the “image and likeness” of God, Adam was created to fashion himself in the likeness of his Creator, but chose the ephemeral and empty path of sin like Israel and Judah in the times of Hosea.

V.8-11 – “I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled” – For the time being, Israel continued to encourage each other to transgress against their faithful covenant God. However, Yahweh would keep His covenant with Abraham in the latter days – “Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.”

### Acts 23

V.1-11 – Using the ‘divide and conquer’ principle, Paul divided the Sanhedrin by highlighting the doctrinal differences between the Sadducees (the ruling class) and the Pharisees (the religious class). The assembly descended into chaos and the chief captain again rescued Paul. The next night while Paul must have been contemplating his future, a similar situation to Acts 9:3-5 occurs – “the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (V.11).

V.12-22 – Gamaliel had made the point in Acts 5:38-39 – “if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.” The forty conspirators who bound themselves with an oath that they would not eat until they had assassinated Paul should have heeded this advice, or at a minimum added a caveat “as long as he is in Jerusalem.” Providentially, Paul’s nephew overheard their machinations and reported it to the chief captain who was still keen to repay his debt for the mistreatment of a Roman citizen.

V.23-35 – Accordingly, Paul was spirited away under a massive contingent of soldiers to Caesarea where he was to be incarcerated for two years. However, his ‘debt’ being repaid to Paul, the chief captain in his communication could not bring himself to tell the pure truth as he wrote – “This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, **having understood that he was a Roman.**” This is so typical of the defense mechanism in the human brain. It will lie and scheme in blatant self-protection.

### Acts 24

V.1-9 – Five days after arriving in Caesarea (the assassins would be getting hungry by now), “Ananias the high priest descended with the elders and with a certain orator named Tertullus” who presented the case against Paul. Oratory without facts and substance rarely impresses intelligent men, and Felix, married to a Jewess (V.24), had a good knowledge of what was happening in Judea (V.10). The flowery oratory of Tertullus accused Paul of being – (1) “a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world,” and; (2) “a

ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”; and (3) “Who also hath gone about to profane the temple.” He presented no actual evidence (V.13).

V.10-21 – When called upon to defend himself, Paul systematically pulled apart the fabric of lies by presenting incontrovertible evidence that his accusers knew was correct. Paul had been in Jerusalem for just one week (12 days minus 5 – cp. V.11 and 1) and his visit to the temple did not involve preaching or arguments either there or anywhere else, hence he was not “a mover of sedition” (V.11-13 answer the first charge). In V.14-16, Paul answered the charge that he was “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” by asserting that he, like many others, was a believer in the promises God had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the resurrection which guaranteed their fulfillment. He was not therefore a political leader. In V.17-20, he sweeps away the charge that he had defiled the temple noting the absence of any witnesses to the contrary.

V.22-27 – Felix was a politician and deferred judgement in order to have opportunity to hear more from Paul in private, and to manipulate the case for political and financial purposes. It is not uncommon for human rulers to deflect the workings of their conscience for personal gain and Paul worked on the fickle conscience of Felix – V.25 – “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, **Felix trembled**, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

## November 10

### Ezra 5

V.1-2 – “Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem” – The intervention of Haggai and Zechariah rebuking the apathy and materialism of the people resulted in a resumption of building within 2 years of its cessation. They had suffered privation as Yahweh afflicted them for their apathy, and once there was proof of genuineness of attitude the blessings of God resumed. The key was strong leadership from Zerubbabel and Jeshua supporting the message of the prophets who themselves pitched in.

V.3-17 – However, because there was an existing decree for cessation of building, this new activity by the Jews caused Persian officials to write a letter to Darius Hystaspes to confirm Jewish claims about the Decree of Cyrus. Meanwhile, “the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius” (i.e. Darius Hystaspes).

### Ezra 6

V.1-12 – “search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon” – The order of Darius to search for the Decree of Cyrus turned up nothing, but a wider search located a copy at Achmetha in Media (otherwise known as Ecbatana) which had been the capital of Cyrus. It was discovered that the decree contained quite a lot of detail on the temple to be constructed. Darius confirmed the decree and gave authority for expenses in the building project be taken from the Persian treasury. Severe punishment was to be meted out to anyone who stood in the way.

V.13-18 – Confirmation of the Decree of Cyrus by Darius Hystaspes in BC 520 resulted in the completion of the temple in BC 516 (V.15). It was dedicated and the priests and Levites set in order. At last, the long trial was over. Bro. Thomas in Eureka Vol. 1 (pgs.107-108) makes a useful comment on the situation faced by our brethren of old – “All God’s sons are subject to vanity (Rom. 8:20). This is the necessary basis for future exaltation to the glories of the

Apocalypse. These are only to be obtained by conquest of self under trial from without (Rev. 7:14). Hence, when the Captain and his associates rejoice in the consubstantiality of the Deity, they will all have attained to it upon the principle of voluntary obedience, motivated by faith, and maintained in opposition to incitements within and enticements and pressure from without."

V.19-22 – "And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month" – The first feast to be held in the new temple was the Passover that recalled the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The "body of Moses" (Jude 9) had been delivered from captivity in Babylon, and from the hand of their enemies in the Land. It was time for remembrance and thanksgiving. Now those who had wept when the foundation was laid could rejoice as they "kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for Yahweh had made them joyful."

## Hosea 7

V.1-5 – "They make the king glad with their wickedness" – Wicked sovereigns and a wicked people are a curse to each other, each encouraging the other in sin. The kings of Israel (in the north), all being wicked, had pleasure in their subjects' wickedness; and they, seeing him to be pleased by it, set themselves to do more evil, and to amuse him with accounts of their sins. What a parlous state God's people had reached. Adultery, both spiritual and literal corrupted the nation as it does the world today in the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17:26-29).

V.6-9 – One commentator makes the following observation on these verses – "Hosea makes a twofold comparison of the Israelites; to an oven, and to dough. Jeroboam set fire to his own oven – his kingdom – and put the leaven in his dough; and afterwards went to rest, that the fire might have time to heat his oven, and the leaven to raise his dough, that the false principles which he introduced might infect the whole population. This prince, purposing to make his subjects relinquish their ancient religion, put, in a certain sense, the fire to his own oven, and mixed his dough with leaven. At first he used no violence, but was satisfied with exhorting them, and proclaiming a feast. This fire spread very rapidly, and the dough was very soon impregnated by the leaven. All Israel was seen running to this feast, and partaking in these innovations. But what shall become of the oven – the kingdom; and the bread – the people? The oven shall be consumed by these flames; the king, the princes, and the people shall be enveloped in the burning, Hos. 7:7. Israel was put under the ashes, as a loaf well kneaded and leavened; but not being carefully turned, it was burnt on one side before those who prepared it could eat of it; and enemies and strangers came and carried off the loaf. See Hos. 7:8,9. Their lasting captivity was the consequence of their wickedness and their apostasy from the religion of their fathers."

V.10-16 – "the pride of Israel testifieth to his face" – Pride stood in the way of reform. Centuries of affliction and judgement made no difference. They would not hearken because they thought they knew better – pride destroyed them. "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria" just as Elijah had said about the way they assessed who was God – "How long halt ye between two opinions? if Yahweh be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Every attempt by Yahweh to turn His people around had failed. Now the only option was destruction.

"They return, but not to the most High: they are like a **deceitful bow**" – Even when flimsy efforts at reform were made (as in the time of Jehu), they did not return to Yahweh,

“who is on high!” (Rotherham). Note that the focus is on the bow, not on the arrows it fires. Adam Clarke in his commentary draws on his own experience of the Asiatic bow – “Which, when it is reflexed, in order to be strung, suddenly springs back into its quiescent curve; for the eastern bows stand in their quiescent state in a curve; and in order to be strung must be beaded back in the opposite direction. This bending of the bow requires both strength and skill; and if not properly done, it will fly back, and regain its former position; and in this recoil endanger the archer – may even break an arm. I have been in this danger myself in bending the Asiatic bow.” Israel repeatedly sprang back at their God who tried to bend them in His direction.

## Acts 25

V.1-12 – The leaders of the Sanhedrin prevailed upon Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem plotting to assassinate him, but Festus refused. The trial that followed in Caesarea was manipulated by Festus and forced Paul’s hand. He appealed to be heard by Caesar which was the right every Roman citizen had. This was the Divinely overshadowed means by which Paul would reach Rome as promised by the Lord – Acts 23:11.

V.13 – This king Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1). Upon the death of his father’s youngest brother, Herod, he succeeded him in the kingdom of Chalcis, by the favor of the Emperor Claudius. Afterwards, Claudius removed him from that kingdom to a larger one, giving him the tetrarchy of Philip, which contained Trachonitis, Batanea, and Gaulonitis. He gave him, likewise, the tetrarchy of Lysanias, and the province which Varus had governed. Nero made a further addition, and gave him four cities, Abila, Julias in Peraea, Tarichaea and Tiberias in Galilee (Josephus). (Agrippa’s territory is shown in orange on the map)



Bernice was Agrippa’s sister. She had been a courtesan of kings, but spent most of her life living with her brother. Josephus accused them of incest.

V.14-27 – An unscheduled trial was held as Festus searched for something sensible to write to Caesar concerning the charges against Paul. Agrippa, though an Edomite by heritage was nevertheless well versed in Jewish laws and customs.

## Acts 26

V.1-11 – Paul recounted his life story before Agrippa as he had done on previous occasions with particular emphasis on his persecution of the believers. In V.10 he uses the phrase “I gave my **voice** against them” – the word is *psephos* – the pebble used for voting. It is found only here and Rev. 2:17 – “a white stone.”

V.12-23 – Paul told the story of his conversion and the persecution he then suffered in turn from the Jews. Just as in Acts 22:21, when Paul used the word “Gentiles” Festus interrupted him suggesting he was insane.

V.24-32 – Agrippa knew Paul spoke “words of truth and soberness” and upon being asked whether he believed the Prophets confessed that he was greatly swayed by Paul’s speech.

Privately he advised – “This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.” Festus’s problem of what to write to Caesar had not been resolved.

## November 11

### Ezra 7

The record of Ezra’s life is preserved for a purpose. His influence on his own generation and those that followed up to the time of Christ is undeniable and incalculable. He is also credited with writing the books of Chronicles and compiling the books of the Old Testament into the Hebrew Bible. Darius Hystaspes is unreserved in his praise of the character of Ezra in his letter of commendation and support (V.12-26). He highlighted the following attributes: (1) He deserved Yahweh’s approval (RV) – “a perfect scribe of the law of the God of heaven.” (2) His complete trustworthiness in financial matters. Darius gave Ezra an ‘open cheque’ knowing he would only use the king’s resources for the well-being of the returned exiles (V.15-22).

V.1-5 – “Ezra the son of Seraiah” – Seraiah means “Yah has prevailed”. He was most likely the ‘chief priest’ killed at Riblah by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:24-27). In the genealogy of Eleazer in 1 Chron. 6:4-14, Seraiah is the second last priest named before Jehozadak the father of Jeshua the high priest of the return. Ezra appears to be the uncle of Jeshua. His line came through Phinehas (1 Chron. 6:4), and Ezra did not disgrace his heritage as many did (Mal. 2:4-9). Ezra is called a “scribe” 9 times (7 times as “**the** scribe”), and in V.6 – “a ready scribe” – *mahiyr saphar*. The word *mahiyr* only occurs 4 times in the O.T. – its meaning is quick, prompt; hence skilled. The same words are used in Ps. 45:1 – “a ready writer” (*mahiyr saphar*) where the psalmist shows overflowing enthusiasm for the future. It is also found in Prov. 22:29 translated “diligent” and that proverb proved true of Ezra – “Seest thou a man **diligent** (*mahiyr*) in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” Interestingly, *mahiyr* is also translated “hasting” in Isa. 16:5 where it is used of Christ (the greatest scribe of all) in the Kingdom.

V.6-10 – “This Ezra went up from Babylon...and the king granted him all his request, according to the **hand** of Yahweh his God upon him” – This commences a theme that runs through the Book of Ezra and into Nehemiah (part of Ezra in the Hebrew Bible). “The hand of Yahweh his God upon him” in that or similar form is found again in V.9,28, and in Ezra 8:18,22,31; Neh. 2:8,18. It is an important exhortation from the lives of Ezra and Nehemiah who placed complete trust in God in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Joined by a company of “priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims” and others, Ezra undertook the four month trek from Babylon to Jerusalem without the protection of a contingent of Persian soldiers (the reason is explained in chapter 8).

“For Ezra had **prepared** his heart to **seek** the law of Yahweh” – The Hebrew for “prepared” is *kun* – to be erect; i.e. stand perpendicular; to be firm, fixed – (Rotherham) “had settled his heart.” The word is found in Ps. 119:133 – “**Order** (*kun*) my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” The word “seek” is *darash* – to seek with care.

“and to **do** it and to **teach**” – Ezra was a doer of the Word, not just a hearer (James 1:22-23 – “be ye **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”). Teachers who are not doers are ineffective and a danger to themselves as well as others – Matt. 23:3; James 3:1. Ezra was a priest and it was the duty of priests to instruct and educate (Mal. 2:7), and he had more than met his obligations.

V.11-26 – “Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest” – The letter of Darius Hystaspes exceeded all expectations and proves Eph. 3:20

("Now unto **him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think**") to be true. It was effectively an 'open cheque' from the king to Ezra which speaks volumes of his character and reputation. Ezra was given supreme administrative authority (V.21) and unchallengeable spiritual authority (V.25-26) – "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand" – Decades of diligent study had prepared Ezra for the task ahead. His wisdom and consequent way of life was evident to all. He was more than capable of the commission – "and teach ye them that know them not" – Ezra was eminently qualified for this role and demonstrated that in Neh. 8:1-8. He had a reverence for the Word and a finely tuned sensitivity to its principles. This led to "rightly dividing the Word" (2 Tim. 2:15) as shown in Neh. 8:8.

So what is the key message for us in the latter days with all its distractions, gadgetry and corrupting influences? Firstly, we need to have good established habits: (1) Read the Bible every day and meditate on its message with enquiring mind; (2) Have some kind of study program that fits our personal level of development; (3) Build a sound relationship with God marked by prayer and a desire for His Word (Acts 20:32); (4) Undertake regular honest assessment of our performance – Are we doers of the Word?

In the Ecclesial Guide (Clause 43), under the heading "The True Secret of Success" there is some very sound counsel – "This lies in the rich indwelling of the word of Christ in each individual member of an ecclesia—a state to be attained in our day only by the daily and systematic reading of the Scriptures. When every mind is influenced by the Word, the worst rules work smoothly. When it is otherwise, the best will miscarry. The system of daily reading, laid out in The Bible Companion, has for years been followed by thousands with increasing benefit. The brethren ought, **above all things**, to help one another in its observance."

Also, in Bro. Roberts' Diary of a Voyage to Australia and New Zealand (pg. 39) there is similar advice – "The Bible foretold a future of ultimate blessedness for all the world. This was, indeed, the Gospel which it had pleased God to require us to believe as a main condition of our acceptability with Him. How true and good all these things were could only be known by **the study of that wonderful book** God had put in their hands. **I pressed the study of it upon their attention as the exercise of the most practical good sense.**"

V.27-28 – "Blessed be Yahweh God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Yahweh which is in Jerusalem" – Ezra's deep sense of gratitude is expressed in a prayer of praise to God. He knew that God had been at work in the life of Darius Hystaspes who was about to take Esther as his wife, although he was unaware that she was a Jewess at the time.

## Hosea 8

V.1 – (Rotherham) – "To thy mouth, with a horn! Like an eagle, on the house of Yahweh,—because they have violated my **covenant**" – Covenant is an important theme of Hosea. The word *berith* occurs 5 times in the book. The events at **Gibeah** recorded in Judges 19-21 are about to come into focus. Gibeah was the place early in Israel's history where covenants and oaths were made and systematically broken by the nation. Israel's first king was Saul of Gibeah and he could not keep a covenant, hence, Saul finds a place in this prophecy – Hos. 13:11 – "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." Hence, V.4 – "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not." Nothing had changed. Israel continued to violate Yahweh's covenant into which they had entered at Mt Horeb and beyond (Ex. 19:5-8; Deut. 29:12-15; Josh. 24:24-27).



V.2-6 – “Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee” – This was a false claim because of the apostasy of Jeroboam that had been perpetuated – “Thy **calf**, O Samaria, hath cast thee off” (V.5); and “the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but **the calf of Samaria** shall be broken in pieces.”

V.7-8 – “they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” – The Biblical principle “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” is exceeded in this metaphor, for Israel would reap much more than they had sown – because of their privileged status on the principle – “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). The metaphor of sowing continues – “it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal.” No fruit would come from their ‘sowing,’ but any that did would be consumed by their enemies (V.8).

V.9-10 – “they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers” – Israel’s attempts to seek help from the Assyrians backfired – “when they have begun to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of rulers” (Rotherham). In Isa. 10:8, the Assyrian king boasted – “For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings?” as he conquered nation after nation. Israel would not escape.

V.11-14 – “I have written to him **the great things of my law**, but they were counted as a strange thing” – Herein lay the source of failure. When men reject the “great things” of God’s law, they condemn themselves to destruction, because what always follows is base idolatry – “Ephraim hath made many altars to sin,” and “Israel hath forgotten his Maker.” Even Judah was heading in the wrong direction.

## Acts 27



Paul’s dramatic voyage to Rome illustrated in the map above is a demonstration that while God’s servants are subject to all the same trials that confront mankind, the promises God makes will always bring them through to the desired end. Paul had been told he would get to Rome (Acts 23:11), so he could have complete confidence that whatever the storm would do to the ship, its cargo and passengers, the promise to him would be fulfilled. We need a similar

confidence as an incredible 'storm' looms over 'the sea of nations.' Christ will come and calm the storm and fulfil the promises God has made in him.

V.1-8 – Luke provides details of the transport arrangements for Paul and uses the pronouns “we” and “us” a number of times, so what we have is a personal witness account.

V.9 – “Now when much time was spent, and when **sailing was now dangerous**, because the **fast** was now already past.” The seas were closed from 11 November to 10 March during the winter months. It was deemed risky from 15 September to 10 November and from 11 March to 26 May. The safe season was from 27 May to 14 September. The “fast” is a reference to the Day of Atonement which fell on 24 September in AD 60. Hence, Paul “admonished them” (V.10).

V.11-12 – Forsaking ‘The Fair Havens’ due to its lack of winter ‘distractions’ and a 2 hour walk to Lasea, they made for Phenice (Phoenix), a larger city with a safer port. Its port had protection from NW and SW winds. Being late September their plan was foiled by Euroclydon (Thayer – “a violent agitation”).



V.13-15 – “there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called **Euroclydon**” – It was evidently a wind not blowing steadily from any quarter, but a hurricane, or wind veering about to different quarters. Such hurricanes are known to abound in the Mediterranean. The ship, depending on wind for propulsion, became unsteerable, so they “let her drive.”

V.16-44 – RV – “And running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat” – Note the island is actually called Cauda (not Claudia), and is a small island about 20 miles (32 kms) southwest of Crete. They passed to the north of that island and struggled to lift the life boat aboard to save it from being smashed by the waves.

After 14 days trying everything possible to lighten the ship with its 276 passengers who had not seen the sun or stars for most of that time, morale and hope were at the lowest possible ebb. However, when soundings at night revealed that land was near and the sailors were prevented from using the boat to flee, Paul told all on board of the message he had received from an angel that God’s promise to him would be fulfilled – “thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” This galvanized everyone to take some sustenance and prepare for the events of the new day. And so it came to pass that all 276 were washed up on the island of Malta.

## November 12

### Ezra 8

Ezra is a worthy example for every era and generation of Yahweh’s servants. He had a burning zeal for building in “the house of God,” and tirelessly laboured among God’s people. His close relationship with Yahweh and His law undergirded his whole life. Consistent with the meaning of his name he leaned on the ‘help’ given by Yahweh. This chapter demonstrates Ezra’s example of working with Divine providence as an important theme of his life and work.

Being conscious of Divine providence and working with it is a test of our faith. It works through the activity and selective intervention of the angels. They are “the eyes” of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9) – “For the eyes of Yahweh run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”

V.1-14 – These verses provide a list of the males who went with Ezra. There were 1,496, but there was a problem.

V.15-20 – “I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi” – A conspicuous problem emerged. There were no Levites in the company (teachers – Mal. 2:7). There was an object lesson for Ezra in this. His rejoicing at obvious Divine blessings supporting the Aliyah was moderated by a miserable response from the remaining exiles in the empire, with particular disinterest from Levites. Neh. 13:10 perhaps suggests the reason for this. Under the Law in the Land the Levites received tithes so they could focus on their mission, but in Babylon they were self-supporting as no tithes were provided. It seems many were quite content with their new way of life. As in the 1st Aliyah the priests proved keener to return to the Land (Cp. Ezra 2:36-42). 3,289 priests returned with Jeshua and Zerubbabel while only 74 Levites plus 128 singers and 139 porters returned. It became necessary at the river “Ahava” (“water” – Smith) to spend three days to correct this imbalance.

Ezra sent eleven “men of understanding” back to “Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia” (“silvery” – symbol for redemption – the key issue at stake) to drum up some support from Levites to join the company at Ahava. And “by the **good hand of our God** upon us they brought us a man of understanding” accompanied by 37 others. An even better response came from the “Nethinims” (“one given”); i.e. to the Temple service. These were the descendants of the Gibeonites – Josh. 9:23; Ezra 2:43,58.

V.18 – “by the good hand of our God upon us” (remember the pervasive theme – Ezra 7:6,9,28; 8:18,22,31; Neh. 1:10; 2:8,18). Ezra perceived the work of the angels in the outcome. The angels were intimately involved in the building of the Temple (Zech. 2:1-4; 3:1-6; 4:1-10). The hand is used in Scripture as the means of accomplishment of purpose both for God and man (Isa. 50:2) – “Is my **hand** shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?”

V.21-23 – “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance” – Ezra’s declaration before the king constrained his appeal for help in the long journey with a huge store of goods and wealth – “For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horse-men to help us” (V.22). The confidence Ezra expressed in the hand of God must now be manifested by absolute faith. Their confidence in God was not misplaced – “So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us” (V.23).

V.24-30 – Ezra selected 22 chief men to care for the enormous treasure being carried to Jerusalem. In the parable, the appointed priests and Levites are called holy (“ye are holy” – *qodesh*), and “the vessels are holy also” (vessels are a symbol for individual servants of God – 2 Tim. 2:20-21). These were made of “silver” (= redemption – Ex. 30:13), and “gold” (tried faith – 1 Pet. 1:7). The ultimate objective of our dangerous journey is to bring the “holy vessels” of the “Israel of God” to Jerusalem that we might be redeemed by tried faith.

V.31-36 – “And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days” – (Type) We too are on a long and arduous journey to Jerusalem bearing precious cargo. We like Ezra’s company must cope with a barren and hostile wilderness, and ruthless enemies lurking everywhere desiring to take away our ‘treasure’ and our lives. With absolute faith in the hand of God we can be “delivered from evil” and come to Zion to dedicate our treasure to Yahweh. The vessels and treasure were faithfully delivered to the priests in Jerusalem. By Providence none were lost and “they furthered (*nasa* – to lift up) the people, and the house of God.” Ezra’s mission was to lift up the spirit of his brethren and support “the house of God” (the ecclesia).

## Hosea 9

V.1 – **“Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy**, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn floor” – Yahweh pre-empts the people of Israel in the midst of their festivity and mirth, telling them that they had no cause for joy. Hosea had witnessed Israel’s prosperity under Jeroboam II; the land also had peace under Menahem on the departure of Pul; Pekah was strong against Judah in his alliance with Rezin king of Syria, and became an object of terror to Judah (Isa. 7), until Tiglath-Pileser came against him. At some of these times, Israel evidently gave themselves to exuberant mirth, whether at harvest-time, or upon military success, enjoying the present and thinking themselves secure for the future, but it was all misplaced. They had forsaken their God throughout their entire history and the day of reckoning was at hand.

V.2-8 – “They shall not dwell in Yahweh’s land” – Divine judgement would see Israel return to Egypt (some fleeing from the Assyrians) but most would end up in captivity in the lands of Assyria. This section amplifies chapter 3:4 – “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and **without a sacrifice**, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.” There would be no means of recovery until the latter days. Whether in Egypt or Assyria, they were doomed.

V.9-17 – “They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in **the days of Gibeah**” – The introduction of the awful events of Gibeah described in Judges 19-21 is highly significant. There were two major issues involved at Gibeah. They were, firstly, the most egregious moral corruption by the men of Gibeah; and then the making and breaking of oaths and covenants by hypocritical Israel. Hence, the sin of Israel at Baal-peor is next mentioned (V.10). Yahweh found Israel like “grapes in the wilderness” and “as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time” is the language of covenant. Israel was Yahweh’s vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7) and His fig tree nation (Joel 1:7,12; Luke 13:6) from whom He expected fruit, but was disappointed continually. Then the theme of conception and birth emerges. All of this is important because this is where Christ’s mind was as he trudged towards Golgotha. We know this because he cited Hos. 10:8 when addressing the weeping women – Luke 23:27-31. He had just heard the

### Gibeah and Christ

- ❖ Hos. 10:8 is cited by Christ on the way to Golgotha – Luke 23:30.
- ❖ Hos. 10:9 – **“O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah...”**
- ❖ The context of Hos. 10 is apposite:
  - ◆ V. 3 – “We have no king...” – Cp. John 19:15 – **“The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.”**
  - ◆ V. 8 – “thorn and thistle” – Cp. John 19:2,5 – **“...the soldiers platted a crown of thorns...”**

leaders of Israel repudiate the covenants of God when they asserted to Pilate “we have no king but Caesar” (the greatest rejection of covenant in history) and his mind went to **Gibeah**. Note the connections between Hos. 9 and 10 with Luke 23 in the slides above.

### Gibeah and Christ

- ❖ Hos. 9:9 – **“They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah.”**
- ❖ Hos. 9:10 – Israel likened to the fruit of the vine and fig tree. Cp. Luke 13:6-7 – **“a fig tree planted in his vineyard.”**
- ❖ Hos. 9:12,14,16 – **“Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them.”** Cp. Christ’s warning – Luke 23:28-29 – **“...weep for yourselves and your children.... Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare...”**

### Gibeah and Christ

- ❖ Hos. 9:16 – **“...their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit...”** Cp. Luke 23:31 – **“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”**

There is no doubt that on the way to the cross the mind of our Lord was firmly fixed on the prophecy of Hosea and its connection with what he had just endured – “the formal abdication of the Messianic hope” (Vincent). How could Yahweh’s people do that? Well, they murdered His beloved Son too!

## Acts 28

V.1-10 – Safe on the island of Malta, Paul and his 275 companions were treated well by the local population for their winter sojourn of several months. Mark 16:18 comes into play – “They shall **take up serpents**; and if they drink any deadly thing, **it shall not hurt them**; they shall **lay hands on the sick**, and they shall recover.” This is exactly what happened. Gathering sticks for the fire, Paul had a viper seize on his hand. He calmly walked it to the fire and shook it off. The locals knowing how potent the venom of the snake was attributed evil worthy of death to him and watched amazed as Paul experienced no effects. There is a lesson and a prophecy in this. The serpent represents human nature and the fire judgement. “The sting (venom) of death is sin” (1 Cor. 15:56). In Christ, there is forgiveness of sin, and in the case of spirit-gifted Apostles, a miraculous way to deal with its consequences. The ‘serpent’ in all its forms will one day be destroyed from the earth – Rev. 20. Paul employed the same power to cure the severe dysentery of the father of the ruler of the island – “Paul entered in, and prayed, and **laid his hands on him**, and healed him.”

V.11-16 – About the beginning of February AD 61 Paul and his Roman guard boarded a ship whose sign was Castor and Pollux. This seemingly unnecessary detail by Luke suggests he saw some significance in it. These were two semi-deities. They were reputed to be twin brothers, sons of Jupiter and Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, king of Sparta. After their death, they are fabled to have been transported to heaven, and made constellations under the name of Gemini, or the Twins. They then received divine honours, and were called the sons of Jupiter. They were supposed to **preside over sailors**, and to be their protectors; hence it was not uncommon to place their image on ships. Paul and his companions had a far greater protector (Ps. 107:23-31) – “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of Yahweh, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto Yahweh in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses” (as he had indeed done). Stopping at several ports, they finally arrived at Puteoli the port of Rome. They met brethren along the way and finally reached Rome in fulfilment of Acts 23:11.

V.17-31 – Paul’s encounter with the Jews in Rome was not particularly fruitful. Extensive teaching surrounding “the Hope of Israel” for which he was bound (V.20) yielded only a few Jewish converts, so Paul focused on the Gentiles (V.28). Sadly, in relation to his Jewish brethren he was moved to cite Isa. 6:9-10 again as Christ had done in John 12:40. Paul had to wait two years to get a hearing before the emperor Nero and having his own residence used it as a haven for “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (V.31). By the time he was released there was a functioning ecclesia of Jews and Gentiles in Rome – Rom. 1:7-8.

## November 13

### Ezra 9

Ecclesial crises are invariably the result of human failure and therefore are inevitable. Biblical history testifies to the fact many times. The method of dealing with a crisis is dictated by the proven seriousness of the offence – Deut. 17:2-5. Israel was the “ecclesia in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). There were many crises in its history. Not the least of these was the case of Baal-peor in Num. 25. The quick and decisive actions of Phinehas were commended by God because the sin combined both immorality and religion – a potent mix. Ezra was now confronted by a very similar situation. What was he to do?

Summary of Ezra 9 & 10	
<b>Preparation</b>	
<b>V.1-2</b>	The problem considered
<b>V.3-4</b>	The mind prepared
<b>Prayer</b>	
<b>V.5-6</b>	The humiliation expressed
<b>V.7</b>	The sin confessed
<b>V.8-9</b>	Yahweh's mercy recalled
<b>V.10-14</b>	Israel's negligence reported
<b>V.15</b>	Yahweh's righteousness vindicated
<b>Aftermath</b>	
<b>10:1-5</b>	The problem shared
<b>10:6-8</b>	The problem acted upon

The Ecclesial Guide (Clause 35) sets out the Scriptural approach to dealing with offences against the laws of God – There are two sorts, both different, and yet both related as regards the spirit and aim with which they ought to be treated: (1) Individual offences; (2) Ecclesial differences. No time ought to be lost in dealing with either one or the other. The longer time that elapses in the application of a remedy, the more difficult does the application of the remedy become. Individual misunderstandings spread coldness beyond the persons affected; and ecclesial differences are liable to settle into chronic alienations, which blight every good work.

V.1 – “The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not **separated** themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their **abominations**” – Two basic problems are highlighted, namely: (1) No separation from the ‘world’; and (2) Involvement in apostate activities. The word “separated” is *badal* – separate, divide; while “abominations” is *to-ebah* meaning disgusting. See the last occ. in Mal. 2:11 which involves basic moral and religious allegiance issues. Here, social intermingling with foreigners in the land resulted in sexual desire towards “strange women” leading to de facto ‘marriages.’ How did this happen? The times had doubtless contributed to it. A period of materialism and laxity between BC 522 and 520 when temple building ceased for 2 years saw the returnees focusing on their own interests with a consequent loss of focus on the principles of the truth.

V.2 – “For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the **holy seed** (*qodesh zera* – Lit. “sacred fruit” = the status of ‘called out ones’) have **mingled themselves** (*arab* – to braid, that is, intermix; give in pledge) with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass” – Failure of leadership is at the forefront of this apostasy. The leaders had failed to fulfil their solemn obligations to lead; and had corrupted themselves and given a bad example which is itself a serious sin (Luke 17:1-2). Malachi comments on it (Rotherham) – “Judah, had profaned, the holy place of Yahweh, which he had loved, and hath taken to himself the daughter of a foreign GOD” (Mal. 2:11). This apostasy involved both sexual immorality and religion.

This transgression was repeated in the times of Nehemiah with a difference (Neh. 13:23-27). The latter were contracted marriages with children old enough to speak, and so in applying the remedy there was no forced separation. It was different in Ezra 10.



V.3 – “And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished” – Ezra was not insular. He was deeply emotionally stirred. The news produced a powerful response in him and a model prayer. He tore his garments in frustration, and plucked out some hair from head and beard, and sat “astonied” (*shamem* – to stun, grow numb; be devastated).

V.4 – “Then were assembled unto me every one that **trembled** at the words of the God of Israel” – Trembling at the Word of God is fundamental to finding acceptance with Him. The word is *chared* – trembling, fearful, afraid. This is the 3rd occurrence of 6 in the O.T. The last 3 occurrences are in Ezra 10:3; Isa. 66:2,5 – “to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and **trembleth** at my word.” Ezra sat motionless until the “evening sacrifice” (i.e. 3 pm), the time for the burnt offering of continual dedication to God.

V.5 – “And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto Yahweh my God” – Ezra’s model prayer follows the initial shock, devastation and “heaviness” he experienced that moved others to share his concern. The ‘principles’ of Ezra’s prayer include; (1) Unreserved confession of transgression; (2) Acceptance of communal responsibility; (3) Acknowledgement of spurned blessings; (4) Admission of the reason for failure; (5) Reaffirmation of Divine commandments; and (6) Upholding the righteousness of God – “we cannot stand before thee because of this.”

## Hosea 10

V.1-2 – “Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself” – A fruitless vine is fit only for destruction (Ezek. 15:1-5; John 15:1-6). The theme of chapter 9:10 is continued. Idolatry had diverted fruit from Yahweh to false gods which is effectively to the idolater himself.

V.3-4 – “For now they shall say, **We have no king**, because we feared not Yahweh; what then should a king do to us?” – It was self-worship that finally led God’s people to say before Pilate – “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15) which Vincent describes as “the formal abdication of the Messianic hope.” How could they ever reach that point? V.4 provides the answer – “They have spoken words, **swearing falsely** in making a **covenant**.” Right from the very beginning Israel as a nation failed to keep covenant. Their assertion at Mt Horeb “All that Yahweh hath spoken we will do” was consistently broken until an entire generation perished in the wilderness. The events of Gibeah (Judges 19 to 21) is the example that Hosea is referring to here (V.9). At Gibeah, oaths and promises were made and broken in one form or another. This highlights how important the keeping of covenants is to Yahweh.

V.5-8 – The “Bethaven” of V.5, and the “Aven” of V.8 are a reference to Bethel the original home of Jeroboam’s apostasy that persisted to the times of Hosea. This is why “the calves” (plural because Jeroboam made two) are mentioned. It seems one may have been given away to the Assyrians as “its people mourn for it, and so do its idolatrous priests – those who rejoiced over it and over its glory— for it has departed from them” (ESV). Clarke in his commentary on V.6 says under a heading “A present to King Jareb” – If this be a proper name, the person intended is not known in history: but it is most likely that Pul, king of Assyria, is intended, to whom Menahem, king of Israel, appears to have given one of the golden calves, to insure his assistance.

“the high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed” – What the Assyrians left untouched in BC 722 Josiah destroyed a hundred years later (2 Kings 23:15). The judgements pending would only be equaled in AD 70. This is what Christ meant on the way to the cross when he cited Hos. 10:8 in Luke 23:30 – “Then shall they begin to say to the

mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.” The Lord’s mind was clearly in the context of Hosea 9 and 10 as the almost unbelievable words of his **Jewish** enemies rang in his ears – “We have no king but Caesar.” Even Pilate saw things correctly when he asked – “Shall I crucify **your King**?” But they fulfilled Hos. 10:3 (Rotherham) – “We have no king,—for we revere not Yahweh, and what could, a king, do for us?” But Pilate was not to be contradicted – “Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.**”

V.9 – “O Israel, thou hast sinned from **the days of Gibeah**: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake (*nâšag* – to reach) them” – Israel never learnt the lessons of Gibeah. They suffered the loss of 40,000 men because they had failed to deal with the apostasy of the tribe of Dan who had established Micah’s idolatry and his ‘priest’ (Moses’ grandson) in Laish in the north (the forerunner of Jeroboam’s apostasy), and in their hypocrisy made several oaths in dealing with the crime of Gibeah, only to break or twist each one. Utter disaster overtook Israel with the loss of a complete tribe except for 600 male survivors. They still had not grasped that lesson – it had not ‘reached’ them. They continued with Jeroboam’s apostasy and broke Yahweh’s covenant.

V.10-13 – (Rotherham) “When I please, then will I chastise them,—and there shall be gathered together against them—peoples, they being harnessed to their two iniquities.” Israel could not be moved from their sin even though God had trained them to serve Him (“as an heifer that is taught”), and even allowed them benefits (“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” – Deut. 25:4), but when the yoke was gently laid upon her, she refused. Centuries of apostasy and rebellion would lead to their dispersion, unless they made a dramatic change to their lives. Sadly, it would have to wait for the latter days when finally “I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods” and they will willingly take the advice to “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek Yahweh, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” That is the wisest choice at any time for all who seek a covenant relationship with God. We reap what we sow – “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity.”

V.14-15 – “all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children” (an awful Assyrian practice). “Shalman” is seemingly Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who came up against Hoshea, early in his reign, “and he became a servant to him and brought him a present” (2 Kings 17:3). Bethel would receive the same brutal treatment dished out to other cities in the path of Shalmaneser like Betharbel.

## Colossians 1

The epistles known as Ephesians and Colossians are very similar in content and complementary to each other, which is why Paul says epistles of this type were for general circulation – Col. 4:16. It is suggested the epistle to the Laodiceans is actually what is called the letter to the Ephesians, but this is of little moment because of their general nature.

V.9-12 – Paul mentions several indispensable fundamentals of life in the Truth that had been observed in the Colossian ecclesia – (1) The need to “be **filled** with the knowledge of his (God’s) will in all **wisdom** and **spiritual understanding**”; which leads to (2) Walking “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being **fruitful** in every good work, and **increasing** in the knowledge of God”; but there being room for improvement he encourages; (3) “**Strengthened** with all might, according to his glorious power (through

the Word), unto all **patience** and longsuffering with **joyfulness**” (remember Deut. 28:47 – “Because thou servedst not Yahweh thy God with **joyfulness**, and with **gladness** of heart”); and finally in gratitude “give **thanks** to the Father who has made us fit to receive our share of the inheritance of God’s people in Light” (Weymouth).

V.13-14 – While the Diaglott translation is a little clunky, it gets to the root of V.13 – “who delivered us from the authority of the darkness, and **caused a change of sides** for the kingdom of the son of the love of himself.” We are not there yet, but we are now on the right side, and in Christ “the son of His love” we have forgiveness of sins.

V.15-23 – Paul launches into a beautiful description of the status of the glorified Christ. This section becomes more intelligible when the bias of the 1611 translators is set aside. V.16 (Weymouth) – “For **in Him** was created the universe of things in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, thrones, dominions, principedoms, powers--all were created, and exist **through and for Him**.” In other words, as he said, “thou lovedst me **before the foundation of the world**” – John 17:24. Though not born until the end of the fourth millennium after Creation, he was always in the mind of his Father.

V.19 – “For it pleased the Father that in him should **all fulness dwell**.” It needs to be remembered that there was no difference in the mental and moral ‘glory’ of Christ before and after his immortalization. This is the point of Rom. 6:3-5. We are called upon to follow the glorified Christ, for nothing changed morally when he was glorified – “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8).

V.24-29 – Paul’s numerous sacrifices and sufferings to preach the Gospel were designed to duplicate in many others the same commitment to Christ that they saw in him.

## November 14

### Ezra 10

V.1 – “Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore” – Ezra’s profound reaction deeply affected his fellow leaders and galvanized them and the people into action. Consensus and cooperation among leaders is the best way to solve ecclesial issues, but it is never easy. One of those leaders, Shechaniah, chimed in with an acknowledgement of transgression and a proposal for a way forward and who should lead the way – “Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it” (V.4).

V.2-4 – “Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the **wives**, and such as are born of them” – The fact that some children had been born is highlighted in V.44, but it is necessary to establish the status of the women involved. The word “wives” is *nashiym* (BDB) – woman, wife, female. Strong’s definition of *ishshâh* or *nâshîym* is “the first form is the feminine of H376 (*ish*) or H582 (*enosh*); the second form is an irregular plural; a woman (used in the same wide sense as H582).” The word occurs 12 times in Ezra – first occ. 2:61 of a ‘wife’; next 10:1 ‘women’; then 10 times from 10:2 to 10:44 as ‘wives’. Rotherham and Young’s Literal translate all occurrences in Ezra 10 as “women.” It is evident from the context that in the great majority of cases these women were not wives, but ‘concubines’ taken in addition to wives. That this was practiced at the time is clear from the events of Neh. 13 and Mal. 2 where some men of Judah had dismissed their covenant wives in favour of strange women – and “married the daughter of a strange god” (Mal. 2:11).

V.5-17 – “Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swear” – Ezra began a lengthy and painful process of reform. It was even more painful because– “It was the ninth month” (V.9), when from mid-December winter strikes with rain and cold. It is not always comfortable to reform in such conditions. These are the steps to reform.

Step 1 (V.7-8) – Ensure that all involved understand the seriousness of the issue and then call them together.

Step 2 (V.11) – Ensure the facts of the case are well understood and defined.

Step 3 (V.11) – Making open confession and acceptance of personal responsibility.

Step 4 (V.12) – Repentance that leads to corrective action.

Step 5 (V.13-14) – Agree on a practical and timely way forward.

V.15 – (Rotherham) – “Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, made a stand against this,—and, Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, helped them.”

Opposition is nearly always present in times of reform. It is not clear whether this opposition was against the rejection of the foreign women or against the delayed process agreed in Ezra 10:14. Opposition and criticism may not be comfortable but provide opportunity to re-examine proposals and plans.

V.18-43 – List the names of all the identified offenders who had taken defacto ‘wives’ = 113. Four priests of the high priest’s family were found guilty. Their leadership of the nation had failed by bad example and inability to uphold Divine principles. In V.20-22 an additional 13 priests were guilty, making a total of 17 (10% of all) confirming Ezra 9:2. In V.23-24, 6 Levites, one ‘singer’ and three ‘porters’ (men responsible for teaching and serving others) let their brethren down.

V.44 – The Interlinear Scripture Analyzer translates – “All of these had taken up foreign **women**, and among them there were **women** who had even borne sons” – This clearly implies that these women were defactos and not covenant wives. In Nehemiah’s time marriage covenants had been broken and made, so separation is not insisted upon as here. Children in Neh. 13 were old enough to speak the language of their foreign mothers.

Ezra disappears from the record until Neh. 8, 13 years later. Did he return to Babylon? We do not know, but the lesson is clear. No single individual can be expected to carry the burden of ecclesial leadership for a sustained period of time. Success depends on the emergence of leaders and teachers who can fill the breach. Where this fails and future leaders do not emerge the future of an ecclesia is at serious risk, as history testifies.

A number of practical implications arise from this sad episode. The first is that a personal relationship with God is the best defense against carnal desire. This close relationship is our greatest need today in the times of Noah and Lot with its assaults on many fronts enabled by technology – Luke 17:26-28; 18:1. Next, prayer and the reading and study of the Word are the bulwarks of spiritual survival.

The modern danger of Humanism which normalizes godlessness, rampant profligacy and shameless immorality is now joined by Post-Modernism which is not new – Judges 21:25 – ISV – “Back in those days, Israel didn’t yet have a king, so **each person did whatever seemed right in his own opinion.**”

“According to postmodern philosophy, society is in a state of constant change. There is no absolute version of reality, no absolute truths. Postmodern religion strengthens the perspective of the individual and weakens the strength of institutions and religions that deal

with objective realities.” But we know there is such a thing as truth — “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

## Hosea 11

The prophet goes back a third time to the early times of Israel (cp. Hos. 10:1; 9:10), and shows how the people had repaid their God, for all the proofs of His love, with nothing but ingratitude and unfaithfulness.

V.1 – “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” – There are two sons in view – “Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Ex. 4:22); and of Jesus Christ – “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matt. 2:15).

V.2-4 – “As **they called them**, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images” – The “they” who called “them” (Israel) are all the leaders (like Moses) and prophets that Yahweh provided to His “son” through their history that He might teach “Ephraim” to walk aright – “I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms,” but it was in vain because “they departed from before me, they, to the Baals, sacrificed, and, to the images, offered incense” (Rotherham). Yahweh had done all He could do. He drew them “with the bands of love” (Rotherham) and took “off the yoke on their jaws” and provided food, but they pursued their false gods, including Baal (V.2).

V.5-7 – “He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return” – Israel had come out of Egypt but some sought to return there in the face of Assyrian invasion, however, they would end up in Assyria in captivity. God’s messengers called Israel to “the Most High,” but “none at all would exalt him.”

V.8-12 – “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?” – This section reflects the tenor of the book. Israel deserved annihilation like the cities of the plain, “Admah” and “Zeboim” (Gen. 14:8; 19:24-25), but Yahweh had made a promise to Abraham that He was determined to fulfil, hence, “I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee.” In the latter days “they shall walk after Yahweh” as He will recover them from dispersion (“as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria”), and install them in their own land. While things were terminally bad in Israel, there were some good things in Judah. This was because of the reign of Hezekiah (Hos. 1:1) – “Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One” (ESV).

## Colossians 2

Most ecclesias in the first century were troubled by the activities of Judaisers who having come to the faith in Christ had not abandoned their commitment to the Law of Moses, and also by Gentiles who had not entirely given up Greek philosophy. Paul leads into this subject by writing in V.4 – “And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with **enticing words**” and followed up with V.8 – “Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy** and vain deceit, after the **tradition** of men, after the **rudiments** of the world (law-keeping – Gal. 4:3), and not after Christ.” The answer was to walk in Christ being “**Rooted and built up in him**, and **stablished** in the faith, as ye have been taught” (V.7).

V.10-15 – Exalting Christ, Paul makes some very important points. Firstly, he compares baptism into Christ to circumcision (V.11-13), for it is, like the death of Christ, the cutting off of the flesh. Secondly, he demonstrates the fulfilment of Gen. 3:15 in V.14-15.

V.15 – “Having spoiled” – *apekduomai* (singular, masculine, middle voice) – to divest wholly one’s self; wholly to strip off for one’s self. Lit. – “having stripped.” (Cp. “spoil” V.8 – *sulagogeo* – to lead away as booty).

“principalities and powers” – *arche* = chief (akin to *arkon*), and *exousia* = authorities. Both these words are preceded by the definite article. The reference is to Roman and Jewish authorities who were complicit in Christ’s death.

“made a shew” – *diegmatizo* – to exhibit. This he did by bearing their nature but denying it.

“openly” – *en parrhesia* – Lit. “in public.” Denotes the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity. Christ did that on the cross “crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24), and destroyed in himself the bias of the nature that motivated and completely dominated his murderers.

“triumphing over” – *thriambeuo* (singular, masculine) – to make an acclamatory procession; i.e. to conquer. Lit. “leading in triumph.”

“them” – *autous* (plural, masculine) – Lit. “themselves.”

“in it” – *en auto* (singular, masculine, dative case – the case of personal interest). Lit. “**within himself.**” Christ’s triumph over the serpent in himself was complete on the tree – thus he triumphed over the power that motivated Jewish and Roman principalities to crucify him. How many perceived who was the true victor on that day?

V.16-23 – Paul repudiates Judaism (V.16). and Greek philosophy (V.18). Weymouth’s translation notes that these false prophets claimed to have seen visions (different to KJV) – “Let no one defraud you of your prize, priding himself on his humility and on his worship of the angels, and taking his stand on **the visions he has seen**, and idly puffed up with his unspiritual thoughts.” V.19 is very similar to Eph. 4:13-16.

V.20-23 is a final rejection of Judaism with its outward show of observance of law by negativity that he called “will worship.” The final phrase of V.23 is better rendered by the ESV – “but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”

## November 15

### Nehemiah 1

The Book of Nehemiah records the last historical incidents of the Old Testament, for Nehemiah was contemporary with Malachi. In the Hebrew Bible, Nehemiah forms part of the Book of Ezra, and together with Esther provides a trio setting forth the Divine purpose with Israel – Esther = Preservation; Ezra = Restoration; Nehemiah = Reconstruction.

Much of this book is written in the first person, indicating that it consists of extracts from the diary of Nehemiah. These are interspersed with official records selected under Divine guidance. Nothing is known of Nehemiah’s beginning of days, nor end of life, but the Scriptures testify he lived up to the meaning of his name – “The consolation of Yah.”

- He was the model of a good reformer. He allowed nothing to turn him aside from a task he had set himself.
- He asked of no man to bring a sacrifice or shoulder a burden, which he himself was not willing to shoulder.
- He was able to fill others with enthusiasm, because he himself felt enthusiastic about the things of God.

- When we read of the passion and zeal with which Nehemiah went about cleansing the Temple, we see the spark of Divine indignation that was also revealed in Christ (John 2:17).
- Nehemiah was noble, generous, highly principled, courageous, upright. Stern integrity was blended with great humility, kindness and princely hospitality.
- As a statesman he revealed forethought, wisdom in counsel, manifested with vigour. When dealing with fellowman he showed neither fear nor favour, aiming only at doing what was right. He was by no means a respecter of persons and was most remarkable for his piety and singleness of heart with which he walked before Yahweh. In all his actions he asked for God's guidance and blessing, and he knew that his reward rested with the Almighty.

### **Nehemiah – man of prayer**

- When the city of Jerusalem lay as yet deserted, he called upon God (Neh. 1:6).
- His request to the king of Persia was preceded by prayer (Neh. 2:4).
- When building the wall he was insulted, mocked at, threatened. He takes refuge to prayer (Neh. 4:9).
- His enemies endeavour to ensnare him – he seeks help from God (Neh. 6:9,14).
- When returned from Persia he meets opposition on every side, but is confident in prayer (Neh. 13:22,29,31).

### **Nehemiah – man of action**

- His energy is remarkable. Yet with all his vigour he is prudent. He takes precautions (Neh. 2:9).
- He prays – but sets a watch (Neh. 4:9), and baffles Sanballat's attempts to ensnare him (Neh. 6:11).
- He knew fear (Neh. 2:2), but showed genuine courage.
- He was threatened (Neh. 2:19), but refused to be intimidated.
- The result – a thorough reform! Judah was strengthened to meet the challenges it had to face until the appearing of the Messiah.

V.1-3 – “Nehemiah” – “The consolation of Yahweh”. This he proved to be. Son of “Hachaliah” – “Yahweh is hidden”. It was the beginning of winter (“Chisleu” – 9th month of the Jewish sacrificial year). The setting was “Shushan the palace” the seat of the Persian rulers (cp. Esther 1:2-3). Known today as Susa.

News related by his brother Hanani (“gracious”) and companions about the state of things in Jerusalem broke Nehemiah's heart. The remnant that had returned in BC 536 under the Decree of Cyrus were “in great affliction and reproach: (and) the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.”

It was BC 502 and 34 years had passed since the first Jews returned from captivity in Babylon through the decree of Cyrus the Persian (Ezra 1:1) in BC 536. In BC 516, 14 years previously, the House of God had been completed despite great difficulties (Ezra 6:14-15). In BC 515 – One year after the Temple restoration, Ezra had been sent from Persia to Jerusalem in the 7th year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7), but had likely returned to Persia soon afterwards.

V.4-11 – Devastated by the report, Nehemiah “sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” – The circumstances revealed the qualities of Nehemiah as a God-fearing man, revealing him to be a man of prayer and deep faith in Yahweh. The prayer contains the following elements:

An acknowledgement of the character of God – V.5;

A humble petition for Him to hearken – V.6;

A confession of sin on behalf of the nation – V.7;

A remembrance of Divine promises – V.8-9;

A declaration of faith in the unlimited power of God – V.10;

A reference to the privileged status of the people for whom he prayed – V.10;

An impassioned plea for help in time of personal need – V.11;



Acknowledgement the powerful king was but mortal – “in the sight of this **man**” – V.11

“For I was the king’s cupbearer” – Such were important men, officers of high rank who were responsible for serving drinks at the courts of the kings of antiquity. They were men of high trust, watching over their master for fear of him being poisoned, and because of this they often tasted the wine before serving it.



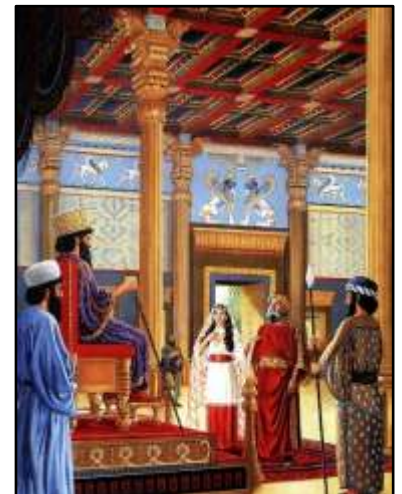
## Nehemiah 2

V.1-8 – “in the month **Nisan**, in the twentieth year of **Artaxerxes** the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence” – The month was originally called “Abib” (Ex. 12:2), but was called “Nisan” after the captivity. It was the first month of the Jewish sacrificial year. Four months had passed since chapter 1. Nehemiah was likely serving the wine for the first time after receiving the sad news of the state of Jerusalem.

“Artaxerxes” is a title signifying “Great King.” Secular history identifies this Artaxerxes as Artaxerxes Longi-manus (BC 464-424), but internal Scriptural evidence indicates that the “Artaxerxes” of Nehemiah must be the same ruler as “Darius” of Ezra 6:14 (Darius Hystaspes).

V.2-8 – “I was sore afraid” – The king had noticed his countenance, and this was a capital offence (see Esther 4:2). Human monarchs had good reason to observe body language and Darius knew this was sadness in his servant. Nehemiah’s response was to explain the reason for his sadness. The remarkable thing here was that when the king said, “For what dost thou make request?” Nehemiah “prayed to the God of heaven,” (obviously in his mind) before making his request to be permitted to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. He acknowledged in that instant a greater King than the one he stood before (see Prov. 3:6; Phil. 4:6).

V.6 – “(the queen also sitting by him)” – It quite unusual for the Queen to be mentioned in scenes like this. It is evident that this queen was Esther and she would have assured Darius of the reliability of Nehemiah, so “I set him a time” – See Neh. 5:14; 13:6. Nehemiah requested “letters to the governors beyond the river” (Euphrates) which indicates the unsettled nature of the country at that time, and the opposition the Jews were experiencing. Hence, the sad situation. So he was granted “a letter unto Asaph” (Sig. “the collector”) who doubtless kept count of the king’s property (V.8). The letters were the seal of the ‘commandment’ of Dan. 9:24-25.



V.8 – “the good hand of my God upon me” – Nehemiah saw the success of his petition as the result of Yahweh’s blessing. Recognizing the overshadowing hand of Divine providence in their labours was characteristic of both Ezra and Nehemiah – Ezra 7:9; 8:18,22; Neh. 2:8,18.

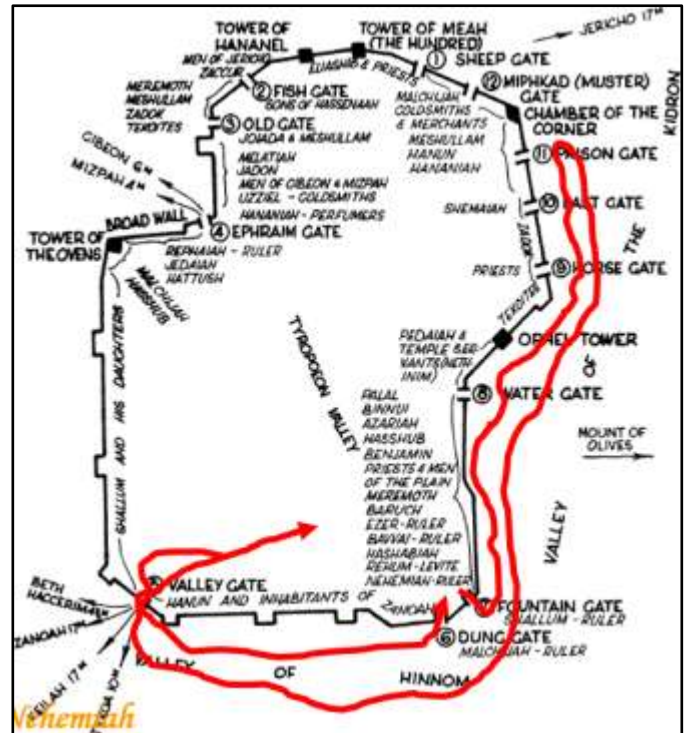
V.9 – “the king had sent captains and horsemen with me” – (Contrast Ezra 8:22). By the king’s command Nehemiah accepted the protection that Ezra had turned down.

In V.10, “Sanballat the Horonite” (probably of Beth-horon, the “house of hollowness”) a deadly enemy of the Jews who sought to insinuate himself into their good graces. His name

means “the enemy is secret,” and he was probably Governor of Samaria. He was allied with “Tobiah the Ammonite” (“Yahweh is good”) another enemy of Israel – see V.19; 4:3,7; 6:12,14,17,19; 13:4,7,8. Ammonites were adversaries of Yahweh (Deut. 23:3) and “it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”

V.11-13 – “So I came to Jerusalem, and I was there three days” – Nehemiah was a true leader. After arriving he used the first three days to ascertain the entire situation, and doubtless to interview the elders of the Jews. Then he undertook an inspection of the walls at night without fanfare starting at “the gate of the valley” leading to the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna); then “into the dung-gate, situated on the south-east corner of the wall” (Rotherham). Through it, refuse of the city was taken to the valley of Hinnom. He found the “gates were consumed with fire” allowing their enemies and strangers free access to the city at any time. Accordingly, its inhabitants were defenseless.

V.14-15 – “Then I went on to the gate of the fountain” – Near the Pool of Siloah on the east (cp. 3:15) where there was “no place to pass” as huge masses of broken masonry cluttered the way. Alighting from the animal, he picked his way over the rubbish and ruins in the night, along the steep, rough Kidron Valley, and then “turned back” retracing his steps from the Kedron into the Hinnom valley, and entered by the “gate of the valley,” the way he came (V.13). The map above shows Nehemiah’s route.



V.16-18 – “the rulers knew not whither I went” – He used the greatest secrecy, ascertaining what work had to be done, and then carefully planning its execution, finally submitted his plan to the elders with the appeal, “Let us build up the walls, that it be no longer a reproach.” It was a reproach that after so long a time the city should reveal such evidence of neglect. It was the subject of ridicule to the world, and this reflected upon Yahweh. It was time to “Let us rise up and build.” His enthusiasm was contagious. All indecision was at an end, but now the challenges would soon come.

V.19 – “But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem (“firm, strong”) the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn” – This is often the most difficult opposition to combat. Men hate to be ridiculed. They added threats to their ridicule (“Will ye rebel against the king”) by suggesting an appeal to the court of Persia.

V.20 – “The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” – Cp. Ezra 4:3 – Zerubbabel had given his adversaries a similar reply. This was an expression of faith, based upon previous experience (cp. V.8,18).

## Hosea 12

V.1 – “Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind” – See chap. 11:12 – “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies.” Lies and deception are the subject of V.1. The kings of Israel made agreements with Assyria (the east wind) as Hoshea was to do near the end. However, when the burden of tribute became too heavy, they sought assistance from Egypt. In so doing, they used the only product that was prolific in Israel – olive oil and its byproducts.

V.2-6 – “Yahweh hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish **Jacob** according to his ways” – Jacob is the generic name for “all Israel” (Israel and Judah). As in Jer. 30 and 31, the life and experiences of Jacob have a national significance. Jacob’s problem was that he had hold of Esau’s heel at birth. The spiritual meaning of this was his connection with Edom (Adam), the problem we all have at birth. In wrestling with the angel, he “had power” (*sarah* – to prevail) with Elohim.

V.4 – “Yea, he had power (*suwr* – to vanquish; to rule) over the angel, and prevailed” (*yakol* – to prevail, overcome). How is it possible for any mortal man to prevail over God? The answer is given – “he **wept**, and **made supplication** unto him.” The fact is that Yahweh’s character is such that He cannot resist the appeals of His faithful and genuine servants. The contextual proof that this is so is found in chapter 11:12 – “Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.” This is a reference to Hezekiah (Hos. 1:1) who in the extremity of the Assyrian invasion in his 14th year fell terminally ill and was told by Isaiah he would die – “Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Yahweh” (2 Kings 20:2), and was given a 15 year extension of life. In that way Judah yet ruled with God.

“he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us” – This refers to Jacob’s second visit to Bethel (Gen. 35:9-15) when he finally became free of the “Syrian” on the death of Rachel (Gen. 35:8-9,19-20). The lesson is for us, because every servant of Yahweh born with the hand on Esau’s heel (so to speak) needs to recognize that God will hearken to earnest prayer in the direst of circumstances.

V.6 – “Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy (*chesed* – loving-kindness – Ex. 34:6) and judgement (*mishpat* – justice = Divine ethics and characteristics) and wait (*qavah* – to bind together, perhaps by twisting. Echoes of Jacob’s wrestling!) on thy God continually” – (RSV) – “So you by the help of thy God, return.” We need to intertwine our lives with God and seek to manifest His character.

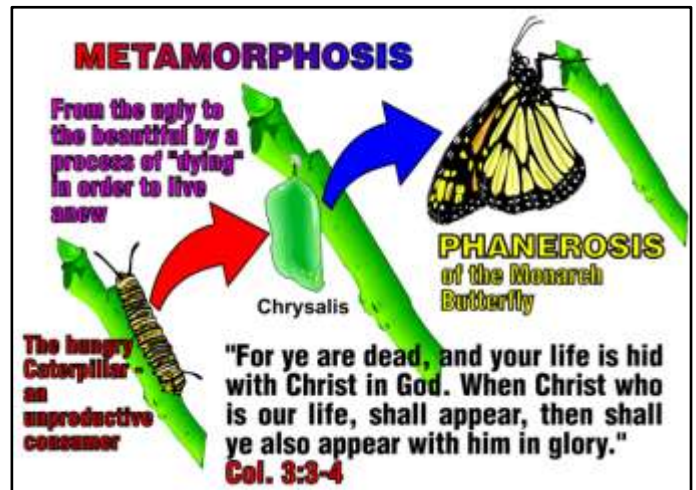
V.7-14 – The remainder of the chapter returns to the theme of the lies and deceit of chapter 11:12 and V.1. In vain, Yahweh had “spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets,” because “Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly.”

## Colossians 3

V.1-5 – “If ye then be **risen** with Christ (being baptized into his death and resurrection), seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your **affection** (*phroneo* – to exercise the mind), on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead (to sin), and **your life is hid with Christ in God**. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Like the dormant, but prospectively beautiful Monarch butterfly, the once insatiable grub (its original self) will be displayed in all its glory when it bursts forth from the ‘chrysalis’ of mortality, providing we now “Mortify therefore (our) members which are upon the earth” (V.5), which uncontrolled proclivities constitute a form of idolatry.



V.6-17 – Paul lists a series of behaviors of “the children of disobedience” which must be eschewed by those who have “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” They must, as “the elect of God, holy and beloved,” put on “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering,” and “over all these put on love, which is the perfect bond of union” (Weymouth). They were exhorted to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” so that Christ dominated every aspect of life.



V.18-25 – Paul follows on to the apply the above principles to everyday practical life in the home and in the workplace (through to chapter 4:1).

## Colossians 4

V.1-6 – “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with **thanksgiving**” – Paul emphasized the importance of prayer and highlighted one of its most critical elements – **thanksgiving**. Wisdom towards those “without” is enjoined and this is best shown by sound speech – “Let your language be always seasoned with the salt of grace, so that you may know how to give every man a fitting answer” (Weymouth). Salt preserves from corruption, and our speech should be free of the carnal and disorderly.

V.7-18 – Unlike its companion epistle to the Ephesians, this epistle ends with salutations and admonitions as it is written specifically to an ecclesia.

V.9 – Interestingly, the epistle was carried by Tychicus “with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you,” along with the letter to Philemon concerning Onesimus.

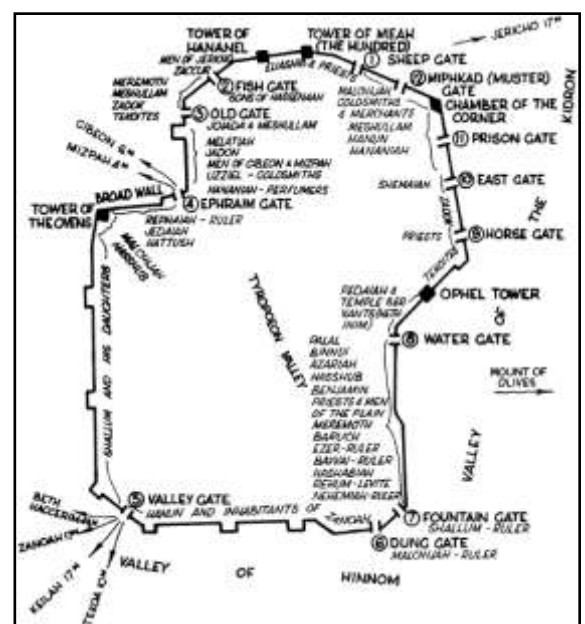
## November 16

### Nehemiah 3

This chapter lists the repairers of the wall of Jerusalem.

V.1 – “**Eliashib** the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they built the **sheep gate**” – The map at right shows the sheep gate as number 1 on the north east side of the city. Then working anti-clockwise, the significant landmarks on the wall (gates and towers) are numbered 1 to 12. Portions of the wall in between are shown and the builders on those portions listed.

The picture of willingness and cooperation among the many teams of labourers with diverse backgrounds and skills is tarnished because the very first name provided is “**Eliashib** the high priest.”



He later became allied in marriage to Sanballat (Josephus Ant. 11:7; Neh. 13:28), and also to Tobiah (Neh. 13:4), the Jews' enemies.

### Hosea 13

V.1-3 – Rotherham – “When Ephraim, spake, there was terror, exalted was, he, in Israel,—but, when he became guilty with Baal, then he died” – The proud tribe of Ephraim was known to create terror in others (Judges 8:1; 12:1), but apostasy and idolatry created a death sentence from God. They proved to be incorrigible, stooping even to human sacrifice and kissing the inert idol – “Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!” (ESV V.2). This practice was revealed to Elijah when he was told there were 7,000 in Israel who had not turned to Baal (1 Kings 19:18 – “every mouth which hath not kissed him”).

Accordingly, they are likened to “the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away” and chaff and smoke blown away. The final phase of judgement was at hand.

V.4-6 – As in chapter 12:9, Israel are reminded that Yahweh had brought them out of Egypt – “Yet, I, Yahweh, have been thy God from the land of Egypt” (Rotherham). So much evidence had been given that He was the only living God in the wilderness and beyond, but Israel went their own way.

V.7-8 – Lion, leopard, bear and wild beast would be sent against Israel. There is a clear reference to the four beasts of Daniel 7 here. These were the four horns (powers) of Zech. 1:18-19 that would ravage God's people – “the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”

V.9-13 – “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself” – Self-destruction is the theme of the remainder of the chapter. From the day that Israel rejected Yahweh as their King and demanded a king like the nations, the writing was on the wall. Yahweh gave them a king in their own likeness, namely, Saul who could not keep a covenant which the nation repeated throughout its history – “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.” He was to do the same with the covenant-breaking nation. Their sins were locked in – “The **iniquity** of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid,” as Job had said using the same word, “My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and Thou sewest up mine **iniquity**” (Job 14:17). The only remedy was immediate judgement like the sudden arrival of birth pangs, but the birth that followed signaled it would not be the end of God's chosen race.

V.14 – ESV – “I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?” – This is an amazing example of how Yahweh can weave the promise of eternal redemption into a prophecy concerning terrible judgements coming upon His people of Israel. Not only will He ultimately redeem Jacob in order to fulfil His promises to the fathers of Israel, but in the meantime while Israel has slipped aside (Rom. 11:22-23), salvation would be offered to the Gentiles. This is why the Apostle Paul cites Hos. 13:14 in 1 Cor. 15:55 – “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” The ultimate redemption of Israel will be concomitant with the glorification of the Bride of Christ (Rom. 11:15) – “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”

V.15-16 – The Assyrian “east wind” was sweeping in and “Samaria shall become desolate,” and incredible suffering hung over God's unrepentant people – “their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up” (one of the most hideous wartime practices of the callous Assyrians (the latter day “Assyrian” will be no different – Zech. 14:2).

## 1 Thessalonians 1

The epistles to the Thessalonians are said to be the earliest preserved letters written by the Apostle Paul to ecclesias. The fascinating thing is that the first letter was apparently written a little over 5 months after he had formed the ecclesia on his second missionary journey (Acts 17). The ecclesia was already suffering serious persecution. Like us, they needed the return of Christ, and it has often been pointed out that, though chapter divisions are not from the Spirit, every chapter of these epistles mentions the return of Christ.

The 5 chapters of 1 Thessalonians might be summarized this way:

1. The model **Ecclesia** and the Christ-based life – Faith, love, patience.
2. The model **Servant** and his reward.
3. The model **Brother** and the believer's sanctification.
4. The model **Walk** and the believer's hope.
5. The model **Walk** and the day of the Lord.

The layout of this epistle can be expressed another way – 1:1 – Salutation

**A.** Characteristics of the Ecclesia – 1:2-9 – In public – Its walk before men; 1:10 – Motivation – The advent of the Lord

**B.** The advent of the Apostle – 2:1-16 – The power of his presence; 2:17-3:13 – The empathy of his absence (2:19-20 – Rationale – The advent of the Lord)

**C.** Characteristics of the Ecclesia – 4:1-12 – Individual walk before God

**D.** The advent of the Lord – 4:13-18 – Promise of resurrection and glory; 5:1-11 – The moral demands of his absence

**E.** Characteristics of true brethren – 5:12-13 – Honour those who show the way; 5:14-22 – Behaviour in the house of God; 5:23-24 – The objective – Sanctification; 5:25-28 – Final appeal and greeting

The two key messages of Chap. 1 are V.5 – the power of Paul's example; and V.9 – the power of true and complete conversion which had turned the Thessalonian brethren and sisters away from the deeply ingrained idolatry of the Greeks enshrined in the 52 peaks of the Mount Olympus range (visible from Thessalonica) where the Greek gods were said to reside.

## 1 Thessalonians 2

V.1-16 – Paul makes three basic points – (1) His **integrity** – no deceit, moral impurity, guile or self-interest; (2) His **gentleness and concern** as a nursing father of his children; (3) The murderous **persecution** of the Judaistic Jews who sought to deny salvation to the Gentiles. All three have roots in the life of Abraham in Genesis 16 and 17.

V.7 – Paul's gentleness among them “as a **nurse** cherisheth her children” and a comforting **father** (V.11) is grounded in Gen. 17 where Yahweh revealed himself to Abram as “El Shaddai” and demanded absolute integrity if he was to be delegated with Yahweh's fatherhood (Gen. 17:1; Rom. 4:17). The title **El Shaddai** is derived from *shad* – the breast (as nourishing); and *shadad* – burly; i.e. powerful; hence to devastate, destroy. However, the primary meaning of El Shaddai is the strength of the nourishers = building the Divine family – Gen. 49:25. In Num. 11:11-12, Moses is represented as a forerunner of Paul after God's own example – Acts 13:18 (KJV margin).

V.14-16 – Paul's criticism of the Jews who were “contrary to all men” is based on the Allegory he outlines in Gal. 4:22-31. **Ishmael** is the type of circumcised law-keeping Jews. He is described in Gen. 16:12 as “a wild **ass** (symbol of Israel) of a man, his hand, **against every one**, and every one's hand against him” (Rotherham).

V.17-20 – Paul’s earnest desire was to be with his Thessalonian brethren and sisters but relentless and vicious persecution prevented it. His deep love for them is revealed in the closing words of the chapter – “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.”

## November 17

### Nehemiah 4

V.1 – “when Sanballat heard that we build the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews” – The word “mocked” is *la’ag* – to deride; by implication (as if imitating a foreigner) to speak unintelligibly. The enemies of the Jews began with ridicule. When that didn’t work, they resorted to threats and violence.

V.2 – “he (Sanballat) spake before the army of Samaria” – Guile and intimidation had already been used (2:19-20). Now Sanballat incited the local army against the Jews evidently with authority from the Samaritan governor – “will they fortify themselves” – i.e. will they complete the walls of defence?; “will they sacrifice” – i.e. dedicate the walls by sacrifice? Cp. Neh. 12:27,43; “will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish?” – There was “so much rubbish” that the Jews were hindered in their work (V.10). In building the spiritual walls of Zion (our work today) there is much rubbish to clutter the work, but we must labour persistently in faith.

V.3 – “if a fox go up, he shall even brake down their stone wall” – Cp. Lam 5:18 – “Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.” Tobiah mocked the faithful efforts of men who laboured under severe difficulties.

V.4-5 – “Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head” – So Nehemiah set the ridicule of the adversaries before God for Him to answer (see Ps. 123:3-4; 79:12). Nehemiah knew that he that cursed Israel was cursed of God (Gen. 27:29), so he prayed, “let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee” for persistence in sin precludes forgiveness. Their ridicule and opposition was actually against Yahweh (cp. Ezek. 35:12-13).

V.6 – “So built we the wall...for the people had a mind to work” – They prayed and worked – it is invariably a successful approach. In spite of all the ridicule the work went quietly, steadily on. There is nothing more irritating than this to such men as Sanballat! It is the complete answer to ridicule. There was cooperative labour, and due to good leadership it went apace. Jerusalem was thus ringed with workers, and though it was heavy, difficult and dirty work, gradually results were forthcoming.

V.7-9 – “when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up (Mgn. “ascended”; cp. V.16)...they were very wroth” – A formidable company of enemies now gathered against Jerusalem. Nehemiah’s feelings and thoughts were likely equal to those expressed by Asaph in Psalm 73. The wicked always **seem** to prosper! Like Asaph, the answer was prayer and action – “we made our prayer and set a watch.” Prayer in the absence of labour will accomplish little. We must provide Yahweh with a basis upon which He can bless us.

V.10-14 – “Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall” – Some were growing weary with the constant opposition and the heavy work. Under duress and suffering fatigue, they saw only the problems, not the end goal. How often this happens to God’s labourers in every age!



Some were also fearful of the power of Sanballat. The exhortation is clear – Luke 18:1 (“men ought always to pray, and **not to faint**”); Gal. 6:9 (“let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we **faint not**”); Heb. 12:1 (“let us run with patience the race that is set before us”). On top of this, the ‘grapevine’ was at work – “our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease,” sparking fear in the hearts of the labourers. Jews who came daily from the surrounding villages to Jerusalem to assist in the work, constantly told Nehemiah that the enemies were preparing at all points of the compass, and that mere vigilance would not hold them at bay once the attack commenced. Nehemiah responded – (Rotherham) “So I set – on the lower slopes of the place behind the wall in the waste ground – yea, I set the people by their families, with their swords, their spears and their bows,” and proceeded to encourage both guards and labourers.

V.15-23 – As soon as Sanballat saw the people united as one man, and both equipped and determined to fight, he decided against an attack. Nehemiah’s soldiers worked or stood on guard (V.16) alternating at these duties, some builders laboured with sword in hand, whilst those who needed both hands to labour had their sword girded by their side, always alert. The vigilant Nehemiah would be seen with his bodyguard moving from point to point, encouraging the workers. It seemed that he never slept – a feature of his character that parallels with the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Hosea 14

V.1 – “O Israel, return unto Yahweh thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity” – Hosea’s prophecy concludes with a final appeal for Israel to repent and reform their ways. We know it fell on deaf ears in Hosea’s time, but his prophecy throughout has held out the prospect of the redemption of Israel in the latter days – “**Afterward** shall the children of Israel return, and seek Yahweh their God, and David their king; and shall fear Yahweh and his goodness **in the latter days**” (3:5). Accordingly, the appeals of this chapter are more useful and relevant to subsequent generations than they were to Israel.

V.2 – “Take with you words, and turn to Yahweh: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips” – The way of reform is set out. Firstly, there is a need for a confession of transgression; secondly, a request for sins to be forgiven by God’s grace; and thirdly, gratitude expressed with the spirit of sacrifice. The Apostle alludes to this passage in Heb. 13:15 – “By him therefore let us offer the **sacrifice of praise** to God continually, that is, **the fruit of our lips** giving thanks to his name.” Finally, as V.4 indicates, there must be action to divest oneself of the past way of life and the ‘gods’ served therein, and to put trust in Yahweh alone – “Assyria, shall not save us” (Rotherham). Turning to earthly powers is foolish.

V.4-8 – God’s offer to “heal their backsliding” and “love them freely” (cp. Zeph. 3:17) will be realized “in the latter days” and He will bring new life to a very dry tree (Hos. 9:16; Luke 23:31 – “if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the **dry**?”) Israel (Ephraim) will then say, “I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.”

V.9 – (Rotherham) – “Who is **wise**, that he may understand these things? **intelligent**, that he may take knowledge of them? For, **straightforward**, are the ways of Yahweh, and, the righteous, shall travel therein, but, transgressors, shall stumble therein” – This is a perfect summary of all the issues of the book. It is also a challenge to all subsequent readers and Bible students. Are we wise and intelligent enough to understand that God’s ways are straightforward, for they can be undermined by the philosophy of modern Humanism?

## 1 Thessalonians 3

Chapter 2:17-3:13 – As a nursing father dealing with young children, Paul shows his deep feelings for the Thessalonians as they suffered persecution. His agitation and worry in Athens as he waited for news from Thessalonica was proof that those who accused him of fleeing too early, lacking concern for them, was incorrect. Sending Timothy in his stead was a mark of Paul's concern (Phil. 2:19-23). Timothy's report gave Paul great consolation.

## Thessalonians 4

Paul's admonition in chapter 3:12 – "And the Lord make you to **increase and abound** in love one toward another, and toward all men" is expanded in chapter 4:1-12.

V.1 – "how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would **abound** more and more" – *perusseuo* – to abound, overflow. Interlinear Scriptural Analyzer – Lit. "ye may be **super-abounding**". The word occurs 39 times in the N.T. – 3 in this letter (3:12; 4:1,10).

V.2-12 – Knowing how recently the Thessalonians had come to the Truth, Paul counseled integrity in all human interactions, the chief of these being moral purity in relationships. With a morally devoid Greek philosophical background, the danger was moral looseness (V.5). There was a need "that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (*skeuos* – used metaphorically for the human body) in **sanctification** and **honour**" (V.4). "In a great house there are not only **vessels** of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore **purge** himself from these (i.e. vessels of dishonour), he shall be a vessel unto **honour, sanctified**, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:20-22). The hallmark of the quality of the vessels would be observed when no man went beyond to defraud his brother in any matter (V.6). Integrity was paramount.

V.13-18 – It is evident that persecution had resulted in the death of some local believers. For a young ecclesia, vital questions had emerged. The Thessalonian's belief in the resurrection was firm – what concerned some of them (through ignorance) was: (1) The relative position of the dead and living at the return of Christ; (2) Who would be called to him first; and (3) What would happen as a result of that call to his presence.

Paul confirmed to them that there will be a resurrection of the responsible dead, which gave hope for an end of their present sorrows, and that the purpose would be to form an **army** for the establishment of the Kingdom – "even so them also which **sleep** in Jesus will God

### Christ returns as Judge

Gr. *keleusma* – (from *keleuo* – to put in motion by word or command) a call, summons, a shout or command which assembles all at once.

Gr. *autos* – very self; he and no other

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Michael (Jude 9) – "Who is like El" – Ex. 23:20-21; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 10:21; 12:1. Yahweh's name-bearer with power to forgive or condemn.

Thessalonians

Lit. "a trump" – Jubilee trumpet Lev. 25:8-10 – once every 50 years on Day of Atonement (coverings).

### Reward in the Aerial – 1Thess. 4:17-18

Gr. *harpazo* – to snatch, to seize, to take hold of forcibly.

Gr. *perileipo* – to leave over, to be left remaining, to survive.

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Symbol of a multitude – Heb. 12:1  
18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Aerial or governing region – Eph. 2:2; Rev. 9:2.

Thessalonians

Gr. *apantesis* – with a view to a meeting (to welcome a newly arrived dignitary).

**bring** (*ago* – to lead , lead along as a General; take with one) with him” and that the living at the time would “not **prevent** (*phthano* – to come before. Diaglott – “precede”) them which are asleep” – V.14-15.

V.16-18 – These verses (dealt with in the slides above) are particularly valuable in understanding the events subsequent to the return of Christ. For a full exposition of that subject see the book “The Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ” by the present author, available via the Study Notes tab of web site <https://jimcowie.info>. The slides will assist understanding of the depth and extent of the Apostle’s writing.

## November 18

### Nehemiah 5

Much had been accomplished since Nehemiah commenced his vital work of reconstruction, but already it had become evident that not all who participated in the work did so with pure motives. Jerusalem had become the testing-ground of Yahweh, and the reconstruction of the wall a means to reveal the innermost thoughts and intents of the hearts of the labourers.

V.1-13 – “And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews” – It is almost inconceivable what happened next. A cry went up from the poor and less well-off about the financial oppression being suffered from their own brethren – “the nobles, and the rulers” and the money lenders. Nehemiah could hardly believe it – “I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words” (V.6). He took counsel with himself and set an assembly against them, saying, “Ye exact usury, every one of his brother.” His charge was that the returned captives had been released from slavery in Babylon only to be enslaved again by their own compatriots. They were speechless. He extracted a promise to release the debts and return the confiscated property, and made them swear an oath. So was put to rest a shameful episode.

V.14-19 – Leadership is most effectual and powerful by example rather than words. Nehemiah pointed to the fact that he had not used the allowance of the governor for his considerable expenses, even though he had every right to do so. This was the same principle employed by the Apostle Paul in his labours among the Gentiles – 1 Cor. 9:1-15 – “I have used none of these things.” There was not the slightest hint of hypocrisy in Nehemiah’s request – “Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”

### Nehemiah 6

V.1 – “when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem (called Gashmu in V.6 – see 2:19) the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein” – They saw in this successful building a personal defeat, and so now determined to try new methods.

V.2 – “Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief” (*rah* – bad. Rotherham – “But, they, were plotting to do me harm”) – “Ono” (“strong”) was a plain of Benjamin thought to have been about seven miles (11 kms) inland from Joppa. This was the first of 5 invitations.

V.3 – “I am doing a great work (*melakah* – deputyship), so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease (*shabath* – to repose, that is, desist from exertion. i.e. take a Sabbatical), whilst I leave it, and come down to you!” – This was an answer from the heart – a perfect answer to invitations and provocations received to enter into useless or trivial meetings aimed at hindering labour in God’s service.

V.5-9 – “Then sent Sanballat...his servant with an open letter” – Open so that others could read it. It was an insult and a mark of contempt to send such an open message to the Governor of Judah! Geshem is put up to falsely accuse Nehemiah of: (1) rebelling against the Persian Government; (2) sedition on the part of Nehemiah; (3) being desirous to reign as a king. Thus political pressure was applied to draw Nehemiah from the work and city. Nehemiah repudiated the charge of treason saying, “you are inventing them out of your own mind” (ESV for V.8). Nehemiah took the matter to his God in prayer.

V.10-14 – “Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple” – Nehemiah rejected Sanballat’s invitation only to find in Jerusalem collusion and treachery among the priests. Shemaiah was cloistered and sought to undermine Nehemiah in two ways; (1) accuse him of defiling the temple having no right to enter an inner sanctum; and (2) most likely lock him up and detain him. Nehemiah saw through him and prayed that God might deal with him and other enemies like “the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets.” Sometimes the work of the Truth is hindered most from within.

V.15-19 – “So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days” – Despite all hindrances, difficulties, attacks, threats, and conspiracies, the work had gone on, and the wall was finished in 52 days. Sanballat had been defeated and with genuine frustration saw the completion of a project he had determined to defeat. Elul was the 6th month of the Jewish sacrificial year and mid-summer in Israel. This was a great achievement as the 7th month (a new civil year) was to commence. Jerusalem’s reproach was removed before a new cycle of festivities and worship commenced. It is perhaps noteworthy that the work commenced on the third day of the 5th month, and this was the very month in which Nebuchadnezzar’s soldiers had broken up the city walls 85 years before (2 Kings 25:8-10).

V.16 – “when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” – It was ironical that while Nehemiah’s enemies perceived that this was a work of God, many prominent Jews continued to consort with the adversaries who sought to undo it. Among these were “the nobles,” a class who from the beginning (3:5) had opposed Nehemiah, and whose ill feeling had increased when their lucrative source of income by usury was taken from them by him (Neh. 5). Many therefore pleaded the cause of Tobiah and Sanballat, perhaps denouncing Nehemiah as harsh and unyielding, claiming they just wanted to help in the work (see Neh. 2:20; 6:19). This treachery resulted in an even more serious alliance later, and eventually led to apostasy within Israel (Neh.13:4). One of the traitors was “Meshullam, the son of Berechiah” who had been prominent in building the wall (Neh. 3:4,20), but now sided with the enemy. The guile of his father-in-law won him over to the cause of the enemy. Intermarriage with unbelievers is always divisive and destructive (2 Cor. 6:14 – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”).

## Joel 1

Bro. Thomas in Eureka Vol. 1 makes the following comments on the Prophecy of Joel (edited and trimmed) – After predicting terrible calamities upon Israel and their country by the lions of Assyria, and others, he consoles the nation with the assurance that after the Gentiles had filled up the measure of their abominations, Yahweh will be jealous for his land and will pity his people; and that they shall no more be made a reproach among the nations. He predicted that

Yahweh will do great things, at which the children of Zion shall be glad, and that they shall rejoice in Yahweh, their Elohim, or Christ: that he would give them the latter rain of the Spirit, as on Pentecost, of the first month; and the former rain on account of righteousness, in the seventh month, which is also the first of the civil year. That in this period there shall be restoration, and that henceforth Yahweh's people shall never be ashamed.

He foretold that between the two Spirit-Rain periods, Zion's Sun should be turned into darkness, and the Moon of her ecclesiastical heavens into blood, before the great and terrible Day of Yahweh should be apocalypted, or revealed, upon Israel's enemies; whose destruction shall proceed from Mount Zion and Jerusalem, in which shall be deliverance for the remnant whom Yahweh shall call. He further makes known, that in the days of the Restoration of Judah and Jerusalem, Yahweh will gather all national armies into the valley of Jehoshaphat or Armageddon; and there contend with them in battle for the possession of the Holy Land: that on the eve of this contest a proclamation shall be made among the nations, stirring them up to the war, which in the Apocalypse is styled "the war of that great day of God Almighty:" that, at this epoch of restoration, Yahweh shall lead down his warriors to the conflict in the valley of judgment; that the harvest-sickle, and the vintage press, shall then do their work; that Yahweh, as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and shake the heavens and the earth of the non-Jewish world, whose Sun and Moon shall be darkened, and the shining of their stars shall be destroyed; that when this is consummated, Jerusalem shall be holy; and no strangers, or enemies, shall henceforth pass through her any more; that the land shall be as Paradise, flowing with wine and milk, being so rich in vines and pasturage, fountains and running streams; and to crown the whole, Joel testifies with Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, that Yahweh then dwells in Zion, the place of rest, and city of the Great King – chaps. 1:6; 2:18,19,23, 24,26,31,32; 3:1,2,9,11-18,20,21.

V.1 – (Rotherham) "The word of Yahweh, which came unto Joel, son of Pethuel" – All the internal evidence when carefully weighed places this prophecy in the reign of Josiah, most likely in or around his 18th year (the second reformation and great Passover and quite possibly a Jubilee Year according to Bro. Henry Sulley – The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy pg. 27). The relative anonymity underlines that the prophecy is Yahweh's words, not the prophet's.

V.2-13 – An invasion of locusts (familiar to "old men") would arrive in human form, namely, the Babylonian army in four successive waves until Judah was completely denuded of life. One nation is involved because it has "the teeth of a lion" (V.6), and this harmonizes with Jer. 50:17 (it is called "the northern army" in chapter 2:20). Babylon made four successive invasions in overthrowing the kingdom of Judah. These were: (1) 2 Kings 24:1 – Jehoiakim made a vassal BC 606; (2) 2 Kings 24:2 – Jehoiakim's captivity BC 598; (3) 2 Kings 24:10-16 – Jehoiachin's captivity BC 598; (4) 2 Kings 25:1-11 – Zedekiah's captivity BC 587.

#### Analysis of Joel 1 – First Discourse

- (1) V.1-7 – The impending judgement
  - V.1 – The authority of the prophet
  - V.2-3 – A national message
  - V.4-7 – Impending devastation
- (2) V.8-13 – An apostate priesthood called to repentance
- (3) V.14-20 – The people called to repentance

Gesenius says of the four different words used of the locusts in V.4 – The "palmerworm" (*gazam*) is a creeping locust without wings (perhaps the caterpillar and/or the pupa stage). The "locust" (*arbeh*) is a common term for the swarming plague (from the root *rabah* – to be many, numerous, multiply). The "cankerworm" (*yelek*) is a species of locusts with wings (from an unused root with the sense of licking up, lapping or browsing like cattle). The "caterpillar" (*chasil*) means to eat away; to devour. The transliterated Hebrew reads: "Gnawer's remnant,

*Swarmer eats: Swarmer's remnant, Devourer eats: Devourer's remnant, Consumer eats.*" One commentator extrapolates this to: "The leavings of the gnawer the multiplier ate, and the leavings of the multiplier the licker ate, and the leavings of the licker the devourer ate." The meaning is clear – Judah would be stripped of all its fruitfulness and joy by the Babylonian invasions over the space of less than 20 years. The following language mingles metaphor with literal amidst a call for lamentation and repentance because the reformation of Josiah had been shallow and ineffective for most of God's people (Jer. 3:10).

One reason for the ineffectiveness of Josiah's reformation was the inadequacy of the priesthood. As in the days of Hezekiah, they had been the subject of a lengthy sabbatical, not required and sidelined during the reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh respectively. Many had been derailed from their role as teachers (Mal. 2:7) and mediators. This fact is made clear in the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 2:8; 6:13; 8:10). Hence, the call, "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye **priests**: howl, ye **ministers of the altar**: come, lie all night in sackcloth." The altar was the only objective representation of Himself that Yahweh allowed. It taught the principle that the only acceptable way to approach Yahweh was by sacrifice. In the light of the imminent disappearance of grain and grapes (by 'locusts'), meal and drink offerings would be impossible. Accordingly, only sin and trespass offerings could be made as burnt and peace offerings could not be made without them. God's people needed to repent and acknowledge their sin if disaster was to be avoided.

V.14-20 – "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of Yahweh your God, and cry unto Yahweh" – This is an urgent appeal for reform for "the day of Yahweh" (meaning the Babylonian invasion) was at hand (probably only 16 years away). The graphic imagery of a denuded land although not yet reality presents an important lesson. Prophecy permits peering into the future. It creates pictures that are not yet fact but are certain to be so in due time. However, responding to it requires faith in the Word of God, and humble acceptance of it. Sadly, this was absent in Joel's time except for a few like Josiah.

## 1 Thessalonians 5

V.1 – We do not know the day nor the hour when Christ will return, but we should know the times in which we live, as did those of old – Dan. 9:2; Luke 2:25,38. "Times has to do with quantity, seasons with quality" (Hogg & Vine). "Times" (*chronos*) refers to the revealed time periods concerning God's purpose. "Seasons" (*kairos*) refers to the actual characteristics of those periods.

V.2 – "the day of the Lord" is a reference to "the day of Yahweh" of Zech. 12 to 14 (mentioned 23 times). Therefore it refers to Armageddon and the following 40 years of judgement. This must be kept in mind for accurate interpretation.

"a thief in the night" – So Christ warned (Matt. 24:42-44). However, those who walk in light should not be caught off guard – V.5-6.

V.3 – "when they shall say" – *lego* – to lay forth, say, affirm. Implies special pleading. This will happen just prior to Armageddon. It needs to be remembered that the saints will have been removed to Sinai some 10 years before and the world will be passing through "a time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1). Some evidence of release from that awful time will result in a premature cry of peace and safety.

"peace and safety" – Lit. "peace and security". This applies to "seasons," and its outcome "sudden destruction" – Lit. "unexpected ruin."

"as a woman in travail" – This is a set time – none can prevent it once the birth pangs begin.

V.8 – Paul uses a similar imagery to Eph. 6:11-17 of the spiritual warrior based on the Roman soldier. Protected by “the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” the faithful will not be swamped by the surrounding darkness that would characterize the final days of human madness.



V.12-28 – Paul concluded the epistle with a list of principles that should govern ecclesial life in every era. Among these were: V.12-13 – Respect for faithful elders and teachers; V.14-15 – An uncompromising yet positive and patient spirit seeking the salvation of others – a hallmark of ‘sons of light’. V.17 – “Pray without ceasing” – *adialeiptos* – incessantly (4 occs. N.T. – 3 in this letter – 1:3; 2:13; Rom. 1:9). This word occurs in a Papyrus letter from the Apostle’s time referring to a chronic asthmatic with an “incessant cough.” Hence, it refers to constantly recurring prayer. V.18 – “in everything **give thanks**” – perhaps the single most important aspect of prayer. V.19 – “Quench not the Spirit” – *sbennumi* – extinguish, suppress, stifle. Negativity and unwarranted criticism stifle growth. V.21 – “**prove** all things; hold fast that which is good” – *dokimazo* – to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not). V.22 – “Abstain from all appearance of evil” – It is important that we give no “occasion to the enemies of Yahweh to blaspheme” (2 Sam. 12:14; Rom. 2:24; Phil. 2:15; Titus 2:8).

## November 19

### Nehemiah 7

V.1-4 – “I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many” – Having completed the wall and set up the gates, Nehemiah appointed trustworthy administrators to secure the city against their enemies. This was necessary because of the treachery among some prominent Jews. Strict rules were applied to ensure they were not caught off guard. One problem was that “the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.” Because the wall could be breached prior to repair and livable houses were rare, very few Jews actually lived in Jerusalem.

V.5-73 – “God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy” – Nehemiah saw the need to assess the situation among the returnees given the dislocation evident between rich and poor (chap. 5), and some very obvious treachery by some prominent people. He “found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first” under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Apart from a couple of minor differences probably due to transcription, it is the same as Ezra 2.

### Joel 2

V.1 – “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain” – The “day of Yahweh” was at hand. The Babylonian locust plague was about to fall upon Judah. The shrill alarm sound of the shophar trumpet warned of calamity at the gates of Zion. Even though this was some way

#### Analysis of Joel 2

##### V.2:1-17 – Second discourse

- (1) V.1-11 – Locust invasion: The trumpet of war
- (2) V.12-14 – Judah’s last chance to repent
- (3) V.15-17 – National repentance demanded: The trumpet of Jubilee

##### V.18-32 – Third discourse – To Israel

- (1) V.18-20 – Removal of the locusts
- (2) V.21-27 – Israel’s restoration to fruitfulness and fellowship
- (3) V.28-32 – How Yahweh delivers and blesses His people



off, the inhabitants of Judah needed to take heed to the call for genuine repentance and reform of their ways.

V.2-11 – “A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness” – Similar language is used by Zephaniah, a contemporary prophet (Zeph. 1:14-15), but here it foreshadows the swarms of the metaphoric ‘locusts’ that would soon darken Judah’s landscape. A vivid description of the locust like Babylonian hordes is given, and Yahweh “shall utter his voice before his army.” It was an irresistible invasion and demanded a response from God’s chosen people.

V.12-14 – “Therefore also now, saith Yahweh, turn ye even to me with **all your heart**, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and **rend your heart**, and not your garments, and turn unto Yahweh your God” – There had doubtless been much external display of remorse for the apostasy and idolatry that characterized Judah at the commencement of Josiah’s sweeping reformation, but it did not come from the heart (Jer. 3:10). This was a final opportunity to repent and make substantial changes in attitude, for Yahweh is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil,” and would call off the ‘locusts’ “and leave a blessing behind him” of the fruits needed to make meal and drink offerings that attended burnt offerings (dedication) and peace offerings (fellowship) that were impossible otherwise (1:13).

V.15-17 – “Blow the trumpet (shophar) in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly” – If this was a Jubilee Year (as suggested by Bro. Sulley), then this was the shophar trumpet of release (Lev. 25:8-10) in contradistinction to the alarm of war. They could be released from the coming judgements if only they would repent. But urgent and universal action was required. The whole nation from aged to newly born (“assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts”) needed to be assembled. Weddings were to be put on hold (“let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet”), and the priests needed to weep bitterly in remorse for their dereliction of duty and plead for their people with a sincere heart. What an opportunity this was! Sadly, history reveals it fell on deaf ears. Yahweh is merciful, but He will not abdicate His righteousness, or tolerate ingratitude.

V.18-20 – “Then will Yahweh be jealous for his land, and pity his people” – This would have been proven true had there been genuine repentance. He would have ended the threat of the Babylonian ‘locusts’ (“I will remove far off from you the northern army”), though they had “done great things.”

V.21-27 – “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for Yahweh will do **great things**” – In contrast to the Babylonians who would do “great things” against Judah, Yahweh now lists the “great things” He would do for Judah if they repented. The ‘locusts’ would not strip the pastures, or fruit trees and vines in the land and they would enjoy their fruits. Furthermore, “he hath given you the **former rain** moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the **latter rain** in the first month.”

Israel’s Mediterranean climate saw the summer dry season (June to October) broken by the “former rain” after the feast of Tabernacles when the harvest had been brought in. This allowed ploughing and sowing. The “latter” rains came in “the first month” (March/April) to finish the growth cycle of grain and fruit crops. There is both a natural and spiritual aspect to this promise of Divine blessing. The words “former rain” are one Hebrew word *moreh* which signifies an archer; also teacher or teaching; also the early rain (Strong), while the word “moderately” is *tsedâqâh* meaning “righteousness.” Hence, Bro. Thomas translates in ‘Faith in the Last Days’ pg. 222 – “For He hath given to you the **Teacher of Righteousness**, and He shall cause to descend for you a rain; a teacher and the latter rain in the first

month.” Peter cited Joel 2:28-32 at the time when the Holy Spirit (a teacher of righteousness – John 14:26) was given to the Apostles and then passed on by them. However, Pentecost was in the 3rd month, whereas the latter rains came in the first month. This indicates that Acts 2 was only a primary fulfillment (an earnest) of much greater things to come and this is proven by V.24-27 where the language is of recovery and restoration from disaster through the ‘locust’ invasion – “And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Yahweh your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed” (we know that is yet future, because Peter does not quote the words “for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance” from V.32).

V.28-32 – “I will pour out my spirit upon **all flesh**” – The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its gifts in the 1st century on the Day of Pentecost was to both Jews and Gentiles who came to the faith (Acts 2:38-39) – “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are **afar off** (meaning distance not time), even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” But just as in the days of Joel, a dark cloud loomed over God’s people, namely, AD 70 – “I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood” (cp. Matt. 24:29). That judgement would precede a much greater outpouring of judgement on Roman ‘Babylon’ (the subject of Mal. 4:5 where the identical Hebrew is used – “**before** the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh”).

We are in view in the phrase “whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh” which is cited in Rom. 10:13 and preceded by the words, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

## 2 Thessalonians 1

While Paul was still at Corinth (AD 53-54) another report from Thessalonica arrived noting marked progress on matters addressed in his first letter. Though persecution still raged, their hope still endured and their faith had grown under pressure. Their love had expanded more and more. Their mistaken sorrow for their dead was gone, and there was much to give Paul joy and thanksgiving. But there were still problems.

False reports had been circulated (claiming apostolic authority), that the day of the Lord was at hand. Feverish unrest had gripped the ecclesia and led to idleness and disorder in some (why should they work if Christ was about to come?). Hence, the theme of the advent of the Lord dominates this letter too. Paul intends to reveal the practical impossibility of the advent occurring in their lifetime because a great internal apostasy would precede it.

V.3-4 – Mutual support under severe persecution characterized the ecclesia.

V.5-12 – The righteousness of God would ultimately avenge the savage treatment they had received. They needed to be steadfast under pressure for it would lead to a glorious future – V.10 – “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints.”

### The structure of 2 Thessalonians

<b>1:1-2</b>	Greeting
<b>1:3-5</b>	Assurance of their welfare in persecution
<b>1:6-10</b>	Judgement of persecutors
<b>1:11-12</b>	Prayer for further perfecting
<b>2:1-7</b>	Reassurance for saints in view of apostasy
<b>2:8-12</b>	Judgement of apostates
<b>2:13-17</b>	Prayer for steadfastness
<b>3:1-5</b>	Assurance of preservation amid disorder
<b>3:6-15</b>	Judgement on the disorderly
<b>3:16</b>	Prayer for peace
<b>3:17-18</b>	Final greeting

## 2 Thessalonians 2

V.1-2 – False ideas were circulating about the imminence of the return of Christ, some with claims of apostolic authority. From whence might such ideas arise? Christ had warned his disciples that his coming was near (Matt. 10:23), but he meant his ‘coming’ at the head of the Roman armies (Matt. 22:7; Dan. 9:26). Judgement was to fall on Judah’s Commonwealth first and that was now at hand. Paul sets out to demonstrate that the second advent was some way off, as there would be a massive apostasy before then. This had been prophesied in Zech. 5 as shown in the slide at right. Zech. 5 sees 2 women – Samaria and Jerusalem fly like storks to Shinar (a reference to Semiramis wife of Nimrod) with an ephah (Judaism’s commercialized religion). This was a prophecy of the rise of the Roman Catholic apostasy out of the ecclesia in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Bro. Thomas wrote in Eureka Vol. 1 pg. 65-74 – “This vision traces the spiritual decline of Israel until a commercialized Judaism arose to supplant the true spirit and purpose of the Law by a deadening formalism, and to superimpose itself upon the truth in Christ causing the great apostasy to arise in spiritual Babylon.” He added – “The abominations of Judaism have been abundantly reproduced in the Roman Catholic religion. The abuses of Rabbinism and Romanism are singularly alike.”

<b>Zechariah 5 root of 2 Thess. 2</b> ❖ The Septuagint translation of Zech. 5 uses the same word for the wicked woman that Paul uses to describe the man of sin.	
“This is their <i>iniquity</i> in all the land.” – Zech. 5:6 (RV margin)	“with all deceivableness of <i>unrighteousness</i> ” – 2 Thess. 2:10
“A woman that <i>sitteth</i> in the midst of the ephah.”	“ <i>sitteth</i> in the temple of God” – 2 Thess. 2:4
“He cast her down into the ephah: and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof” – Zech. 5:8 (RV)	“that which <i>restraineth</i> ” – V.6 (RV) “there is one that <i>restraineth</i> now” – V.7 (RV)
“This is <i>wickedness</i> ” – V.8 (RV)	“the mystery of <i>iniquity</i> doth already work” – V.7 “then shall that <i>Wicked</i> be revealed” – V.8
<i>Thessalonians</i>	


V.3-5 – “a **falling away** first” – *apostasias* – falling away, defection, apostasy. The apostasy would see “that **man of sin** be revealed, the son of perdition (*apōleia* – utter destruction), who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, **shewing himself that he is God**” – After 280 years of gestation “the man child” was born when Constantine (with the support of the apostate Christian church) defeated Maxentius at the battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312 and assumed control of the Roman Empire in the west. This was the beginning of a system that developed into the papal system that claims to be God on earth. This is fully expounded by Bro. Thomas in Eureka.



V.6 – “now ye know what **withholdeth** (*katecho* – to hold down, restrain, hinder the progress. RSV – “restrains”) that he might be revealed (*apokalupto* – to take off the cover; disclose – cp. Zech. 5:8) in his time” – Paganism was the ‘religion’ of the Roman Empire. With the rise of Constantine in AD 312 half the empire became notionally ‘christian’ and by AD 324 Constantine had overthrown Licinius in the east and the whole empire became ‘pagan’



christian' and subsequently Constantine took charge of the apostate church and ensured pagan doctrines and practices were insinuated into Christianity.




### Identifying Characteristics

#### V.4 – “showing himself that he is God”

“All the earth is my diocese, and I am the ordinary of all men, having the authority of the King of all kings upon the subject. I am all in all and above all, so that God Himself, and I, the Vicar of God, have but one consistory, and **I am able to do almost all that God can do.** In all things that I list, my will is to stand for reason: for I am able by the law to dispense above the law, and of wrong to make justice in correcting laws and changing them... Wherefore if the things that I do be said not to be done of man, but of God, **what can you make me but God?** Again, if prelates of the Church be called and counted of Constantine for gods, I then, being above all prelates, seems by this reason to be above all Gods. Wherefore, no marvel if it be in my power to **change time and times:** to alter and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, yea, with the precepts of Christ: for where Christ biddeth Peter put up his sword, and admonishes His disciples not to use any outward force in revenging themselves, do not I, Pope Nicholas, writing to the Bishops of France, exhort them to draw out their material swords?”

Pope Nicholas I, 845



### Identifying Characteristics

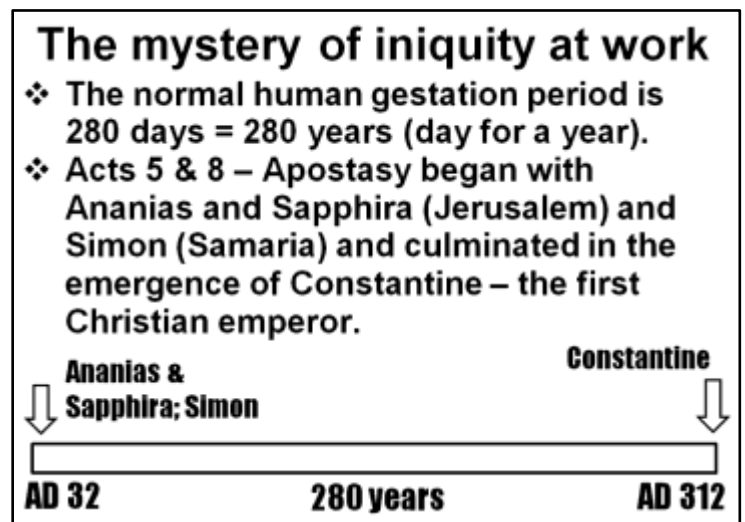
#### 2 Thess. 2:4 – “showing himself that he is God” - even in the last days!

“The pope **takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth.** . . . He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter, the judge of all, being judged by no one, **God himself on earth.**”

The New Catechism (under Pope John Paul II), under the section of the pope.

V.7 – “the mystery (*musterion* – secret. Its use in Rev. 17:5,7 is revealing) of iniquity (*anomia* – contempt and violation of law) doth already work” – As shown in the slide at right a form of ‘commercialized religion’ when Ananias and Sapphira used deception to begin the ‘secret of iniquity’ that matured 280 years later with the rise of Constantine.

“he who now letteth (*katecho* – restrains) will let, until he be taken out of the way” – RSV – “only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.”



V.8 – “then shall that **Wicked** (*anomos* – a violator of law, lawless) be revealed (*apokalupto* – to take the cover off; disclose) whom the Lord shall consume (*analisko* – destroy) with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy (*katargeo* – to render idle, unemployed, inactivate; abolish) with the brightness of his coming” – Youngs Lit. – “manifestation of his presence” (*parousia*). Christ will destroy the Catholic system by “the spirit of his mouth” described in Isa. 11:4; cp. Hos. 6:5; Rev. 19:20-21.

V.9-10 – “with all deceivableness (*apate* – delusion) of unrighteousness in them that perish” – The working of “Satan” (the adversary) has been by “signs and lying wonders” deceiving their adherents who have no “love of the truth,” the key to salvation.

V.11-12 – “for this cause God shall send them **strong delusion** (*energeia plane*), that they should believe a lie” – Youngs Lit. – “a working of delusion.” Diaglott – “a strong working of deceit.” God sends ‘strong delusion’ by abandoning men to their own devices – Rom. 1:28; Isa. 66:4. Refusal to believe the truth leads to ready acceptance of lies.

V.13-14 – Paul reminds them that God’s plan always included Gentiles for Abraham was made “the father of a multitude of nations” – Gen. 17:5. God has “chosen you” – God does the

calling – We choose salvation by doing two things – seeking purity and believing truth. No truth – no salvation! (1 Tim. 4:16).

V.15-17 – “**stand fast**, and hold the **traditions** which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” – The word “traditions” is *paradosis* – transmission; i.e. a precept. Used 13 times in the N.T. (10 in a negative sense). Here it refers to the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. We must “stand fast” (*steko* – to stand firm, persevere) in the doctrine remembering there is a nexus between doctrine and practice (1 Tim. 1:9-10). Paul concludes with a prayer that God would continue to work in them and establish them in the right way.

## November 20

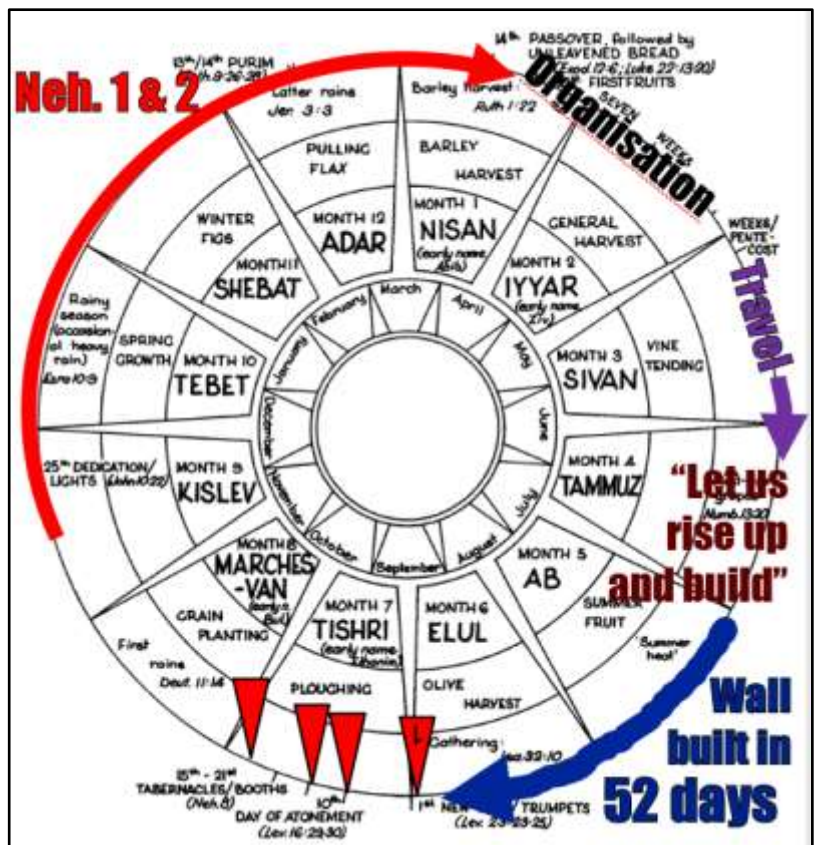
### Nehemiah 8

The chart at right shows Nehemiah’s journey so far, from the month Kislev (9th month) to the completion of the wall and the events of chapter 8 where Ezra plays a prominent role in the events of the 7th month; then in the great national prayer and solemn covenant; and finally in the joyous dedication of the completed wall. Ezra was now about 90 years old. It was around BC 500, 16 years after the Temple was completed. The wall was completed by Nehemiah on 25th Elul – 5 days before Rosh Hashanah (1st day of the 7th month – see chart).

V.1 – “all the people gathered themselves together as **one man** into the street (*rechob* – broad or open place) that was before the water gate” – Cp. Ezra 3:1. Jeshua the high priest had represented the nation some 36 years before. The “Water Gate” symbolized the Word which Ezra was going to dispense on this day in response to the peoples’ request.

V.2 – “all that could hear (*shama* – hear intelligently) with understanding” (*biyn* – to separate mentally; distinguish; i.e. understand) – The 1st day of the 7th month was the beginning of Israel’s civil year and was a special day – a memorial of the blowing of trumpets (Lev. 23:24), and every seventh year (year of release) the Law was read to a gathering of all the people (Deut. 31:9-12 – “Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn”). That is exactly what is happening here.

V.3 – “he read therein **from the morning until midday**, before the men and the women, and those that could understand” – That is, for several hours. It would take that long to read the Law, but the process was extended by what is described in V.7-8 as “the people were attentive unto the book of the law.”



V.4-6 – (Rotherham) “Ezra the scribe stood upon a lofty platform of wood, which they had made for the purpose” – Ezra was elevated above the people, but it was the Word of God that was truly elevated, for “when he opened it, all the people stood up” showing due reverence and respect for the Word. When Ezra then praised Yahweh, the people chimed in with a humble and sincere Amen. It was a good start.

V.7-8 – “the Levites, caused the people to understand the law” – Their role as ministers and teachers (Mal. 2:4-7) was exercised in the way it had always been envisaged. They got among the people and, “So they read in the book in the law of God **distinctly** (*parash* – to make distinct, declare, distinguish, separate), and **gave the sense** (*sekel* – prudence, insight, understanding), and caused them to understand the reading” (*biyn miqra* – Lit. – to understand something called out).

V.9-12 – The civil and religious leaders through their agents, the Levites dispensed a message that anticipated an emotional and depressed reaction to the morning’s activities as the people reflected on how far they fell short of their obligations. And so it was, “For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.” The message was “mourn not, nor weep” for “this day is holy unto Yahweh your God.” It was the 1st day of the 7th month Tishri – Rosh Hashanah, the time of the festival of blowing trumpets and a time for **rejoicing** and **rededication**, hence, burnt offerings were offered (Num. 29:1-6). The Levites became involved again and “stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved,” and the people responded with great joy and gratitude “because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.” They had understood that “the joy of Yahweh is your strength” (cp. Deut. 28:47). The Day of Atonement on the 10th day of the 7th month was time for afflicting the soul (Lev. 16:30-31), not on this day.

V.13-18 – “on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law” – On the 2nd of the 7th month, evidently because they witnessed the amazing effect on the people the day before and realized their deficiency as teachers. They discovered “that the children of Israel should dwell in booths (*sukkah* – thicket, covert, booth) in the feast of the seventh month” from 15th to 21st Tishri (October). This had not been done “since the days of Joshua the son of Nun” (i.e. 1,100 years before). And so Sukkot was kept with “very great gladness” (*simchah* – joy, mirth, gladness) which was the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:39-43) to remember the deliverance from Egypt. Ezra also read from the Law the whole seven days of the feast. It was a rare display of interest in the Word of God in Israel’s history.

### Joel 3

#### Analysis of Joel 3

Fourth discourse – To the Gentiles

- (1) V.1-8 – Yahweh’s judgement upon the Gentiles
- (2) V.9-17 – The Day of Yahweh revealed
- (3) V.18-21 – Yahweh triumphant throughout the earth

V.1 – “behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of **Judah** and **Jerusalem**” – The time period of the prophecy can be identified now with hindsight. “Judah” is the prophetic name given to the Jews in the Land at the

time of Armageddon. Israel became a nation in 1948, and Jerusalem was freed from Gentile control in 1967. These are two very significant milestones of the latter days.

V.2 – “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of **Jehoshaphat**” (the judgement of Yah – see ancient map below) – This is the equivalent of Zech. 14:2 and is a reference to the gathering of the nations for “the battle of that great day



of God Almighty” in a place called Armageddon (Rev. 16:14,16). The valley of Jehoshaphat is the Kidron Valley between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives where the Assyrian army was destroyed in the 14th year of Hezekiah.

V.3-8 – Given the context, we naturally look for events in the latter days matching the descriptions in these verses. However, this is a long range prophecy from the time of Joel, and God’s view of the 2,600 years that have passed is of a few days (2 Pet. 3:8). History records the brutal and callous treatment of His people by the Babylonians, Greeks, Romans and others who “scattered (Israel) among the nations,” and “parted my land” (the latest iteration in 1947 when Palestine was partitioned). During those times boys and girls were sold as sex slaves, and the Tyrians traded slaves with the Grecians. However, there are latter day counterparts. For example, “what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine?” identifies two current bitter enemies of modern Israel, namely, the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. When this verse (Joel 3:4) is compared with Zeph. 2:4-11 and Ezek. 25:15-17 it is evident that there will be a Palestinian State established in the Gaza Strip as it has a coastline and is called a “nation.” The West Bank does not have a coastline and will be part of Israel proper at the time of Armageddon (Ezek. 38:8,12).



In relation to V.8, Adam Clarke comments – “When Alexander took Tyre, he reduced into slavery all the lower people, and the women. Arrian, lib. ii., says that thirty thousand of them were sold. Artaxerxes Ochus destroyed Sidon, and subdued the other cities of Phoenicia. In all these wars, says Calmet, the Jews, who obeyed the Persians, did not neglect to purchase Phoenician slaves, whom they sold again to the Sabeans, or Arabs.” So perhaps this too is a prophecy already fulfilled.

V.9-12 – “Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up” – This proclamation was to be made among the Gentile nations prior to Armageddon, and it is evident it is now coming to pass. Most nations on earth have recently massively increased their defence budgets in the shadow of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the rising power and aggression of China and other rogue nations, not to mention the wars in the Middle East. Some nations, like North Korea which is weak are flexing their muscles at the expense of their own people in fulfillment of the prophecy – “let the weak say, I am strong.” As a result many nations have decreased their financial assistance to struggling nations (called foreign aid), particularly in Africa, and some of these nations are now experiencing a food crisis and local famines. This is what was required before Armageddon – “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears.” Feeding hungry people would give way to re-armament in preparation for war.

All of this is in preparation for the crisis of V.2 – “Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about” (i.e. to Jerusalem). But God will be ready for them – “Thither, bring down, O Yahweh, thy mighty ones!” (Rotherham). Christ and his glorified saints will arrive at the Mount of Olives at the critical moment as the last contingent of Jews hold out against the Russian hordes in the Old City as Zech. 14:2-5 makes



clear – “half of the city shall go forth into captivity, **and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city**. Then shall Yahweh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle,” because “Then, shall arrive, Yahweh my God, All thy holy ones, with thee!” (Rotherham for Zech. 14:5).

V.13 – (RV) – “Put ye in the **sickle**, for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the **winepress** is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great” – The language of Armageddon enters the prophecy. “Armageddon” is a name consisting of three Hebrew words – *arema* = a heap of sheaves; *gai* = a valley; *don* = judgement – hence, ‘a heap of sheaves in a valley for judgement.’ That valley is “the valley of Jehoshaphat” – ‘the judgement of Yah’ (V.2,12). In Rev. 14:14-16, Armageddon is presented as the harvest of the earth where “he that sat on the cloud cast his **sickle** upon the earth; and the earth was **reaped**.” However, Armageddon (a relatively short battle) is to be followed by 40 years of judgement on rebellious nations, mainly Catholic Europe, and this is why the winepress is referred to in this verse – “the angel thrust in his **sickle** into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great **winepress** of the wrath of God” (Rev. 14:18-20). This is the vintage of the earth (refer comments on Rev. 14 – June 27).

V.14 – “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!” – The word “multitudes” is *hamonim* and finds its way into the name of Gog’s mausoleum in Ezek. 39:11 – “there shall they bury Gog and all his **multitude** (*hamon*): and they shall call it The valley of **Hamongog**” (the multitude of Gog). The KJV margin is correct – “Concision or threshing” as one meaning of the word *chârûts* is ‘a threshing sledge having sharp teeth’ (Strong). This is a play on the name “Armageddon.”

V.15-16 – “The sun and the moon shall be darkened” – The luminaries of the world (all human governments) will go into terminal eclipse as a result of Yahweh roaring “out of Zion” in that day. Salvation will have come for the faithful of all ages, and redemption will finally come for Judah (Jews in the Land) and Israel (Jews outside the Land) – “Yahweh, shall be a shelter to his people, and a refuge to the sons of Israel” (Rotherham).

V.17-21 – “So shall ye know that I am Yahweh your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more” – In the light of the awful judgements pronounced in chapter 1, this is a wonderful denouement. The promises of God to the fathers of Israel and to David will be in the process of fulfillment during the long Millennial years with Israel’s enemies subdued and made powerless, vengeance for millennia of bloodshed having been taken. Attendant with all this will be abundant blessings flowing from God’s people and His Land unto all nations.

## 2 Thessalonians 3

V.1-2 – “Finally, brethren, pray for us” – Paul seeks reciprocation from the Thessalonians – he had prayed for them, now it was their turn. He sought three things – (1) That the Word might be freely preached; (2) And consequently be glorified; (3) That he might be delivered from those who sought to impede his work, for – “all men have not faith.” Paul’s enemies to this point had primarily been the Jews. Of all men they should have shown faith in the things of God, but despite the perfidy of His people “the Lord is faithful” (V.3). By contrast Paul had confidence the Thessalonians would also show their faith by their actions (V.4), so he prayed that God would “direct” (*kateuthuno* – straighten fully; includes removal of hindrances) their “hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (V.5). God directs through His word believed – Ps. 119:36; Prov. 3:6.

V.6-15 – Paul outlines the way disorderly conduct is to be dealt with – “command” is not an optional choice. To be “disorderly” is a military term – *ataktos* – irregularly, out of rank (of soldiers). Good soldiers follow orders or “tradition” – *paradosis* – substance of teaching; a body of precepts. There is a time to shun the disorderly (V.14) in order to recover them (V.15).

V.17 – Paul signed off “with mine own hand” for the first time. This may indicate that a counterfeit letter purporting to be from Paul had arrived to mislead them about the return of Christ.

## November 21

### Nehemiah 9

V.1 – “Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them” – After more than three weeks of intense spiritual activity and deep soul searching, a national day of fasting was observed and brought to a climax when communal prayer was offered.

This prayer acknowledged the integrity of some who, in days past, walked faithfully and undefiled amidst the godless and the heathen (V.7-8, 27). It confessed the weakness of the flesh in the face of temptation (V.25), and praises the strength of Yahweh in the face of difficulties (V.10-11). Yahweh was exalted for His mercy, and man was abased before Him in recognition of his utter dependence (V.33). The fast and the prayer were designed to bring home to the people a deep sense of responsibility, to reveal to them the cause of failure in the past, and to give them an incentive for the future. Thus the people were prepared before they entered into a most solemn covenant with Yahweh (V.38).

There was a spontaneous response (though not permanent!) and Nehemiah and Ezra rejoiced in the fact that those who heard and responded will reap their reward “at the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13), if they did not faint as some later did.

V.2 – “the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers” – This was a ceremonial separation so that no legal impurity might render them unfit to draw near to God. The separation was from Sanballat and his cohorts. Note the sequence of their actions: they fasted, mourned, humbled themselves to the dust, separated themselves, confessed their faults, gave themselves over to meditation upon the Word, and finally rededicated themselves to God.

V.3 – “And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of Yahweh their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped (*shachah* – to bow down, prostrate oneself) Yahweh their God” – This was an important occasion to impress the people with the need of earnestly seeking Yahweh in truth. The whole day was given over to religious exercises – from 6 to 9 am was spent hearing the law read. From 9 am to 12 noon they prostrated themselves and confessed their sins, their minds having been awakened to this need by the hearing of the law.

V.4 – “Then stood up upon the stairs (*ma’aleh* – ascent, incline), of the Levites (8 of them)... and cried with a loud voice unto Yahweh their God” – The prayer culminates in the covenant of V.38. This prayer is a recapitulation of Israel's history demonstrating the goodness of Yahweh, the folly of the nation, and the need to obey His precepts. It was designed to induce in the people a spirit of reverence that would lead them to signing the covenant to obey the Law. It begins with God's majesty and power (V.5-6), and ends with a humble confession of absolute dependance (V.36-37). The content of the prayer strongly suggests Ezra's involvement in its preparation.

V.38 – “because of all this we make (*karath* – to cut) a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it” – Youngs Lit. – “a steadfast covenant.” To “cut a covenant” in those days, animals were divided and covenant makers passed between the pieces (see Gen. 15:9-10; Jer. 34:19; Heb. 9:16). If any party failed to keep the covenant they met the same fate as the covenant sacrifices (cp. Matt. 24:51 – “and will cut him in pieces” (ESV).

## Amos 1

V.1 – “The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, **two years before the earthquake**” – Tekoa was a rural fortress town (2 Chron. 11:5-6) 12 miles (20 kms) south of Jerusalem. The times of Uzziah and Jeroboam II were some of the most prosperous and peaceful in the entire history of the divided kingdom, and it was only the earthquake triggered by Uzziah’s incredible presumption attempting to seize the high priesthood (see Josephus) that began the unwinding of that tranquility. We know the severity of the earthquake from its use in Zech. 14:5 where the latter day “Uzziah” (proud Israel) will be humbled by a much greater earthquake (see comments on Uzziah on October 29).

The first two chapters deal with God’s coming judgements on the surrounding nations, and on Judah and Israel for their behavior, and are characterized by a Hebraism, “For three transgressions... and for four” which is a way of saying sufficient, and more than enough (cp. Proverbs 30). Three was the first complete number to the Hebrews. That would be enough, but add a fourth (4 is the number of righteousness, inter-alia) and you have total justification for proclaiming judgement on the offenders.

V.2-15 – “Yahweh will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem” – This is how the prophecy of Joel ended with reference to Armageddon (Joel 3:16). The coming judgements would primarily be delivered through the effects of the earthquake two years away, but as that earthquake was typical of the earthquake of Armageddon (Zech. 14:5), the projection is into the future. The proclamation in this chapter is against **Syria** for cruelty and inhumanity (V.3-5); **Philistia** for slave trading (V.6-8); **Tyre** for despising the brotherly covenant with Israel (V.9-10); **Edom** for unrelenting hatred of Israel (V.11-12); and **Ammon** for cruelty and self-aggrandizement (V.13-15). In each of these condemnations “**fire**” is used. It is the symbol of Divine judgement (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 21:9; Isa. 66:15-16; Jer. 4:4; 15:14; etc.).

## 1 Timothy 1

Paul’s first letter to Timothy is addressed to “Timothy, my own son in the faith.” Paul had no one closer to him in the work than Timothy – “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state” (Phil. 2:20-22).

V.3-11 – Paul had left Timothy (a somewhat timid character – 1 Cor. 16:10-11) in Ephesus to minister to the newly formed ecclesia there. The problem of Judaism in Jewish converts was again present, as in the Galatian ecclesias. With Judaism, what you see is not always what you get. The list of sins in V.9-10 should be absent from the life of anyone who agreed “the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (V.8), but this was not always the case. Hypocrisy was the hallmark of Judaisers – Matt. 23:2; Luke 12:1. The leaven of the Pharisees was not only their private deeds, but their ‘doctrine’ (Matt. 16:12), and that is what Paul takes aim at, saying, “if there be any other thing that is **contrary to sound doctrine**” (V.10).

V.12-17 – Paul acknowledged his own dubious past as a strict Pharisee, and the grace of God that had delivered him from it.

V.18-20 – Wrong doctrine ultimately leads to wrong practice (V.10), so false teaches needed to be sidelined before a little leaven permeated the whole ecclesia – 1 Cor. 5:6-7.

## 1 Timothy 2

V.1-3 – “I exhort therefore, that, **first of all**, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for **all men**; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God** our Saviour.” Most will agree that not a lot of this is done publicly in our community. It is an area of prayer that may need improvement given it is desired by God.

V.9-15 – The position of women is a point of debate in the modern Humanistic world. Paul provides two proofs that the woman should be subject to the man – one is pre-fall (V.13 – “For Adam was first formed, then Eve”), and the other post-fall (V.14 – “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being (Rotherham – wholly) deceived was in the transgression”). However, her role in the larger scheme was crucial – “She shall be saved, however, through means of **the child-bearing**” (namely, the birth of the Son of God – see V.5-6; 1 Cor. 11:11-12 – “even so is the man also by the woman”).

## 1 Timothy 3

V.1-7 – Ecclesias need shepherds (“bishops” – *episkopos* – an overseer) and “deacons” (*diakonos* – a servant, attendant, minister – V.8-13), but there are qualifications listed. The Roman world did not practice polygamy, so “the husband of one wife” meant not divorced and remarried. Discipline within the family unit was another indispensable requirement, as was probity and moderation in life.

V.15-16 – The Diaglott translation of V.15 is helpful, and correct – “that thou mayest know, know it behooves in a **house of God** (meaning of Bethel) to conduct thyself, which is a congregation (ecclesia) of **God living**.” This verse is based on Gen. 28:10-19 where Jacob, having had the dream of the angels of God ascending and descending upon him, took the stone which he had used as a pillow and stood it up into a **pillar**, and anointed it with oil. He then changed the name of the place from Luz to **Bethel** meaning “the house of God.” There is no article before the words “living God” which is the same as 2 Cor. 6:16 where Paul explains what is meant here. God should be seen walking about in believers. We call that God manifestation which is the subject of V.16. The ecclesia is “the **pillar and ground** (*hedraioma* – basis, foundation; what is fixed, settled). Bro. Thomas – “and material habitation of the truth” – a habitation of gods – Eureka Vol. 1 pgs. 390-392.

## November 22

### Nehemiah 10

V.1 – “Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha” – Nehemiah the Governor heads the list of the priests (V.2-8), Levites (V.9-13) and the chiefs of the people (V.14-27).

V.28 – They were joined by “the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the **Nethinims**, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding” – It was a national commitment. Virtually everyone was involved in making the covenant, even the remnant of the Gibeonites (Nethinims). Mental separation from the way of the godless was the first thing necessary. Such was a natural safeguard and resulted in literal separation (cp. Num.16:21; 1 Kings 8:53).

V.29 – “and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law...to observe and do all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes” – The Law contained curses for disobedience (Deut. 27:15-26), so such a solemn covenant must be made with great caution (Deut. 29:12,14).

The seven points of the covenant were:

V.30 – **Point 1** – No intermarriage with foreigners.

V.31 – **Point 2** – The Sabbath and Sabbatical Year to be strictly observed.

V.32-33 – **Point 3** – A voluntary yearly offering to be made in support of the Divine service: a voluntary tax additional to Ex. 30:11-16.

V.34 – **Point 4** – A contribution of wood to be made at appointed times.

V.35-37 – **Point 5** – Firstfruits, the firstborn and the tithes to be given to Yahweh.

V.38-39 – **Point 6** – Tithes to the priesthood.

V.39 – **Point 7** = Summary of all – “We will not forsake the house of our God.”

### All points broken quickly

Nehemiah returned to Persia after 12 years as Governor in the Land – Neh. 5:14; 13:6. On Nehemiah's return some years later he found all seven points had been broken.

❖ Point 1 – Broken – Neh. 13:23-27.

❖ Point 2 – Broken – Neh. 13:15-22.

❖ Point 3 – Restored – Neh. 13:13.

❖ Point 4 – Ceased – resumed – Neh. 13:31.

❖ Point 5 – Broken – restored – Neh. 13:12.

❖ Point 6 – Ceased – Neh. 13:10.

❖ Point 7 – “Why is the house of God forsaken?” – Neh. 13:11.

## Amos 2

V.1-3 – “I will send a **fire** upon **Moab**” – The judgements on Moab were for a total lack of respect for humanity, and for royalty in particular. It is noteworthy that Jeremiah, when prophesying the destruction of Moab, designated it by this same name “sons of tumult” (V.2; Jer. 48:45). Nebuchadnezzar brought terrible judgements on Moab after which it seems to have disappeared as a nation.

V.4-5 – “For three transgressions of **Judah**, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; **because they have despised the law of Yahweh**, and have not kept his commandments” – The principle of “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48) is applied to Judah and not to the other nations who preceded them in this list. Additionally, Christ's warning – “And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:47-48) is also applicable. While Judah had some good kings who encouraged the study of the Word of God, sadly there were many who were either disinterested, or blatantly opposed to it. Uzziah, the king of Judah at the time of the prophecy, was a Bible student as a young man (2 Chron. 26:5), but in maturity presumptuously rejected it (2 Chron. 26:16-20).

V.6-16 – “For three transgressions of **Israel**, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof” – It is appropriate that Amos gave his condemnation of Israel in Bethel (Amos 7:10,13) the centre of Jeroboam's golden calf apostasy. He listed their evils:

1. Their judges were mercenary and corrupt. They took bribes to condemn the righteous; and even for articles of clothing, such as a pair of sandals (the token of possession of property), and they condemned the poor man, and delivered him into the hands of his adversary.

2. They were unmerciful to the poor generally. They panted after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor to deny him even of the sign of his grief at his loss through their injustice. Ellicott translates – “They would even covet the dust the poor were throwing on their heads in token of grief.” They were oppressors of the poor, showing them neither justice nor mercy.

3. They turned aside the way of the meek. They were peculiarly oppressive to the weak and afflicted who were vulnerable (“For ye have the poor always with you” – Matt. 26:11).

4. They were licentious to the uttermost abomination; for in their idol feasts, where young women prostituted themselves publicly in honor of Astarte, the father and son entered into impure connections with the same female.

5. They were cruel in their oppressions of the poor; for the garments or beds which the poor had pledged they retained contrary to the law (Ex. 22:7-26), which required that such things should be restored before the setting of the sun.

6. They punished the people by unjust and oppressive fines, and served their tables with wine bought by such fines. It may be suggested that they even appropriated to themselves that wine which was allowed to criminals to mitigate their sufferings when being put to death, which revealed an excess of inhumanity and cruelty.

V.9-16 – “Yet destroyed I the **Amorite** before them” – The iniquity of the Amorites was full (Gen. 15:16) when Yahweh brought Israel “up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the **Amorite**.” It is ironic that Israel had proved worse than the Amorites who they were sent to destroy.

V.11-12 – “I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites” – Samuel was one such, and there were many more. Nazariteship was designed so that male and female could imitate the high priest, but Jeroboam’s apostasy and corrupt priesthood put paid to that. God’s prophets were ignored and Nazarites corrupted by the very thing they had pledged to eschew.

V.13-16 – “Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves” – The burden of Israel’s iniquity was too great for Yahweh. He could not endure it any longer. Interestingly, the name Amos means “burdensome.” The burden they had laid upon their God would now fall on their heads. They would be crippled by it and their strength to defend themselves from invaders stripped from them.

## 1 Timothy 4

One of the hallmarks of the inspiration of the Scriptures is prophecy that never fails. The Apostle Paul prophesies of the character of the great apostasy that would overtake the Brotherhood of Christ, as he did to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2).

V.1 – ESV – “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits (claims of divinity) and teachings of demons” (Catholic ‘saints’). This would lead to “Forbidding to marry” (celibacy in the Catholic priesthood); and “commanding to abstain from meats” (Catholic laws against eating meat on Friday = fish day after Dagon).

V.8 – (RV) “for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come” – A fad of modern times is body image. Much time is spent in the gym or on the walking or running track. Very little time, if any, is spent seeking higher and more permanent things.

V.13 – “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” – By “reading” Paul means the public reading of the Word in the ecclesia. It has its own power when read well. It is after all, the Word of God.

V.14-16 – Full commitment to appointed tasks and the teaching of the Word will lead to salvation for oneself and others (Dan. 12:3); Rotherham – “they who **make wise**, shall shine like the shining of the expanse,—and, they who **bring the many to righteousness**, like the stars to times age-abiding and beyond.”

## 1 Timothy 5

V.1-16 – Honouring the elderly and vulnerable by extending respect and care is fundamental to life in Christ. Paul gives instructions on which widows should be supported by the ecclesia. These speak for themselves, but the indispensable requirement is that the aged widow (over 60) have a record of doing for others what she now rightly receives from the ecclesia.

V.17 – “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” – Much in ecclesial life depends on wise leadership and sound teaching. While no-one should be put on a pedestal, respect and honour is due to those faithfully leading others to the Kingdom. They themselves will be very conscious of the vagaries and pitfalls of human nature, and therefore conscious of the needs of others.

V.20 – “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” – This is consistent with many prior Scriptures such as Lev. 19:17; Prov. 27:5 – “Open rebuke is better than secret love.” Reluctantly, Paul had to do this with Peter (Gal. 2:11-14). It is not easy, and must always be done with sensitivity and without anger or “partiality” (V.21).

V.22 – “Lay hands suddenly on no man” – This refers to the laying on of hands to pass on the Holy Spirit gifts – 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Acts 6:6. It was not to be done flippantly or irresponsibly.

V.24 – “Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgement; and some men they follow after” – In connection with ecclesial guidance and selection of fellow workers it would be necessary to show sound judgement based on what was known – “Ye shall know them by their fruits” – Matt. 7:16.

## November 23

### Nehemiah 11

V.1-2 – “And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city” – Jerusalem had been too dangerous for ordinary folk to dwell in for many years because of the broken down walls. Now that the wall had been repaired and there was a high degree of security, those who were willing could make their abode in Jerusalem. The rulers who had been prominent in the covenant of chapter 10 paved the way for others to join with them, but it became necessary to cast lots to complete the required numbers to make the city viable. A brotherly spirit prevailed when “the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.”

V.3-24 – A list of those who dwelt in Jerusalem is provided with special emphasis on the temple services. The people had learnt from the first three weeks of the seventh month (chapter 8) just how important it was to have a place of worship, sacrifice, learning, and reflection on the Word that was properly managed and staffed.



V.25-36 – A list of the villages throughout Judah is provided where all those who were not involved in the call up to live in Jerusalem resided. Many had settled in territory dominated by Gentiles (Neh. 11:25-36), and under their control. For instance, some of the Jews had returned from captivity, only to find that they had to settle among Idumeans who had taken possession of their home towns when Judah was carried away to Babylon (Ezek. 35). See map at right.



### Amos 3

The second section of the prophecy is from chapter 3:1 to 6:14 and contains three solemn addresses directed to the northern kingdom of Israel (V.1), although the phrase “whole family” includes Judah as well. Chapter 3 is the first address.

V.1-2 – “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” – The “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” principle comes into play here. Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:13-14), and declared them to be His firstborn nation (Ex. 4:22), and took them as His ‘wife’ at Horeb (Ex. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:32). Their unique privileges (Rom. 9:4-5) meant they had huge responsibilities. They rarely met them.

V.3-8 – (Rotherham) “Can two walk together,—except they meet?” (*yā’ad* – to meet by appointment). Two cannot walk together unless they agree on where the meeting point for the journey will be. Yahweh and Israel were miles apart on that score now, though at the beginning they had agreed (Ex. 24:7 – “All that Yahweh hath said will we do, and be obedient”).

“Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?” – The threatened judgements were as good as complete on the basis of God calling “those things which be not as though they were” (Rom. 4:17). Hence, the “lion” (the Assyrians – Jer. 50:17) could roar even though their invasion was some way off. Similarly, if a trap placed for a bird does not have the “gin” (*môqêsh* – bait, lure) properly set, then the trap will not work, but God had guaranteed coming judgement, so the trap was firmly set. So too, when an alarm shophar was sounded in a city, the inhabitants would be foolish not to take heed, but Israel did not. Hear Israel – “shall there be evil (i.e. judgements) in a city, and Yahweh hath not done it?” The question was asked, shall there be any evil, or calamity (this is not moral evil), inflicted on a wicked city, which does not proceed from God, as the effect of His wrath? These animated interrogatives were intended to convince the people that they had cause for alarm, as their monstrous iniquities called down the vengeance of God to punish them with these calamities. “The lion hath roared, who will not fear?” cp. chapter 1:2 – “Yahweh will roar from Zion.”

V.7 – “Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” – This is one of the most encouraging statements in Scripture. What it promises is that everything we need to know about God’s purpose can be found in prophecy, type and parable. We need to search it out. It is the honour of kings to do so (Prov. 25:2).

V.9-12 – The Philistines and the Egyptians were invited to be witnesses of the savage judgements the Assyrians would bring to Israel in BC 725 to 722 – “Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof,

and the oppressed in the midst thereof,” as a warning of the judgements that awaited them for similar behaviour.

“As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion **two legs**, or a piece of an **ear**; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch” – Yahweh the Shepherd of Israel (Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:12) had promised He would not utterly destroy them because of His promises to Abraham. A remnant would be preserved. What was left by the ‘lion’ (Jer. 50:17) was suggestive of why the nation was nearly wholly consumed. The **ear** is for **hearing** (which Israel did not), and the **legs** are used to **walk** (which they would not do in God’s ways).

V.13-15 – “I will also visit the altars of **Bethel**: and the horns of the **altar** shall be cut off” – It was highly appropriate that the judgements would involve Bethel and Jeroboam’s great apostate altar (1 Kings 12:33) by which the nation had been derailed, and from which they never recovered. That was the source of the perennial apostasy.

“I will smite the **winter house** with the **summer house**; and the **houses of ivory** shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end” – The houses of the wealthy had two sections. An upper floor for the summer to catch the breezes, and a lower section for winter. However, kings sometimes had separate summer and winter houses as it seems Ahab did in Samaria and Jezreel. Ahab also had an ivory tipped and paneled palace in Samaria (1 Kings 22:39).

## 1 Timothy 6

V.1-10 – The nexus between doctrine and behavior that Paul mentioned in chapter 1:9-10 is expanded here. The way we operate in everyday life is reflective of the way our mind has been shaped by teaching – “Ye shall know them by their fruits” is an unfailing measure of attitude and character (Matt. 7:16). Solomon’s quest for contentment without hypocrisy (Prov. 30:8-9) is echoed by Paul – “having food and raiment let us be therewith content,” “for the love of money is the root of all evil.”

V.11-21 – Using wealth aright (V.18-19), and following “after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” is fighting “the good fight of faith” leading to “eternal life” that we might share with Christ an ever-lasting relationship with “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.” The only being with no beginning and underived immortality in the universe is Yahweh “the blessed and only Potentate,” but He has extended immortality to angels and to His Son – the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth, faithfulness and loyalty to Him will see many more added to them through the mission of His beloved Son.

## November 24

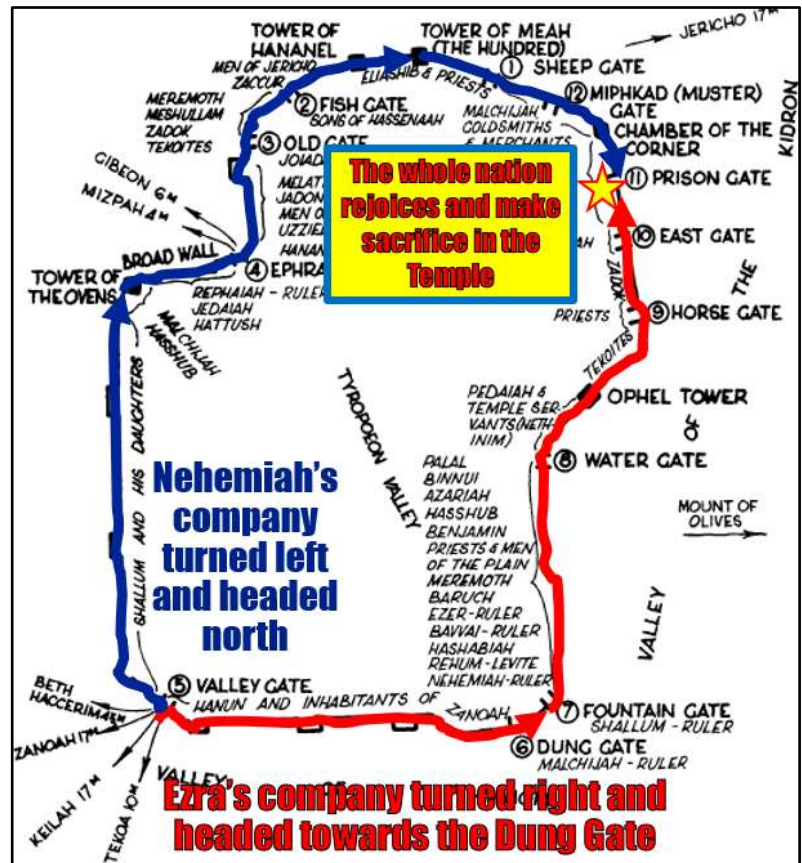
### Nehemiah 12

V.1-26 – A list of the priests who came with Zerubbabel and Jeshua in BC 536 is provided. The interest in this list is that some of them were apparently still alive, which strongly suggests that the wall was repaired in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, not Longimanus as is traditional.

V.27-43 – At the dedication of the wall, two great companies began at the Valley Gate (Hinnom) and went in opposite directions the entire length of the wall. **Ezra** led princes, priests, Levites and people in a large company along the southern wall to the Dung Gate and from there north to the Temple Mount. **Nehemiah** brought up the rear of another large group of the

same composition who went north to the Tower of the Furnaces and then around to the Temple. Both Nehemiah and Ezra disappear from the scene at the end of the dedication of the wall. Together they point to Christ. V.36 is the last mention of Ezra in the O.T. There is no record of his death. He disappears into the Temple at the head of a great procession, marching into glory to the strains of a chorus of praise. A fitting finale for such a towering figure. Much greater things await him when the walls of Zion are built again.

V.40 – Nehemiah returned to Persia after the procession and returned to Judah sometime later for the events of Neh. 13. It was not to be a pleasant homecoming and set the type for the return of Christ in the latter days.



#### Amos 4 – The second address of Part 2 of the Book

V.1-5 – “Hear this word, ye **kine** of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their **masters**, Bring, and let us drink” – The word “kine” is *pârâh* – cow, heifer (noun feminine). It is a reference to the women of Israel with husbands from whom they demanded more corrupt gain; hence, ESV – “who say to their **husbands**.” It is a sick society when wives (and mothers) demand the crushing of the weak and the poor to feed their own lusts. These would be carried into captivity with “hooks” (in their noses – Isa. 37:29) and roped together would “go out at the breaches.” Samaria, the place of their ease and confidence, being broken through, they would go forth one by one, “each straight before her,” looking neither to the right nor to the left, as a herd of cows go one after the other through a gap in a fence.

Irony enters the language of the prophet when Israel is encouraged to go up to Bethel and Gilgal (centres of Jeroboam’s apostasy) to offer sacrifices, one of which was “a sacrifice of thanksgiving with **leaven**” only acceptable as a grateful acknowledgement accompanying a peace offering (Lev. 7:13) by which the offeror acknowledged he was the source of alienation from God. The fact was that Samaria was besieged for its last three years of existence – “after three years.” No-one could get to Bethel from there anyway. The irony was deep.

V.6-13 – “I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places” – Sieges of towns and lack of rain brought famine, and so there was no need to clean their teeth because they had not eaten anything. Some places received rain, others did not, so men travelled from one town to another in search of food. Yet for all that, they did not turn to Yahweh the giver of “every perfect gift” (James 1:17). Even the failure and ravaging of crops by locusts did not work on them. A series of calamities are alluded to which also failed to make them turn. What was God to do? Bring on the final judgements –

“Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, **prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.**” That day eventually comes on all the disobedient and unresponsive. There is no hiding from, or escaping, the God that formed “the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought.” All responsible people will one day meet their God at the Judgement Seat – “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12).

## 2 Timothy 1

As the Apostle languished in prison in Rome for the second and final time awaiting a hearing before the increasingly insane and hated Emperor Nero that culminated in the latter’s suicide on June 9 AD 68, he wrote his final letter to his “son in the faith” Timothy. One of the last orders Nero gave was for the execution of the Apostle to the Gentiles. It was the right time for him to rest. The Roman legions under Vespasian were in Judea; AD 70 was near; and many of Paul’s converts in Asia had turned their back on him (V.15).

V.1-2 – Reasserting his Divinely appointed Apostleship would seem superfluous for someone who knows he is about to die, but Paul has Timothy’s continuing labours in the truth in mind. He knew by reports that many in Asia Minor (the western side of modern Turkey) had forsaken him because false brethren had gained their ear. Timothy needed as much support as he could get in this disappointing and challenging development.

V.3-15 – He exhorted Timothy to carefully guard and promote the deposit of the truth received through his heritage (mother and grandmother), and his close association with the Apostle, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a **sound mind**” (*sōphronismos* – discipline, that is, self-control).

V.16-18 – One who had not forsaken Paul was Onesiphorus who had apparently lost his life offering support to the Apostle. That is why Paul used the terminology “the house of Onesiphorus” for he was ‘asleep’ in Christ awaiting the judgement (“in that day”).

## November 25

### Nehemiah 13

There is a nexus between this chapter and Mal. 3:1-3. Nehemiah was absent for a while after the dedication of the wall (V.6), but there was an expectation of his return – “the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple,” and he came as a judge – “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire” with an intention to “purify the sons of Levi.” Malachi’s prophecy concerned the arrival of Jesus Christ at two advents preceded by a forerunner – John the Baptist at the first, and Elijah at the second (Mal. 4:5; Luke 1:17,76). As such, Nehemiah’s sudden appearance after an absence is a type for the latter days. The question that arises is – will Christ find the situation in his community different to what Nehemiah found? The slide below illustrate that all seven clauses of the covenant made in chapters 9 and 10 were broken.

#### The seven points of the covenant (from Neh. 10)

Neh. 10:30 – **Point 1** – No intermarriage with foreigners.

V.31 – **Point 2** – The Sabbath and Sabbatical Year to be strictly observed.

V.32-33 – **Point 3** – A voluntary yearly offering to be made in support of the Divine service: a voluntary tax additional to Ex. 30:11-16.

V.34 – **Point 4** – A contribution of wood to be made at appointed times.

V.35-37 – **Point 5** – Firstfruits, the firstborn and the tithes to be given to Yahweh.

V.38-39 – **Point 6** – Tithes to the priesthood.

V.39 – **Point 7** = Summary of all – “We will not forsake the house of our God.”

V.1-14 – Incredibly, even though the Law was clear that “the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever,” the high priest Eliashib had made Tobiah “a large chamber, where aforetime they used to lay the meal-offering, the frankincense, and the utensils, and the tithe of the corn, the new wine and the oil”

(Rotherham). Little wonder that the people had slackened their offerings of tithes to the Levites, for “Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was **allied** unto Tobiah.” “Allied” here means ‘connected by marriage.’ Tobiah was married to a Jewess (Neh. 6:18), who may have been a relation of Eliashib; and his son Johanan was married to another, of whom the same may be said. Family ties and blood relationships have often proven to be effective in undermining the principles of truth. It was for that reason that Christ warned in his teaching – “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” Nehemiah tossed all of Tobiah’s stuff out of the temple compound and had the chambers cleansed. He set things in order and the people responded by bringing the prescribed tithes.

V.15-22 – “In those days saw I in **Judah** some treading wine presses on the **sabbath**” – The Sabbath was also being desecrated blatantly by Jews. Nehemiah took direct action – “I protested against it, as a day for them to sell provisions” (Rotherham) which points to the motivation – “the love of money is the root of all evil.” The presence of Gentile traders complicated the matter, because they were not under the Law. So, Nehemiah ensured that the gates of Jerusalem were shut at 6 pm Friday so that the Sabbath would be free of trading at the gate. The maneuver did not stop the traders turning up next morning – “So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice,” requiring Nehemiah to threaten their well-being if they did so again – “Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you.”

“Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy” – As he had done in V.14, Nehemiah pleads to Yahweh to be remembered for good for his efforts to uphold the Law. It is not an easy task.

V.23-31 – The next major problem for Nehemiah was intermarriage with Gentiles. He found “Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab.” This had been the first thing on the list of forbidden things in the covenant they had made – “we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons” (Neh. 10:30). This had gone on long enough for the offspring of these marriages to produce children that could not speak Hebrew. Even some priests had married strange women, including “Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, (who) was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite,” and was chased out of the priesthood, while others were manhandled by Nehemiah whose chastisement reminded the nation of Solomon’s foolishness in marrying many foreign women – “nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.”

### All points broken quickly

Nehemiah returned to Persia after 12 years as Governor in the Land – **Neh. 5:14; 13:6**. On Nehemiah’s return some years later he found all seven points had been broken.

❖ **Point 1 – Broken – Neh. 13:23-27.**

❖ **Point 2 – Broken – Neh. 13:15-22.**

❖ **Point 3 – Restored – Neh. 13:13.**

❖ **Point 4 – Ceased – resumed – Neh. 13:31.**

❖ **Point 5 – Broken – restored – Neh. 13:12.**

❖ **Point 6 – Ceased – Neh. 13:10.**

❖ **Point 7 – “Why is the house of God forsaken?” – Neh. 13:11.**



Having corrected all the broken commitments of the covenant, Nehemiah asks again – “Remember me, O my God, for good.”

## Amos 5

V.1-3 – “The **virgin** of Israel is fallen” – The prophet takes up a lamentation against Israel. To be a “virgin” nation means that they have never before gone into captivity. This is demonstrated by the fact that even Babylon is called a virgin in that context (Isa. 47:1). The principle of the tithe appears when the decimation of Israel’s armies is referred to as the nation’s population was drained. Historians say there was only between 28,000 to 30,000 people left in Israel when they went into captivity in BC 722 (Sargon’s inscription claimed 27,290 captives were taken).

V.4-6 – “Seek ye me, and ye shall live” – The word “seek” is *dârash* – to resort to, seek with care, enquire (is used 4 times in this chapter but not elsewhere in the book). A great change was required for Israel who perennially sought after Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba (centres of false worship). “Seek Yahweh, and ye shall live” or face the inevitable judgement.

V.7-17 – The reasons for the coming judgements are listed – “Ye who turn judgement to wormwood” (*la’ănâh* – bitterness, metaphorically). Injustice was rife and considered normal, leaving only bitterness and helplessness for the victims.

“Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion” – The “seven stars” (one word *kîymâh* – refers to Pleiades, a constellation of seven stars). The Pleiades are a group of stars in the constellation of Taurus in which there are hundreds of stars of such magnitude that it is beyond human understanding. Orion is one of the brightest stars in the heavens and pagans worshipped it as a deity. Israel is called upon to worship the maker thereof and the Creator of all the wonders on the earth. He is able to even give strength to the weak as instruments of His judgement, including His prophets who rebuked in the gate (the place of administration and judgement) – see 1 Kings 22:9-10,13-25. Callous injustice was the greatest concern of the Almighty, but there was an antidote – “Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that Yahweh God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.”

V.18-27 – “Woe unto you that desire **the day of Yahweh!** to what end is it for you? the day of Yahweh is darkness, and not light” – This is the equivalent of Isa. 5:19 where the mockers of the prophet said, “Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it,” and Jer. 17:15 – “Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of Yahweh? let it come now.” This contemptuous treatment of the looming judgements would make them all the more bitter to endure when they inevitably arrived, for they would be a nightmare – “As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him” (most of us have had nightmares like that). It would be “darkness, and not light; even very dark, and no brightness in it.”

“I hate, I despise your feast days” – Yahweh repudiated their festivals and sacrifices, and their false worship and demanded drastic change – “But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” That change was not made then, or much later in the days of Christ and Stephen who wrapped up his defence by quoting Amos 5:25-26 in Acts 7:42-43.

## 2 Timothy 2

V.1-13 – In a series of metaphors, Paul underscores the importance of total commitment to Christ and his cause. The soldier, athlete and farmer all come into view. A good soldier does

not allow himself to be entangled in the affairs of this life and be distracted from the objectives of his commanding officer. Athletes are cautious not to be disqualified for unlawful behavior. Farmers are rightly determined to produce a crop for their own sustenance as well as for the wellbeing of others. In all cases, hardship, discipline and difficulties will be encountered, just as it was for Christ (V.9-13).

V.14-21 – Nitpicking Judaism and disbelieving Greek philosophy were dangerous distractions from the objectives of Christ. The antidote was as Weymouth translates V.15 – “Earnestly seek to commend yourself to God as a servant who, because of his straightforward dealing with the word of truth, has no reason to feel any shame.” All kinds of people had been called to Christ, for God wishes to save all men, some would prove to be vessels of honour, others would not. We are the arbiters of our own destiny by the choices we make.

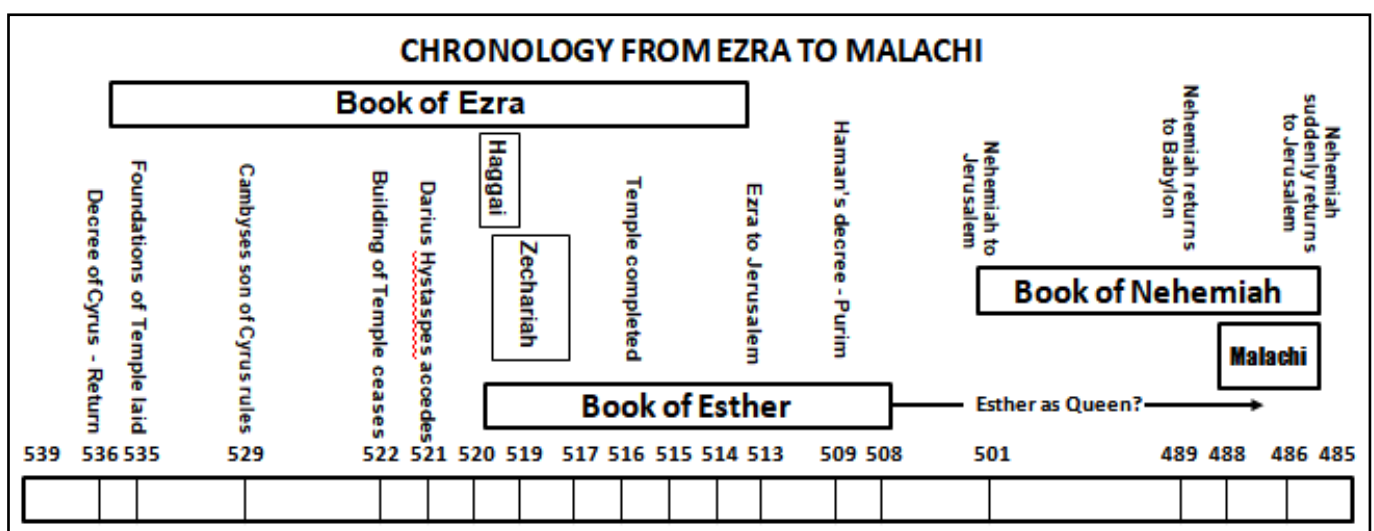
V.22-26 – Flesh is weak and is not inclined to “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace” the products of pure motivation. It is more inclined to quibbling and argument. Patience and “meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” is what is required.

## November 26

### Esther 1

The Book of Esther is a masterpiece. It reads like a fairy tale, but is a revelation of the work of God to redeem both Israel and the nations through Christ, and yet curiously, there is no reference to God or to His name in the entire book. How is that possible? Only by the way Yahweh works now in the life and affairs of His people – through Divine providence. In every chapter of Esther it is evident that the angels are at work behind the scenes, just as they are now in the earth, not only to manipulate the affairs of nations (Dan. 10:13,20-21), but also as ministers to the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14).

V.1 – “Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus” – See **Appendix 2** for the clear reasons why it is believed this Ahasuerus is a reference to Darius Hystaspes who ruled Persia from BC 521 to 485. The information is important, but too large to be included here. The chart found in that appendix is duplicated below. It is useful to see the harmony and relationship of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi to each other.



V.1 – “(this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from **India** even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)” – History records that Darius Hystaspes conquered **India** in BC 508 and placed the populous nation under heavy tribute (Esther 10:1).



See **Appendix 2** for details. With 127 provinces, this was a huge empire that stretched from India in the east to the Aegean islands in the west.

V.2 – “Shushan the palace” – This is Susa (the capital at the time), one of four prominent cities of the Medes and the Persians. They had palaces in Babylon (Dan. 5:1,30-31, although Babylon was in revolt at the time of Esther); in Ecbatana, Persepolis and Susa. They moved around these cities depending on the climatic conditions during the year. Susa means ‘white’ (‘the lily’). Excavations by Dieulafoy in 1884-1886 found an inscription by Artaxerxes II stating the palace was built by his ancestor Darius Hystaspes.

V.3-9 – “In the **third year** of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him” – The accession of Hystaspes had been difficult. Overthrowing the imposter Gomates (Smerdis) and quelling the revolt of the province of Babylon fully occupied him for two years, but when peace came he considered it wise to consolidate his power. For 180 days (half a year), he lavishly entertained, and doubtless organized his governors and operatives from the entire empire. All went well until the final week. “Shushan the palace” refers to the capital city, and “the king’s palace” to the king’s palatial residence in it.

V.10-22 – “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was **merry** with wine” – The word *ṭôb* means to be good, be pleasing, be joyful, be beneficial, be pleasant, be favourable, be happy; and is not a reference to intoxication. The king had good reason to be happy at the way things had turned out over six months, but was stunned and humiliated by the what happened next. One crowning glory of his kingdom remained to be displayed to his guests – his beautiful wife Vashti (her name means ‘beautiful’).

“But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him” – This brazen disobedience by Vashti was incredibly humiliating for Hystaspes. She had in one stroke undermined all the gains of the last six months. In the eyes of his guests, here was a monarch that couldn’t even rule his own house. It is perhaps not surprising that further revolts occurred in the empire that took another two years to quell. The matter had to be set right. The king convened the council of his closest advisors. These seven princes listed in V.14 were those who overthrew and killed Gomates (Smerdis) and chose one of their number to assume the role of king. They had made a solemn contract that any one of them could at any time approach the king without being announced (Ezra 7:14). They counselled that Vashti be banished and another wife sought for the king because “this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto **all women**, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes,” and worse, “Likewise shall the ladies (*šârâh* – princess, noblewoman, noble lady) of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king’s princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen” and “much contempt and wrath” would arise, and the outcome would mirror modern Humanistic society where one in two marriages fail.

The higher spiritual meaning of these events is seen in their relationship to Israel after the flesh. The Book of Esther beautifully reveals in type, the purpose of God with Israel who were taken by Yahweh as His wife at Mt Horeb (Ex. 19:5-6; Jer. 3:14; 31:32). Like Hystaspes, He desired that she should be the crowning ornament of His glory (Jer. 13:11) as He revealed His power unto the nations. He sent His messengers unto her (2 Chron. 36:15-16), who in the type are represented by the seven chamberlains (V.10). The king desired to display her in regal glory before the representatives of the nations (Deut. 4:6-8). She was called upon to reveal His praise and glory (Isa. 43:7), but she refused to hear and obey her husband (Isa. 54:5). As a result, another bride has been sought consisting of faithful and obedient Jews and Gentiles which His son will take to himself in due time.

## Amos 6 – Second woe address

V.1 – “Woe to them that are at **ease** (*sha’ănân* – at ease, careless, wanton, arrogant) in Zion, and **trust** (“confidence” RSV) in the mountain of Samaria” – The prophet condemns the ruling, wealthy classes in the nation who as a decadent aristocracy lived in luxury at the expense of ordinary folk whom they oppressed to maintain their lifestyle. They were “not grieved for the affliction of Joseph” (V.6).

V.2-8 – “Calneh” (built by Nimrod – Gen. 10:10); “Hamath the great”; and “Gath of the Philistines” (the capital) all fell to the Assyrians as would Samaria. Their confidence in Samaria was seriously misplaced. They pushed “the evil day” far away and lived like it would never come as described in V.4-6. They would be the first to go into captivity between BC 725 and 722 when Samaria was finally overthrown after a 3 year siege (V.7-8).

V.9-14 – “if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die” – Even the remnant were doomed, excepting perhaps a lone survivor in a house who buried the dead – “when one's relative, the one who anoints him for burial, shall take him up to bring the bones out of the house” (ESV). He would be instructed not to mention the name of God who was clearly now perceived to be the architect of the holocaust, for fear of further reprisals.

V.12 – “Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen?” – These are actions of stupidity that accrue irreparable damage, just as the rejection of God's principles and commandments had done in Israel.

V.13 – “Ye which rejoice in **a thing of nought**, which say, Have we not taken to us **horns** by our own strength?” – It seems there is a play on words and history here. Israel had recently captured Lo-debar from Syria. Its name means “a thing of nought,” and “who say, Have we not by our own strength captured Karnaim (‘horns’) for ourselves?”

V.14 – “But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel...and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath (far north) unto the river of the wilderness” (i.e. the brook of the Arabah as it enters the Dead Sea – the southern extent of Jeroboam the Second's territory – 2 Kings 14:25).

## 2 Timothy 3

V.1 – “This know also, that in the last days perilous (*chalepos* – hard to bear, troublesome, dangerous) times shall come” – A more accurate description of the character of the times in which we live from the following verses 2 to 9 is not possible. Most are obvious, but “trucebreakers” of V.3 requires comment. The word *aspondos* means “that cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant, implacable.” In other words, they cannot keep covenants, and if they make them will not hold to them out of self-interest. The modern world are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,” yet there is a ‘curtain’ of hypocritical religion (V.5-9).

V.10-17 – Attempting to live the truth and preach the Gospel brings its challenges even in times of freedom from violent persecution (V.11-12). The evils of the world, in magnitude and reach, rapidly increase as men seek out many inventions – Ecc. 7:29. But there is an antidote – “continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of” by close attention to “the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” We are assured that “All Scripture is **breathed out** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” – ESV for V.16-17.

## 2 Timothy 4

V.1-5 – We have an obligation to preach to all as opportunity arises (1 Pet. 3:15), but Paul is not talking about preaching externally when he writes, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” for he goes on to say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,” but will choose teachers who say what they want to hear. This is about one-time believers who turn aside to false teachings. Upholding truth within the community is critically important.

V.6-8 – Paul had done all he could to “contend earnestly for the faith,” but it was a losing battle. The time for his “departure” was at hand. The word is *analsis* – an unloosing; a military term speaking of the breaking up of camp, hence describes the disintegration of his body. However, he knew a reward awaited him at the resurrection which would also go to “all them also that **love** his appearing.” We love (*agapao*) Christ’s appearing by sacrificing the present for the future – Luke 17:33. Sadly, one of Paul’s fellow labourers had chosen the present – “Demas hath forsaken me, having **loved** (*agapao*) this present world.”

V.9-22 – Personal instructions for Timothy and final greetings conclude the epistle. Paul was not without some comfort, for Luke the faithful physician was with him, and he asked Timothy to bring John Mark with him. This young man had caused Paul much disappointment (Acts 13:13; 15:37-39). Paul did not bear personal grudges. He was happy to see and encourage renewed dedication.

## November 27

### Esther 2

The types presented in the Book of Esther are quite astonishing, but like all types, they are shadows and it is unwise to press details that undermine other clear testimonies of Scripture. For example, Vashti represents natural Israel to whom Yahweh gave a bill of divorce (Jer. 3:8), but consistent with the Biblical principle, that ‘divorce’ does not sever the marriage, for He could say through Elijah in the latter days “I am married unto you” (Jer. 3:14), and will restore her unto Himself in faithfulness (Hos. 2:14-20; Isa. 54:5). A new wife is sought for the king and shows all the characteristics of the bride of Christ of whom she is obviously a type. In the type, Mordecai represents Christ as later chapters clearly reveal, so what is the answer to this apparent dichotomy? It is a shadow where not all elements fit the reality of higher things to come. Christ will marry his bride at his return. He returns as “the father of the age” (Isa. 9:6), representing Yahweh as “Michael” (Dan. 12:1 – “He who is like El”) and therefore “the angel of His presence” (Isa. 63:9). There is therefore a sense in which Yahweh is involved in the taking of this bride prepared for His son. In the final analysis beyond the Millennium, all members of Yahweh’s restored wife who prove faithful in the Kingdom as mortals will unite as immortals with the glorified members of the then completed Bride of Christ.

The call for virgins, probably from many nationalities, to be prepared as a bride for the king immediately raises the type involved in the preparation of the bride of Christ. The method of preparation – 6 months with oil of myrrh (used to anoint Aaron – Ex. 30:23) points to our preparation for priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10); while 6 months with sweet odors of spices points to the incense of Ex. 30:34-38, symbolizing prayer. Priests’ lips should keep knowledge (Mal. 2:7), therefore study of the Word of God is inferred (2 Tim. 2:15), while prayer is the perfect counterbalance for study – Yahweh speaks to us by His Word; we speak to Him by prayer often generated by it (Rom. 8:26-27). The outcome, as it was for Esther, is an irresistible ‘beauty’ not related to fleshly and ephemeral considerations, but of humility and Divine character traits that shine through.

Even Esther's Hebrew name Hadassah has spiritual import. It means "myrtle" and the myrtle tree was used to create booths in the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15), the feast to be kept by the nations in the Kingdom (Zech. 14:16); it is used as a symbol of Israel glorified and blessed in the Millennium (Isa. 41:19; 55:13); and is prominent in the first night vision of Zechariah of Christ triumphant over all nations (Zech. 1:8-11). Both Yahweh's restored wife Israel, and the glorified Bride of Christ will be present in that day.

V.5 – "there was a **certain** (*ish* = great man) Jew, whose name was **Mordecai**" – The role of Mordecai is extremely important and highly typical. His name means "little man" and he was a Benjamite ("son of the right hand"). Here was a great man (from the Divine perspective) who was little in the eyes of other men, but was a son of the right hand (Ps. 110:1). It is not hard to see the type of Christ. He was the cousin and adoptive father of Esther whose parents had died ("he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother"), and she was highly respectful of him and grateful for his part in her life, even after she became queen (V.20 – "Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him").

V.12-18 – "Now when the turn of Esther" – There is a hint that Hegai who had prepared the virgins for 12 months, and clearly favoured Esther (V.9), kept the best till last. The phrase "when every maid's turn was come to go in to king" (V.12) suggests that others preceded Esther, and then finally her turn came. This meant a considerable wait for Esther as each virgin was in the company of the king overnight and released next morning. If she was not the chosen one, she ended up in the harem as a concubine called upon on the whim of the king at some future time (V.14). In the type (which must be considered sensibly), these passed-by 'virgins' represent the rejected at the Judgement Seat as they had to be "called by name" (cp. Matt. 7:22-23). It was as though their "names were not written in the book of life" (Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

Having always taken the advice of Mordecai and Hegai, Esther's entrance on the appointed day had everyone in awe, including the king – "the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins." Her outward beauty was enhanced by a meek and quiet disposition that displayed itself in the way she carried herself and the way she spoke. The quality of character and attitude was evident to all, as it will be in the Bride of Christ in the great Day soon coming for all the faithful. So, Ahasuerus "set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." God was at work to save the Jews from the cruel machinations of the Antisemite Haman (the Edomite), and next prepared for the exaltation of Mordecai in that regard.

V.19-23 – "In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, **Bigthan** and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus" – The "Bigthan" of this verse is most likely the "Bigtha" of chapter 1:10. The chamberlains were highly trusted eunuchs who watched over the king's living and sleeping quarters to prevent assassination attempts by his enemies. These two clearly had a grievance against the king, and Mordecai overheard their whisperings about a plot on the king's life. He apprised Esther, who in turn advised the king. The matter was investigated, proven and the conspirators executed. At the end of that fateful day, the king called in his scribes to record the events of the day, but other exigencies forestalled any reward being made to Mordecai at the time. That record of events, clearly created by angelic manipulation, was to play a critical part in the events to come, as are the behind-the-scenes activities of the angels today.

## Amos 7

This chapter begins the third section of the prophecy of Amos which runs from chapter 7:1 to 9:15, concluding the book. It contains five visions given to Amos that are interrupted by a vigorous conflict with Amaziah the chief priest of Jeroboam's apostate religion at Bethel from V.10-17. The visions are as follows: (**Vision 1**) 7:1-3 – The plague of locusts; (**Vision 2**) 7:4-6 – The devouring fire; (**Vision 3**) 7:7-9 – The plumbline of judgement; (**Vision 4**) 8:1-3 – The basket of summer fruit, which is followed by a stinging condemnation of Israel's injustice and false worship for the remainder of chapter 8; (**Vision 5**) 9:1-15 – Yahweh standing on the altar representing the certainty of God's judgements and the ultimate fulfillment of His purpose.

V.1-3 – (Rotherham) “he was preparing the locust, in the beginning of the shooting up of the after-grass,—and lo! after-grass, cometh after the mowings for the king” – The latter rains came in the Spring (March/April) and produced new growth for food to supplement the early harvest (“the king's mowings”) for the hot dry Summer ahead, but locusts had devoured the new growth (Rotherham – “when they had made an end of eating the herbage of the land”), eliciting a plea from Amos for clemency towards a shrinking nation. God hearkened and mitigated the harm to some degree. This illustrates the mercy of God towards His people. It was not because they had sincerely repented, for they had not. It was because they acknowledged the judgement, like Ahab had done (1 Kings 21:27-29).

The following note from Collier's Encyclopedia shows the ravages of a locust plague – “Among the most destructive of pests is the locust. They attack in huge swarms and in a single day can eat enough grain to feed 5 million people. A single swarm can extend over 50 square miles and can travel 400 miles or more. Locusts form in many breeding grounds and assemble in the Arabian Peninsular and from there invade countries from Egypt to India.”

V.4-6 – “Adonai Yahweh called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part” – The great deep (sea) is a reference to nations (Isa. 17:12-13; 57:20). The fire of Divine judgement which is against all nations (Rom. 1:18 – “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”) would in this instance only affect “a part,” namely, Israel, and later Judah. Tiglath-Pileser attacked Samaria and allowed Hoshea to be made king (their last), but ultimately, when he rebelled, Shalmaneser V and Sargon II destroyed Samaria and carted off the remaining inhabitants of the nation. Amos, seeing these things, again pleaded for his people, and Yahweh delayed the judgement pronounced in the days of Jeroboam II for a while.

V.7-9 – “the Lord stood upon **a wall made by a plumbline**, with a plumbline in his hand” – A plumbline was deployed to ensure a wall was built straight. Yahweh had built His people as a wall to keep out the evils of the nations (Dan. 9:25; Lam. 2:18; Isa. 58:12), based on His unchanging principles, but the nation had twisted and abused them so that their wall was no longer straight. It was now to be demolished because it was not aligned with God, as was later to happen to Judah – “Yahweh hath purposed to destroy the **wall** of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a **line**, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying.” Though the Hebrew words are different in Isa. 28:17, the line and plummet are the equivalent of the plumbline here – “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.” The plumbline clearly refers to judgement.

“the high places of **Isaac** shall be desolate” – Isaac spent the best part of his life at Beersheba (Gen. 26:23,33; 46:1), and it became synonymous with his name, but it too had been made into a centre of idolatry (Amos 5:5; 8:14), and was slated for destruction.

V.10-17 – “Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words” – Every faithful messenger of God will encounter opposition at some point (2 Tim. 1:8,12; 2:9). This was Amos’s time. The chief priest of the apostate worship at Bethel, Amaziah, charged Amos with conspiracy against the life of Jeroboam II. As always in such cases, the charges were exaggerated and untrue. Amos had not said “Jeroboam shall die by the sword,” and in fact, he did not (2 Kings 14:29), but he **had** said “Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.” The king is not represented as doing anything in response, so Amaziah resorted to threats and intimidation (another common tactic). Amos in response took personalities out of the equation and humbly asserted his appointment by God to do something quite out of the ordinary for him. If it had not been for Yahweh’s call, he would be seasonally picking sycomore fruit and tending sheep and cattle. That call qualified him to pass on God’s messages, and he had an uncomfortable one for Amaziah – “Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword... and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.” It is never wise to challenge the Word of God.

### Titus 1

Titus was given one of the most difficult commissions in the first century history of the Brotherhood – the organization of the ecclesias on the Island of Crete. Cretians as a race were notorious for all forms of bad behavior (V.12). The ecclesias there needed organization and stabilization and Titus was the one brother with the skills and fortitude to handle the situation. He had done effective work among the Corinthians for the Apostle – 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18. His character is clearly shown in those passages, but his presence is indicated by 2 Cor. 7:15 when Paul reminded the Corinthians “how with **fear** and **trembling** ye received him.” They did not view Timothy that way – 1 Cor. 16:10. The old saying “horses for courses” has its application to ecclesial life – Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-25; 1 Pet. 4:10-11. Titus was equipped to deal with unruly behaviour, so Paul could counsel “rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (V.13).

V.5-9 – Capable and qualified elders were required as ‘bishops’ or overseers (V.7) to guide the ecclesias and set things right. These qualifications are similar to 1 Tim. 3, but hint at some of the contemporary problems of our time as well – e.g. divorce and remarriage; dysfunctional families; self-will and anger when demands are not met; domestic violence and greed. Cretian society had moulded its inhabitants, and consequently the truth was facing an uphill battle to survive. Added to this was the omnipresent machinations of Judaistic converts (V.10-16).

### Titus 2

Chapter 2 expands upon 1:9 – “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Leaders especially need to be equipped to dispense the Word, each in their own area of responsibility – “aged men” the ecclesia; “aged women” to “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” (V.4-5). It is the Word of God that would effect change for the better. It too could bring moderation to the lives of younger men brought up in an evil environment. The word for “sober minded” (V.6) is *sōphroneō* – to be of sound mind; to exercise self-control; to curb one’s passions.

V.7-10 – It was essential that Titus “walk the talk” as the modern saying goes as an example of integrity in “a pattern of good works” in doctrine, speech and employment.

V.11-15 – There were sound reasons for demanding such corrections to behavior. By “the grace of God” the call had gone out to all men “training us to renounce ungodliness and all the pleasures of this world, and to live sober, upright, and pious lives at the present time” (Weymouth – V.12). The sacrifice of Christ can remove the stain of sin “and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (V.14), who will look to the “appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (RV for V.13).

### Titus 3

V.1-7 – “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” – Having dealt with the necessary changes within the ecclesias, Paul now turns to the relationship of the ecclesia to the state. Lawlessness and rebelliousness were common in Crete. Followers of Christ have obligations to “the powers that be,” and are required to be subject to them unless required to disobey God. We have a duty to undertake “every good work” in terms of Paul’s counsel in Gal. 6:9-10 – “let us not be weary in well doing....as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto **all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” This is best brought to the fore by remembering the unbelieving past, and appreciating the scope of the change wrought in our lives by the truth in Christ, and the benefits it has brought – “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

V.8-11 – “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou **affirm constantly**, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain **good works**” – Christ’s principle that “ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16) is reflected by the Apostle. Our destiny will be determined by our works (not to be confused with works of law and ritual in which the Judaisers gloried – Rev. 22:12 – “my reward is with me, to give every man according as his **work** shall be”). It is Judaisers that Paul has in mind next – “avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law” (cp. 1:10). Heretics decide their own fate by insisting on wrong doctrine and/or wrong practice (“being condemned of himself”), and after two or three genuine attempts at conversion should be withdrawn from lest they corrupt the rest of the community (1 Cor. 5:5-6).

V.12-15 – Paul’s final instructions to Titus speak for themselves, but it is notable that one of the principal problems in Crete was an aversion to manual labour – “let our people too learn to set a good example in following honest occupations for the supply of their necessities, so that they may not live useless lives” (Weymouth).

## November 28

### Esther 3

V.1 – “After these things did king Ahasuerus promote **Haman** the son of Hammedatha the **Agagite**, and advanced him” – Esau left a legacy for his descendants that manifested itself in many after him. Hadad, an adversary to Solomon (1 Kings 11:17); Haman the Agagite; Herod the Great; and Simon a leader of a 20,000 strong band of Edomite thugs in the events of AD 66-70 are just a few, and all displayed the arrogance and forthrightness of their Antisemitic ancestor. Five years after Esther’s marriage to the king, a new favourite had thrust himself into the limelight in the empire. His name “Haman” means “magnificent” (BDB), or “noise, tumult” (Hitchcock) and is reflective of his rise. His father “Hammedatha” has a name



that means “given by the moon god” (Hastings), or “he that troubles the law” (Hitchcock). He was an “Agagite” – a descendant of the Amalekite kings (Num. 24:7; 1 Sam. 15; Ex. 17:16). Amalek was a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:16) and a duke, so there was a family history of exercising power. Amalek had the distinction of being the first nation to oppress Israel (Num. 24:20), and were their erstwhile enemies from the outset (Deut. 25:17-19). The scene was set for an outburst of Antisemitism through an Edomite obsessed with power (chap. 5:11).

V.2-6 – “the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence” – Having ingratiated himself with the king, Haman now sought to be worshipped as a god. The word “bowed” is used of the worship of idols (1 Kings 19:18). All the servants of the king did so, but not Mordecai, for two reasons: (1) Haman was an Amalekite, sworn enemies of the Jews; and (2) Divine reverence for any man was forbidden under the Law (Ex. 20:5), as Daniel's three friends had shown. It was not long before Mordecai's defiance was tested, although the state had granted special liberties to the Jews previously (Ezra 6:14). Mordecai having announced his Jewish heritage, Haman took counsel to punish all of his race – Ps. 10:2 – “The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.” This was to be Haman's fate.

V.7 – “they cast **Pur**” – Persian for “lot”. The reference is to “the monthly prognosticators” of Isa. 47:13. This was to fix on a fortunate time. Haman was looking for his lucky day to destroy the Jews. The Greek version of the O.T. adds words that suggest that the day was decided before the decree was written. That means they cast the lot for each month, and then the day, and decided on the 13th day of the 12th month (V.13).

V.8-11 – “Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is **a certain people** scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom” – Haman deceptively concealed the identity of the “certain people” whom he sought to eradicate from the empire and secured the confidence and authority of the king to proceed. He offered to pay into the coffers a huge sum of money which he knew he would likely recoup by the plundering of the Jew's wealth. To this the king agreed – “The silver (of the victims) is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.” Haman was beside himself with glee (V.15). Christ's murderers too “were glad, and covenanted to give him (Judas) money” (Luke 22:5).

V.12-15 – “Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month” – The decree was issued and delivered throughout the empire by Persia's unique postal service where stations had been established at intervals and horses were rested and replaced. Perplexity fell upon Susa and among the Jews throughout the empire.

Amalek was the national representative of the serpent (cp. Ex. 17:16 with Gen. 3:15). Haman the Agagite (“Gog” in Num. 24:7 Lxx) is a type of the serpent in several iterations – Herod and the powers who sought to destroy Christ (typed by Mordecai); Rome and Catholicism; latter day Gog; and the rebels (Gog and Magog) at the end of the Millennium.

## Esther 4

V.1-17 – “When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry” – Mordecai's grief was replicated among Jews throughout the empire, and ultimately by Esther who sought to comfort her foster-father, without success. A trusted messenger named Hatach (“verily”) acted as liaison between Esther and Mordecai who was forbidden to enter the palace clothed in sackcloth. Persian laws stood in the way. So many

attempts had been made on the life of the king that another inviolable law prevented even Esther from approaching him without summons which had not happened for a month. Only the holding out of the golden sceptre by the king could save the life of the uninvited. Mordecai prevailed upon her to risk her life for her people, asking the question, “and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” He believed in providence, but that requires faith. This was Esther’s test, as it is ours.

Esther’s response was positive, but she asked for support from all Jews in Susa by fasting for **three days**. Given that the decree was issued on 13th Abib, it is reasonable to assume that the fast began on the 14th – the day of the Passover. Hence, the type of Christ seems obvious. Mordecai and his brethren spent three days fasting as Christ was to spend three days in the tomb while his brethren mourned.

## Amos 8

V.1-3 – “behold a basket of **summer fruit**” (*qayits*) – The 4th vision is of the final harvesting of summer fruit and speaks of the nearness of the end for Israel because of their wickedness, which is spelt out in V.4-6 – “The **end** (*qêts*) is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again **pass by** them any more.” There is a play on both words and history here. Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge says – There is here not only an allusion to the nature of the summer fruit, which must be eaten as soon as gathered, but also a paronomasia upon the words *kayitz* “summer fruit,” and *ketz* “an end.” Yahweh had ‘passed by’ His people when the destroying angel killed the firstborn of Egypt, and many times thereafter, but He would no longer delay the judgement. The time had come for the summer fruit to be eaten. The normal joy at the conclusion of harvest would be absent – “but palace-songs, shall become howlings, in that day” (Rotherham), and dead bodies would strew the land.

V.4-7 – “ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail” – This reverts to chapter 2:6-8. These sinister behaviors gave Yahweh great grief – “Surely I will never forget any of their works” (V.7). They systematically scammed the poor by falsifying weights and measures; paying pitifully low prices for pawned goods, and selling the worst products for exorbitant prices, all the while cursing the restrictions imposed by the Sabbath and ‘holy’ days that impacted their scandalous trading. This was the antithesis of what God looked for in His people – “what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to **do justly**, and to **love mercy**, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Mic. 6:8) which when manifested constitutes “the excellency of Jacob.”

V.8-10 – “Shall not the land tremble for this” – Prophesying “two years before the earthquake” (1:1), Amos is flagging what was to come and likens the wave like action of an earthquake to the flooding of the Nile (sometimes it rose 6 metres or 20 feet and quickly subsided). Two eclipses would interrupt their festivals. About eleven years after Amos prophesied there were two great eclipses of the sun, one at the Feast of Tabernacles, and the other sometime before the Passover. These had a very negative effect on the ‘celebrations’ of those occasions.

V.11-14 – “I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh” – Amos and other prophets were ignored and when the day of judgement came and unspeakable distress overtook them, they would search in vain through the whole land for a word from God and would not find it (as Ahab searched for Elijah – 1 Kings 18:10). “Fair virgins and young men” who had not been educated in spiritual things would perish of spiritual malnutrition and in their anguish and desperation look to false gods – the calves of Jeroboam that had brought the disaster upon them.

## Philemon

This is a short but powerful epistle about humbly receiving back into service as a brother in Christ an escaped slave. Paul's writing from prison is vigorous and uses an obvious play on the meaning of names. For example, "Philemon" means 'affectionate' whom Paul describes as "our dearly beloved." "Archippus" signifying "horse ruler" is described as "our fellow-soldier." "Onesimus" means 'profitable or useful' to which Paul adds, "Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now **profitable** to thee and to me."

V.4-7 – Philemon had a reputation for loving and faithful service in Christ at Colosse. He was known for his care of the brethren and sisters. Now Paul had a challenge for him.

V.8-22 – Paul pleads for the escaped slave of Philemon, Onesimus, who had been subsequently converted by him, and doubtless under the Apostle's instruction wanted to return to Colosse and to his master. Human pride and the desire to exact lost revenue may have got in the way, but Paul's masterly writing would have removed all impediments.

When all is said and done, we are all slaves. Once, slaves to sin (Rom. 6:17), we have been freed from one slave master in order to serve another, namely, God and His son (Rom. 6:22 – ESV – "now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God"). In Christ we are 'prisoners' – V.1,9 – "being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a **prisoner** of Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8). As such we have no choice in the matter, and doubtless Philemon grasped that.

## November 29

### Esther 5

V.1-8 – "Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house" – Three days of fasting and prayer prepared Esther to take her life in her hands and approach the king uninvited. It was obvious to the king that the matter was very important as he offered her "half of the kingdom" while holding out the golden sceptre. Perhaps a little surprised at her simple request for attendance at a banquet by him and Haman, he nevertheless commanded Haman to be present, only to be further surprised by another request to attend a banquet the next day. The king may have been a little bemused, but Haman was exuberant and returned home "joyful and with a glad heart" only to have his pride punctured by Mordecai who refused to bow to him as he left the palace, and acted almost as if he (Mordecai) was dead and unconscious of Haman's presence. Seething with rage, he deferred his anger unto a later date as all seemed to be going well for Haman at present and the decree for the Jews' destruction was in place.

V.9-14 – "Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king" – Boasting of his achievements and of his numerous progeny to his family, Haman was nevertheless weighed down with the problem of his nemesis, Mordecai the Jew. His vindictive wife Zeresh and his friends suggested an answer – "Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon," all before attending the banquet. Providence had prepared for this denouement.

In the type, the gallows (Heb. *ets*) represent the cross of Christ's crucifixion. It was Christ who was hung thereon, but in so doing he crucified the nature that manifested itself so fully in men like Haman (see notes on Col. 2:14-15 on November 14, page 51).

## Esther 6

V.1-3 – “On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles” – The angels were at work again that night ensuring the king could not sleep. It was the practice of Persian monarchs keen to etch their names in history to call in the scribes at the end of the day’s business and have recorded the significant events and important governmental decisions of the day. Mordecai’s name had been recorded as the revealer of the plot to assassinate the king, but the confusion and dislocation of that time did not see him adequately rewarded. It was this record that was brought out and read by “the decree of the watchers” (Dan. 4:17). The reading was interrupted by the arrival of Haman in the court to seek the life of Mordecai on his gallows.

V.4-11 – “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). So it was for Haman. When the king asked, “What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?” He wanted to be king – “Let the royal apparel be brought which the **king** useth to wear, and the horse that the **king** rideth upon, and the **crown** royal which is set upon his head.” Commanded to perform all his suggestions without fail to Mordecai the Jew, Haman was crushed by the humiliation of pronouncing publicly that his enemy had displaced him.

V.12-14 – Completely shattered by these humiliating events, Haman hurried home to report to his wife and friends who saw the writing on the wall – “If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.” Before he had time to think he was hastened “unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.”

## Amos 9

The 5th vision is of Yahweh standing on the altar (“I saw the Lord standing upon the altar”) representing the certainty of His judgements and the ultimate fulfillment of His purpose.

V.1-4 – “Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword” – There is a shift in the tense of the language from the previous chapters where the frequently used word “shall” presages the judgements to come, whereas in this chapter the language is more confronting as the judgement nears. The altar on which Yahweh stands is evidently that of Jeroboam at Bethel – “in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of **Bethel**” (Amos 3:14). There would be no escaping the oncoming storm wherever they hid or took refuge.

V.5-6 – “Yahweh of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn” – Reference is again made of the oncoming earthquake (1:1) in which the earth “melts,” although this language is often used of irresistible Divine intervention in the affairs of men and nations – Ps. 46:6 – “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts” (see also Isa. 64:1). Reference again to “the flood of Egypt” as in chapter 8:8 shows that the threatened judgements were now inevitable, like the regular flooding of the Nile. There is no opposing the Creator of the earth when He is angry (V.6).

V.7 – (ESV) “Are you not like the **Cushites** to me, O people of Israel?” – Because both Israel and Judah had introduced Baal worship that had so thoroughly marinated both nations, Yahweh looked upon His people as Cushites (Cush was a son of Ham and bore Nimrod the first god-king of the earth and founder of Baal worship – Gen. 10:6,8). Yahweh asserts that He

could have done better with uncircumcised Philistines and Syrians whom He made Israel's neighbours at the same time He brought Israel out of Egypt – “Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor (Crete), and the Syrians from Kir?” (lower Mesopotamia). This is confirmed by the use of Amos 9:11-12 by James to resolve the issues of the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15. The demand of Judaizers in the community for the circumcision of converted Gentiles was resolved by this context. David converted many Philistines and did not demand that they be circumcised, hence, the erection of his tent to house the Ark – the Tabernacle of David.

V.8-10 – “the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob” – The promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be fulfilled, hence “Jacob” (the generic name for all Jews) would not be utterly destroyed like the Cushites (represented by latter day Roman Catholicism) whose religion they had adopted. However, Israel would be sifted among the nations as stated in Jer. 30:11 – “I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.” It would be a long and painful process (V.10), “yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth” because in the latter days Christ would gather all Jews from the lands of their dispersion and bring them into their own land.

V.11-15 – “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old” – One of the great curiosities of this context is that it clearly concerns the time of the return of Christ to establish the Kingdom of God (see V.13-15 which can only be fulfilled then), but James quoted V.11-12 to resolve the issues of the Jerusalem Conference (see notes on V.7 above). The Tabernacle of David in the future is called “an house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:7) because David involved Gentiles in the worship and service of Yahweh without the restrictions of the Law, not insisting on circumcision, although it will be required for entry to this house in the future (Ezek. 44:9). David's tabernacle functioned under a Melchizedek order in parallel with the Law as a forerunner of the future Order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4) who fellowshiped Hebrew and Gentile converts in Gen. 14:18.

## Hebrews 1

Faced with the increasingly evident defection of some Jewish converts who were inclined towards keeping the Law and returning to it to avoid persecution from other Jews (family included – Luke 12:51-53), the Apostle wrote, under inspiration, perhaps the most profound letter in history. The aim was to assert the absolute superiority of Christ over every aspect of the Law. It had been delivered “by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2), but Christ was superior to the angels in every way – V.4 to 2:18. This was the first of several contrasts to be made between the Law and Christ as the Apostle sought to pre-empt a defection from the Body of Christ by some of the Hebrew brethren (Heb. 10:25-26) – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, **as the manner of some is**; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we **sin wilfully** (by departing from Christ) after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

The superiority of Christ to the angels was due to his Divine begettal that led to victory over sin and death (something the Law could never do) and now “being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (RV for V.3.) He “loved righteousness” and **therefore** “hated iniquity” (V.9 cited from Ps. 45:7), and was exalted above “the whole family in heaven and in earth”

(V.13 is cited from Ps. 110:1; Eph. 3:14-15), so that he now manages the angelic host in support of his mortal brethren – V.14 – ESV – “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” It was these indubitable facts that produced the dramatic and unique introduction to the epistle – “**God**, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his **Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (*aionos* – Ages).

## Hebrews 2

The theme of Christ's superiority over the angels runs from chapter 1:4 to chapter 2:18 as is indicated in 2:16 – “For verily he took not on him the nature of **angels**.”

V.1-5 – The problem for those converted Jews who were tending to turn back to the Law was that they had allowed the teaching concerning Jesus Christ to leak out of their minds – “lest at any time we should let them slip” for which the KJV margin has “run out as leaking vessels.” There was a pressing need to revive the memory of that teaching which had convinced them to be baptized into Christ – “For this reason we ought to pay the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard” (Weymouth). Uncomfortable and persistent persecution like that described in chapter 10:32-33 has a way of distracting the mind from the veracity of cold hard truths (“the word spoken by angels was stedfast”). This was the status of some Hebrew believers who were doubtless experiencing what Christ warned would happen within families by the acceptance of his teaching (Matt. 10:34-37). Departing from the “great salvation” that they had received which was confirmed by “signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit” could only lead to rejection at the Judgement Seat and that would rob them of assuming the role of the angels in the future Age – (Rotherham) – “For, not unto messengers (angels), hath he subjected the coming habitable earth of which we are speaking.” The word “world” (KJV) is *oikoumenē* – the inhabited earth (Thayer).

V.6-10 – To prove the things related in this section from chapter 1:4, the Apostle quotes Ps. 8 extensively (see comments from March 19 copied below in box).

Ps. 8 was written by David after he slew Goliath. This is indicated in the superscription of Ps. 9 where the words “To the chief Musician upon Muthlabben” (‘On the death of the giant’) are actually the subscription of Ps. 8. David saw in the death of Goliath the sacrifice of Christ to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts,” which is why Ps. 8 is cited in Heb. 2 in the context of Christ's sacrifice and its aim – the establishment of the Kingdom and its attendant reward to his faithful followers.

Ps. 8 begins and ends with the same words – “O Yahweh our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” Spelt out this is “O’ **He who will become rulers**, how excellent is thy name in all the earth.” Two things should be noted here. Firstly, the title “Lord” (*adon* – singular meaning ‘ruler’ if you look it up in Strong's Concordance) is actually *adonynuw* in the Hebrew text in both V.1 and 9. *Adonynuw* is first person plural in number and refers to the glorified saints who will share with Christ the privilege of setting up the Kingdom. That is why the Apostle says in Heb. 2:5 – “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world (*oikemene* – the inhabited world) to come, whereof we speak.” Secondly, it is obvious that the ‘earth’ we live in does not reflect the excellence of Yahweh's name. It lies in wickedness and is defiled by man – 1 John 5:19. Ps. 8 is a Kingdom psalm.

“But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is **man**, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou **visitest** him?” – Weak, mortal man (the first word

“man” from Ps. 8:4 is *enosh*) could not overcome the problem of his nature, but God “visited” (*paqad* – to attend to, look after, care for) His son to enable him to do so and render perfect obedience. The title “the Son of man” refers to exercising dominion over all carnal things, and this Christ did, then, now, and will in the future (see comments on Luke 5 for **March 14** – page 32). For this to be done required him to be made “a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death” and to be raised and “crowned with glory and honour” having tasted “death for every man.” Everything revolved around Jesus Anointed (“for whom are all things”) and without this “captain of their salvation” who was made “perfect through sufferings,” no other sons could be brought “unto glory.”

V.11-18 – “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of **one**: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” – The work of God in Christ “reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19) created a unity between God and those who came into His son by belief and baptism. This was over and above what the Law could achieve and to depart from Christ to return to it was utter folly, for all the Law could do was separate man from God through highlighting his sinfulness (Rom. 7:7-10). This **oneness** enabled Christ to declare baptized believers as his brethren as shown by the Messianic citations from Ps. 22:22; 2 Sam. 22:3 and Isa. 8:18. The latter becomes the basis of V.14 – “Forasmuch then as the **children** are partakers of flesh and blood, **he also himself likewise** took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Four words used consecutively (“**he also himself likewise**”) emphasize that Jesus Anointed shared Adam’s nature equally with us. His perfect obedience to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8) not only destroyed the *diabolos* (that which strikes through God’s Word in every other man) in him, but enabled the righteousness of God to be declared by his resurrection and change of nature as well. Henceforth, those “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” could be delivered from the shackles of death that were only emphasized by the Law (2 Cor. 3:6-7). Why would anyone appreciating these things want to return to the Law of Moses? Sadly, some did to escape the constant persecution and rejection by family. They chose the consolations of the present over future glory – “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33).

We have “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God” through whom sins can be forgiven and our inner yearnings and need for help are perceived by a mediator who “himself hath suffered being tempted,” and therefore “is able to succour (*boētheō* – to aid or relieve) them that are tempted.” How this is done is hinted at in chapter 1:14.

## November 30

### Esther 7

As in the type, deliverance came after three full days of mourning and fasting (Mordecai, the type of Christ was as though dead and his people fasted and mourned with him). The new day changed everything. The king and Haman came to Esther’s banquet and the promise of half the kingdom was repeated, but Esther was not concerned about the temporary kingdom of men. Her concern was for the life and future of her people – “if it please the king, let **my life** be given me at my petition, and **my people** at my request.” For “we are sold, **I and my people**, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish.” The king was stunned and incredulous – “Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?” He was doubtless even more stunned with the response – “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.” How had he let himself be duped by this man he trusted? In furious anger he retired to the palace garden while Haman pleaded with Esther for clemency (the kind



of clemency he had not shown towards the Jews). So desperate was he that it seems he approached Esther physically to make his appeal – “Will he force the queen also before me in the house?” Haman’s fate was sealed. He was hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. In the type “the body of sin” (Rom.6:6) had been destroyed.

## Esther 8

It was customary for the possessions of an executed criminal to fall to the crown (just as the wealth of this world will be given to the saints – Isa. 61:6; Dan. 7:18).

There was a radical changing of the guard. The destiny of Haman’s house was given into the hands of Esther and she passed it on to Mordecai who was elevated and given the king’s ring of authority taken from Haman (used by him to seal the decree for the destruction of the Jews). But this was just the beginning. The machinations of Haman needed to be reversed. Esther’s further tearful request to the king secured the answer to the laws of the Medes and the Persians that made change difficult (Dan. 6:15). The decree of Haman could not be cancelled and withdrawn. It had to be negated in some other way. Again she risked her life for her people and pleaded – “let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king’s provinces.”

V.8-17 – “Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse” – The decree issued by Mordecai authorised the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies in all the provinces of the empire. It was issued “in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof” seventy days after Haman’s decree (V.9). On the day for a year principle, this period could reflect upon the 70 year captivity in Babylon that ended with the Decree of Cyrus.

V.14 – (ESV) “So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king’s service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king’s command” – There is a type here of the future when the emissaries of Christ (Mordecai) who are represented as Yahweh’s “goodly horse in the battle” (Zech. 10:3) will be sent out to their scattered brethren with an appeal for them to return to the Land during which they will need to defend themselves against their ‘Edomite’ enemies (Jer. 3:18; 51:20-24).

As the posts delivered the decree throughout the vast empire, “The Jews had light (i.e. joy – Ps. 97:11; Isa. 58:8), and gladness, and joy, and honour,” and so it became popular to become a Jew, as it will in the Kingdom (Zech. 8:22-23).

The type is clear. Mordecai represents Christ arrayed in the garments of royalty (blue = heaven; white = righteousness; purple = royalty) issuing decrees for the redemption of his people from the hand of their enemies. The original decree stood (just as Yahweh’s decree of judgement against His sinful nation still stands) so that Israel might be purged in the fire of affliction (Jer. 30:10-11; Ezek. 20:37-38; 39:23-28), but the purged will fight their way back through the lands of their enemies to take up an inheritance in the Land promised to their fathers (Ezek. 20:40-42; 37:21-28).

## Obadiah

For a full set of Bible marking notes on Obadiah see **Appendix 3**. This is one of the shortest prophecies, yet it has far-reaching implications for the world.

Obadiah’s name means “Servant of Yahweh” and he is thus a type of Christ (Isa. 49:6). Little is known of the prophet but he was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah (cp. Jer. 49:7-22). If so,

he probably saw the Babylonian captivity and may have lived to see the partial fulfillment of some of the things his prophecy predicted.

### Analysis of the Book

Vv. 1-14 – The coming judgement on Edom by Babylon who the Edomites foolishly supported against Judah

Vv. 15-21 – Destruction of the latter day Edom (all anti-Semitic nations) resulting in the triumph of Zion

Obadiah depicts the final outcome of the age-old controversy between Esau and Jacob. Edom is the name memorializing Esau's choice of "that red" pottage which confirmed his attachment to the principles of flesh (Gen. 25:30). Red (Heb. *adom*) means rosy or red (the colour of sin – Isa. 1:18). *Adom* is the root of Adam. The Hebrew *dam* = blood. Edom's final punishment for his fleshly and sinful hatred of Jacob will be punished by the shedding of blood. Edom represents all nations who lift their hand against God's people and as a consequence will be destroyed – Cp. Ezek. 39 with Isa. 34:1-8; 63:1-6; Ezek. 35:1-7.

V.1 – "**We** have heard a rumour (*shemuwah* – something heard, an announcement) from Yahweh, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen (nations), Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle" – "We" refers to all the prophets of Israel who spoke the same message. The "ambassador" was Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25:9-11; Ezek.30:24) whose battle cry was shared by its confederate nations, including Edom at that time.

V.2-4 – "Lo! small, **have** I made thee, among the nations" (Rotherham) – This is in the past tense as the abasement of Edom's pride was certain though not yet accomplished – Jer.49:14-16. Edom was mountainous and its inhabitants carved their homes out of the rocks. They felt secure and that produced pride and arrogance. The nation is likened to the eagle in its confidence against invaders dwelling high on the craggy rocks. As an ally of Babylon they felt secure ("though thou set thy nest among the stars" – Refers to the mistaken confidence Edom placed in Babylon at that time – Isa. 14:12-13), but Babylon would prove to be their nemesis. Their destruction was ensured (V.5-9).

V.10-14 – The reason is then given for the looming judgements – their treatment of and hatred for Israel – "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." This violence had been manifested when Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Judah in BC 587. Scorn for the Jews; encouragement for Nebuchadnezzar; plunder and murder of fleeing refugees; and looting of the scorched land. Now the time for retribution had come for them at the hand of the king of Babylon in whom they had put their trust.

V.15-16 – (Rotherham) "For, near, is the day of Yahweh, upon **all the nations**" – Edom, the classic Antisemitic nation of history became a type of all Antisemitic nations of the future (of which the world is full today). Just like Edom, they will be abolished should they foolishly follow Edom's example and oppose the Lord Jesus Christ on his return (as will the Catholic system – Ps. 2; Isa. 34; Rev. 17; etc) – "**all the nations** shall drink continually,—Yea they shall drink and swallow down, and shall be, as though they had not been" (Rotherham).

V.17-21 – (Rotherham) – "But, in Mount Zion, shall be a delivered remnant which shall be holy,—and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions" – Christ will deliver Israel from the hand of their oppressors and convert them (Joel 2:32; Rom. 11:26-27; Isa. 46:13; 2:2-4), and Zion will become the sanctuary of Yahweh's glory (Isa. 56:7; 60:13). This will be accomplished by Christ in the company of his glorified Bride who will have come from the south (Christ and the Saints who come from Sinai will possess all nations = Esau – Hab. 3:3; Ps. 68:17-18; Deut. 33:1-2; Song 3:6). "And saviours shall come up on mount

Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be Yahweh's." If we remain steadfast and faithful until the end, this is our lot.

There are some tricky passages in this bracket. Readers are referred to Appendix 3.

Differentiation needs to be made between "the house of Esau" which refers to the adherents of Catholicism who continue to support the Papal system ("the mount of Esau") after Armageddon, and as a result are completely destroyed from the earth. The Papal system and its supporting empire will be destroyed beforehand (see Rev. 19:20-21).

### Hebrews 3

V. 1-6 – Having shown the superiority of Christ over the angels in chapters 1 and 2, the Apostle now turns to contrast him with Moses the champion of the Law. It was not an even comparison. Though Moses was faithful in God's house, Christ was God's Son and therefore heir and builder of the house.

V.7-19 – As a witness that Law cannot save, the Apostle introduces the testimony of the wilderness generation who were led by Moses and guided by the law he ministered to them. They were an utter failure and lost their chance of eternal life and an inheritance in the Land promised to Abraham. He cites Ps. 95:7-11 as proof. He warned those contemplating turning their back on Christ and returning to live under Law that they would "not enter into his **rest**" like their fathers of old had not. The Sabbath **rest** (pointing to the Kingdom Age) now becomes the central focus – Heb. 4:4.

### Hebrews 4

V.1 – "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his **rest**, any of you should seem to come short of it" – Faith was the missing factor (3:19) – "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." The word preached to Israel did not produce faith which is its aim and purpose (Rom. 10:17).

V.3,5 – The use of the Hebraism "**if** they shall enter into my rest" meaning 'they will **not enter** my rest' is drawn from Ps. 95:11. The "Jesus" of V.8 is of course Joshua of old.

V.9-10 make the point that in Christ the believer is already related to the 'rest' of the future Age through faith in his accomplished mission – V.14-16. But personal commitment and steadfastness is required.

V.11-13 – "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Unlike the Law which could be espoused publicly, but not followed within (Matt. 23:2-3), life in Christ is exposed to the incisive gaze of "the Word made flesh" who misses nothing – "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in **his** sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of **him** with whom we have to do." Our life must be guided by God's Word within – "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (RV). Its power is capable of "penetrating as far as a dividing asunder of soul (that which belongs to the flesh) and spirit" (Rotherham). The Word divides the fleshly and carnal from the spiritual.

### Hebrews 5

V.1-4 – (Weymouth) "For every **High Priest** is chosen from among men, and is appointed to act on behalf of men in matters relating to God, in order to offer both gifts and sin-offerings" – The Apostle is referring to the Aaronic priesthood. He is about to launch into the next major contrast between the Law and Christ and show the latter's absolute

superiority. The duty of a high priest was to represent God to His people, and the people to their God. Accordingly, “compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way” with empathy born of being a possessor of the same weak nature was required. Aaron and his successors were “compassed with infirmity” that led to moral failure and necessitated making sin offerings “for himself” as well as for the people they served. Such a grave responsibility could only fall to those appointed by God.

V.5-10 – Accordingly, “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, (Ps. 110:4) Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” The Apostle introduces a superior priesthood to the Aaronic and it changes everything on the principle expressed in chapter 7:12 – “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.” This is one of the most brilliant arguments ever made. It was made to overt the disaster of some returning to a defunct and powerless priesthood after the resurrection of Christ at which time he became “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

As a bearer of Adam’s condemned nature with all its infirmities, Jesus Christ “in the days of his flesh, having offered up, both supplications and entreaties unto him that was able to save him **out of death**, with mighty outcries and tears, and been hearkened to by reason of his devoutness” (Rotherham for V.7), was because of his sinlessness raised and immortalized. It was a painful process – (Weymouth for V.7-8) “He was delivered from the terror from which He shrank (Matt. 26:39). Although He was God’s Son, yet he learned **obedience** from the sufferings which He endured.” **Obedience brings suffering** (2 Tim. 3:12). Christ never disobeyed his Father, but obeying Him led to great suffering (ultimately, the death of the cross) “and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey** him.” This was a high priest far superior to Aaron and his sons – “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” by an oath (Ps. 110:4).

V.11-14 – The Apostle knew some Hebrew believers had become shaky on this subject because they had not grown in knowledge and understanding. It was easier to default to the Law as pressure came on them from relatives and acquaintances with whom they had peace and acceptance beforehand. Maturity of understanding of the work of Christ was needed, and this is the reason for the epistle – “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” They should by now be teachers, but had not progressed past “milk” (that is where we all begin – 1 Pet. 2:2). They needed more “milk” in order to progress to “strong meat” (the deeper things of the Word) – “for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the **mature**” (ESV). This maturity is critical to ultimate success, for “they have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” The word “use” (KJV) is *hexis* and means ‘habit, that is, (by implication) practice’ (Strong). Regular daily reading of the Word of God and determined efforts to grow in understanding are essential for success in overcoming this world, and our biased nature. Only then will we be able to properly “discern both good and evil” (Heb. 4:12). The key message is – Cultivate good spiritual habits in daily life.

## APPENDIX 1

### EXTRACT FROM EXPOSITION OF DANIEL BY JOHN THOMAS – 1854

The prophecy of Daniel 11 proved so breathtakingly accurate that so-called 'Higher Critics' in centuries past claimed that it must have been delivered beyond the events prophesied – i.e. with hindsight. The only problem for the critics is that the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Canon began in the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC under the instruction of Ptolemy II (called Philadelphus) who reigned BC 285-246, and was completed in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC well before many of the events prophesied in Dan. 11 actually transpired. The Book of Daniel was included in the translation. It clearly had been written before the events prophesied.

#### 16. PARAPHRASE OF THE ELEVENTH OF DANIEL

##### TO THE THIRTY-FIFTH VERSE INCLUSIVE.

*Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, namely, Ahasuerus, Smerdis, and Darius; and the fourth, or Xerxes, shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And Alexander the Macedonian, a mighty King, shall stand up, ruling with great dominion and doing according to his will. And when he shall stand up, having suffered no defeat, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided into four horns or kingdoms toward the four winds of heaven: and their glory and power shall fall not to his posterity, nor according to the extent of his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for other rulers besides those of his family. And the King of the South shall be strong, and shall be one of his, Alexander the Great's, princes or generals; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion, extending over Egypt, Libya, Cyrenaica, Arabia, Palestine, Coele-Syria, and most of the maritime provinces of Asia Minor, with the Island of Cyprus, and several others in the Aegean Sea, and even some cities of Greece, as Cicyon and Corinth. Such was the dominion of Ptolemy Soter, the first Macedonian King of Egypt.*

VERSE 6. *And in the end of 52 years from B. C. 301, they, the Kings of Egypt, and of the Assyro-Macedonian Horn of the north, shall associate themselves together; for Berenice, the king's daughter of the south, shall come, or be conducted, to Antiochus Theos, the king of the north, to make a marriage agreement; but she shall not retain the power of the arm of her father Ptolemy Philadelphus. Neither shall he her husband Antiochus stand; for Laodice his repudiated wife, whom he shall receive again when he divorces Berenice after her father's death, shall cause him to be poisoned. Nor shall his arm, Berenice, stand; but she shall be given up to suffer death; and they, the Egyptians also, that brought her to Syria; and he, her son, whom she brought forth, and he that strengthened her in these times, shall die; and thus leave her to the mercy of Laodice, which will be treachery and death.*

*reign nine more years than the King of the north, who shall die a prisoner in Parthia five years before the King of Egypt. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land, B. C. 244.*

VERSE 10. *But his Seleucus Callinicus' sons, Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus, shall be stirred up to war; and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one of them, even Antiochus the Great, shall certainly come and overflow through the passes of Libanus, and pass through into Galilee, and possess himself of all that part of the country which was formerly the inheritance of the tribes Reuben and Gad, and of the half tribe of Manasseh. Then, the season being too far advanced to prolong the campaign, shall he return to Ptolemais, where he shall put his forces into winter-quarters. But early in the spring, B. C. 217, Ptolemy Philopater shall march with a large army to Raphia, by which Antiochus shall be stirred up again*

to war, and defeated with great slaughter, so that he shall retreat to his fortress. Thus shall the king of the south be moved with choler, and come forth, and fight with the king of the north; and the King of the north shall set forth a great multitude, even 72,000 foot and 6,000 horse; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of the King of Egypt.

And when he, the King of the south, had taken away the multitude by a signal defeat of Antiochus, his heart shall be lifted up, for he will desire to enter the Most Holy Place of the temple. But while he was preparing to enter, he was stricken and carried off for dead. In his victory over Antiochus, he shall cast down ten thousands, even 10,000 foot and 300 horse. But not following up his advantages, Philopater shall not be strengthened by his victory. For Antiochus the king of the north shall return and shall set forth a multitude of troops greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain, that is, nineteen years after the battle of Raphia, or B. C. 198, with a great army and with much riches, and shall subjugate all the Holy and Coele-Syria.

VERSE 14. And in those times, when Ptolemy Epiphanes shall reign over Egypt, many shall stand up against the infant king of the south, even the kings of Macedonia, and of Syria, and Scopas, the general of his deceased father. But the Deputies of the Breakers of thy people, Judah, O Daniel, that is, of the Romans, shall interfere to establish the vision. The Romans became the guardians and protectors of Epiphanes during his minority. They appointed three deputies, who were ordered to acquaint the Kings with their resolution, and to enjoin them not to infest the dominions of their royal pupil; for that otherwise they should be forced to declare war against them. The deputy Emilius, one of the three, after delivering the message of the Roman Senate, proceeded to Alexandria, and settled every this way the Romans began to mix themselves up with the affairs of Egypt, Syria, and the Holy; and in a few years established themselves as lords paramount of the East, being thus constituted a Power in Asia, which is symbolized in this relation by the Little Horn on the Northern Horn of the Grecian Goat; and in the 36th verse of this chapter, styled "THE KING." But, though destined to be "the Breakers of Judah," the assurance was given to Daniel, saying, *they shall fall.*

So the king of the north, being checked by the Roman Deputies, shall come into the Holy, and cast up a mount against Sidon, where he shall besiege the forces of the Egyptians; and he shall take Jerusalem, the city of munitions, from the castle of which he shall expel the Egyptian garrison; and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand Antiochus. But Antiochus who cometh against Ptolemy Epiphanes shall do according to his own will in Coele-Syria and the Holy Land, and none shall stand before him: and he shall make a permanent stand in the land of the glory which by his hand shall be consumed. He shall also set his face to enter into Greece with the strength of his whole kingdom, and Israelites with him. Thus shall he do to incorporate Greece with his dominion, by which the Romans who had recently proclaimed it free, would be stirred up against him. Therefore, to secure the neutrality of their Egyptian ally, he shall give Cleopatra, the daughter of women, or princess royal, to Epiphanes to wife, corrupting her to betray him by resigning to him Coele-Syria and Palestine as her dower, but on condition that he should receive half the revenue. Thus the land of Judah was given over as a bribe to bind Cleopatra to her father's interests, that she might influence Epiphanes either to remain neutral, or to declare against the Romans, his protectors. But she shall cleave to her husband, and not stand, neither be for him, but shall join with her husband in congratulating the Roman Senate on the victory they had gained over her father at Thermopylae.



*After this shall Antiochus, at the earnest solicitation of the Ætolians, turn his face unto the isles of Greece, and shall take many: but a chieftain, (kotzin,) L Scipio, the Roman Consul, shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own disgrace he, Scipio, shall cause it to turn upon Antiochus, by defeating him at Mount Sipyllus, and repulsing him from every part of Asia Minor. As the condition of peace, the Romans required him to pay 15,000 talents—500 down, 2500 on the ratification of the treaty, and the rest in twelve years at 1000 talents per annum. These terms being acceded to, he shall turn his face toward the fortress, or capitol, of his own land, being much at a loss how to raise the tribute. While in the province of Elymais, he heard of a considerable treasure in the temple of Jupiter Belus. He accordingly broke into it in the dead of night, and carried off all its riches. But he shall stumble, and fall, and not be found; for the provincials, exasperated at the robbery, rebelled against him, and murdered him and all his attendants, B. C. 187.*

*VERSE 20. Then shall stand up in Antiochus' estate or kingdom, his son Seleucus Philopater, one who causeth an exactor to pass over the glory of the kingdom; the business of his reign being to raise the tribute for the Romans. But within few days, that is twelve years, he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle, being poisoned by Heliodorus, his primo minister, having reigned long enough to pay the last instalment to the Romans.*

*VERSE 21. And in his, Seleucus Philopater's, place shall stand up Heliodorus, a vile person, being both a poisoner and usurper, to whom they, the authorities of the nation, shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but Antiochus Epiphanes shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries bestowed on the adherents*

*VERSE 22. And with the arms of a flood, by which they shall be formidably invaded, shall they, the Egyptians, be overflowed from before Antiochus, whom they excite to war, by demanding the restitution of Coele-Syria and Palestine. And they shall be broken, or subdued; yea, also, Onias, the High Priest, or Prince of the Mosaic Covenant, shall be murdered, as it came to pass B. C. 172. And after the league made with Ptolemy Philometer, Antiochus shall work deceitfully after his second invasion of Egypt, B. C. 170; for he shall come up to Alexandria, and he shall become strong with a small people, or army. By his deceit, he shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province to which he reduces Egypt; and he, Antiochus, shall do that which his fathers, or predecessors on the throne, have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; namely, he shall scatter among his followers the prey, and spoils, and riches: yea, he shall forecast his devices against the strongholds of Egypt, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army, but he shall not stand: for the Alexandrians seeing him in the hands of Antiochus, and lost to them, shall forecast devices against him, and place the crown of Egypt on the head of his brother, Euergetes II. Yea, they that feed of the portion of Philometer's meat, even his courtiers, shall separate, or renounce, him; and his Antiochus' army shall overflow Egypt; and many of the Egyptians shall fall down slain. And the hearts of both these kings shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table, but shall not prosper; for the end is still at the time appointed.*

*Then shall Antiochus return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the Covenant of the Holy; and he shall do terrible things against Jerusalem, taking it by storm, butchering 80,000 men, making 40,000 prisoners, and causing a like number to be sold for slaves. And then shall he return to his own land, laden with the spoils of the Temple, amounting to 1800 talents, or £270,000, about \$1,315,000.*

*At the time appointed, under pretence of restoring Philometer to the throne, he shall return and come towards the south, against Alexandria to besiege it. But it, this fourth invasion, shall not be as the former, or as the latter.* He raised the siege and marched towards Memphis, where he installed Philometer as king. As soon, however, as he had departed, Philometer came to an understanding with Euergetes, and they agreed to a joint reign over Egypt. This coming to the ears of Antiochus, he led a powerful army against Memphis, for the purpose of subduing the country. Having nearly accomplished his project, he marched against Alexandria, which was the only obstacle to his becoming absolute master of Egypt. But the Roman Embassy, sent at the request of the Ptolemies, met him about a mile from the city. They had left Rome with the utmost diligence. When they arrived at Delos they found a fleet of Macedonian, or Greek, ships, on board of which they embarked for Alexandria, where they arrived at the crisis of his approach: Popilius delivered to Antiochus the decree of the Senate, and demanded an immediate answer. Sorely against his will he agreed to obey its mandate, and draw off his army from Egypt. Thus, his invasion terminated very differently from the former and the latter; *for the ships of Chittim shall come against him, and prevent him from incorporating Egypt into his Assyrian dominion of the north.* Thus, the prophecy of Balaam, that "ships from the coast of Chittim shall come and afflict Asshur," began to show itself; a more complete fulfilment remains for the latter days, when "Asshur shall perish for ever."

All Antiochus' wrath was kindled at this interference; *therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the Covenant of the Holy*; for in his return-march, through Palestine, he detached 20,000 men under Apollonius with orders to destroy Jerusalem, B. C. 168. *So shall he do; he shall even return*

**VERSE 31.** *And arms shall stand on his part under Apollonius; and they, the Assyro-Macedonian troops, shall penetrate the temple, חמקדש, ham-mikdash, the stronghold, and they shall remove the Daily, and they shall place a statue of the Olympian Jupiter in the temple, and a strong garrison in the castle to command it, as the abomination making desolate its courts, and overawing the nation.*

As soon as Antiochus Epiphanes was returned to Antioch, he published a decree by which all his subjects were required to conform to the religion of the State. This was aimed chiefly at the Jews, whose religion and nation he was resolved to extirpate. Atheneus, a man advanced in years, and extremely well versed in all the ceremonies of Grecian idolatry, was commissioned to carry the edict into effect in Judea and Samaria. As soon as he arrived at Jerusalem he began by suppressing the *Daily*, or evening-morning sacrifice, and all the observances of the Mosaic Law. He caused the sabbaths and other festivals to be profaned; forbade the circumcision of children; carried off and burned all copies of the Law and the Prophets wherever they could be found; and put to death whoever acted contrary to the decree of the king. To establish it the sooner in every part of the nation, altars and chapels filled with idols were erected in every city, and sacred groves were planted. Officers were appointed over these, who caused the people generally to offer sacrifice in them every month, on the day of the month on which the king was born, who made them eat swine's flesh and other unclean animals sacrificed there. The temple in Jerusalem was dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, whose statue was placed in it. Thus he did in his great indignation against the Covenant of the Holy Nation and its Land.

VERSE 32. *And such of the Jews as do wickedly against the covenant shall Antiochus, by flatteries, cause to dissemble.* These not only "forsook the covenant of the holy," but "had intelligence" with the king, and aided him all they could in the desolation with which he was overspreading their country. *But the Maccabees and their adherents, people who do know their God, shall be strong, and do valiantly in war. And they, even Mattathias and his five sons, and others with them, that understand among the people, shall instruct and encourage many; yet they, of the Maccabean party, shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, evils incident to the war, for days, that is, seven years from the ninth of Antiochus, the Era of the Asmoneans, to the third of Demetrius Soter, B. C. 161.*

*Now, when they shall fall by these seven years' calamities, they shall be holpen with a little help;* for while Antiochus was amusing himself in celebrating games at Daphne, Judas Maccabæus had raised the standard of independence, and was helping his countrymen in Judea. He levied a small army, fortified the cities, rebuilt the fortresses, threw strong garrisons into them, and thereby awed the whole country. He defeated and killed Apollonius, and made great slaughter of the troops. With 3000 men he defeated Lysias with 47,000; and another army of 20,000 under Timotheus and Bacchides; and in the year before Christ 170, he gave Lysias a second defeat at Bethsura, by which he dispersed 65,000 of the enemy. The "*little help*" they received at this crisis was mingled with the supernatural, which will account for the extraordinary victories of the Jews over such powerful armies of Greeks with such unequal forces. In the battle with Timotheus near Jerusalem, it is related, that "When it waxed strong there appeared in sight of the enemy, from heaven, five comely men upon horses with bridles of gold, and two of them led the Jews, and took Maccabæus betwixt them, and covered him on every side with their weapons, and kept him safe, but shot arrows and lightnings against the enemies; so that being confounded with blindness, and full of trouble, they were killed."<sup>1</sup> Also, in the battle against Lysias, near Bethsura, with his 80,000 Greeks, Maccabæus and the Jews prayed that Jehovah would send a good angel to deliver Israel. In answer to this, as they were marching from Jerusalem, "there appeared before them, on horseback, one in white clothing, shaking his armor of gold. Thus they marched forward in their armor, ready not only to fight with men, but with most cruel beasts, and to pierce through walls of iron, having an helper from heaven: for Jehovah was merciful to them. And giving a charge upon their enemies like lions, they slew 11,000 footmen, and 1,600 horsemen, and put all the other to flight."<sup>2</sup> Thus were "they holpen with a little help" from heaven, and their struggle for independence crowned with success. Yet, in that struggle *many did cleave to them with flatteries*: trial was, therefore, necessary that the approved might be manifested to God. Hence, it was determined that *the party of the wise shall be weak, to try them, and to purify, and make them white* FOR THE TIME OF THE END; for then their services will be needed to assist in heaven, as shown to Daniel in the first year of Belshatzar. The Era of the Asmoneans was not that end; for, having particularized the events of the era, the revelator added, it is *still for a time appointed*.

Extracted from pages 39 to 44 of the Exposition of Daniel (called Anatolia) – John Thomas 1854

## APPENDIX 2

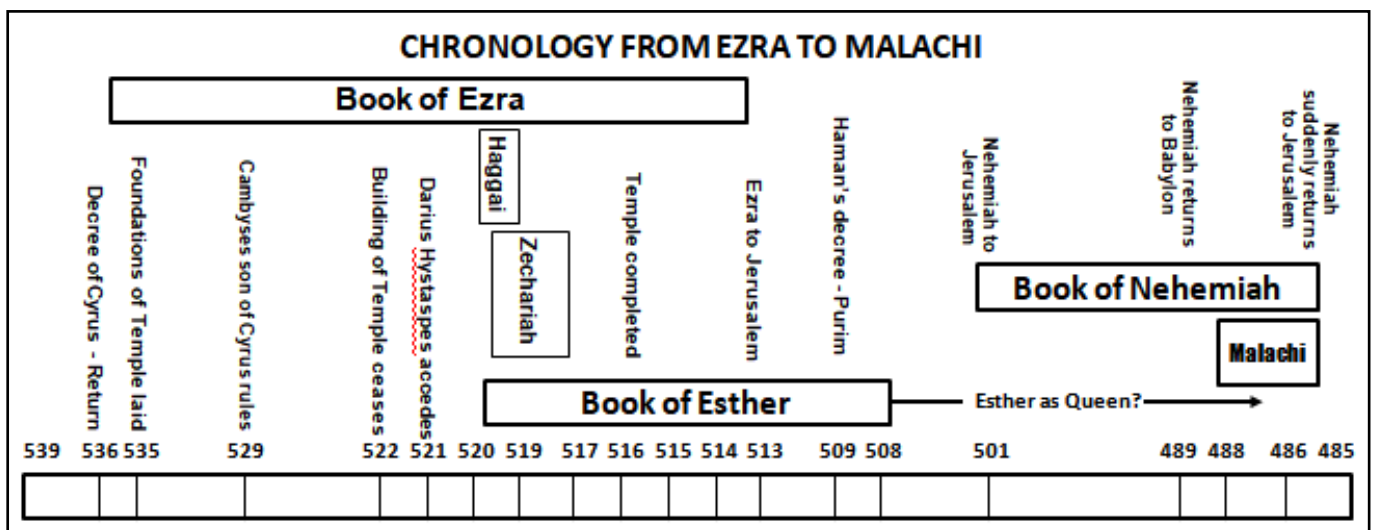
### THE CHRONOLOGY SURROUNDING THE BOOKS OF EZRA, ESTHER AND NEHEMIAH

The traditional view is expressed by Smith's Bible Dictionary – Ezra was “the famous scribe and priest. He was a learned and pious priest residing at Babylon in the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus” – BC 464-423.

Bullinger's comments in The Companion Bible support this interpretation. Bullinger asserts the captivity of Babylon occurred in BC 487 – it is generally accepted it was BC 539.

The many problems of traditional Persian era chronology complicate the matter. If Ezra went into captivity with Zedekiah as an adult in BC 586 (as Bullinger says) he would have been around 150 when he journeyed to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1) if the traditional chronology (supported by Bullinger) is correct. If the above premise is accepted, Ezra would have been around 175+ when he last appeared in the great procession on the wall (Neh. 12:36). Additionally, twenty out of thirty priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel in BC 536 signed the covenant with Nehemiah (Neh. 10:2-10). If Artaxerxes was Longimanus, these men were all still alive in BC 444, 91 years after their return from Babylon, though at that time they were all heads over families! That is an impossible scenario.

The Artaxerxes of Nehemiah reigned at least 32 years (Neh. 5:14; 13:6) and no other Persian king before Longimanus did this, except Hystaspes. This is why Darius Hystaspes appears in the chronological chart below.



### What about the effect on the 70 weeks prophecy? – Dan. 9:24-26

Accepting this revised chronology creates a 40 year shortfall in the 490 years to the death of Christ in AD 30. Traditional chronology is based on Ptolemy's Canon (of kings and dates) from his era AD 70-161. Ptolemy is not corroborated. He is also contradicted by the Persian National Traditions preserved in Firdusi; by the Jewish National Traditions preserved in the Seder Olam, and by Josephus.

In Ezra 6:14 the Temple was completed in the reign of “Darius, and Artaxerxes” according to their decrees. But there was only one decree (that of Cyrus – Ezra 1:1) which was endorsed by Darius (Ezra 6:1-3,6). Who then was the Artaxerxes of Ezra 6:14? It is merely another title for Darius – supported by the Hebrew text – “vav”, rendered “and” should be rendered “even”: “and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius **even** Artaxerxes, king of Persia” –

Ezra 6:14. "Ahasuerus", "Artaxerxes", and "Darius" are titles, not names, referring to Darius Hystaspes (BC 521-485), and the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah.

Most commentators suggest that it is the Persian ruler Xerxes (BC 485-465) in Esther 1:1, but the details of his reign are inconsistent with those which are found within the book, and would have the effect of making the young and beautiful bride Esther about 80 years old at the time when she married the king. The suggestion that this king Ahasuerus is Darius Hystaspes is supported by the renowned historian Charles Rollin in his work 'Ancient History' (Vol. 1, Book 6, Chap. 1, Sect. 1). Also the following extract from 'The Romance of Bible Chronology' is very helpful:

"The dates and events of the Book of Esther fit in exactly with the reign of Darius Hystaspes. Hystaspes occupied the first two years of his reign in overthrowing Gomates, and other pretenders to the throne of Persia. The third year was thus a year of peace (cp. Esther 1:3). Babylon revolted against him twice, once in the 1st year of his reign, and again in the 4th. On this second occasion, the siege was a tedious affair, lasting nearly two years (Herod. 3:151). This brings us down to the 6th year of Hystaspes, and explains how it was that though Vashti was divorced in the 3rd year of Ahasuerus, he was not married to Esther until his seventh year (Esther 1:3; 2:16). He was busily engaged in the Babylonian war.

There is nothing in the character of Ahasuerus that does not fit all we know of Darius from classical literature. In fact, the reference to tribute and money matters, to the postal service, and above all his friendly disposition towards the Jews, agrees exactly with what we know of Darius, the organiser of the Empire, who issued the decrees of Ezra 6:6-12; 7:11-26.

The extent of Persian rule under Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1) also agrees with that under Darius Hystaspes. He conquered India in 508 BC, divided the Empire into Satrapies, assigning to each its governor, and fixing the tribute which was to be paid him by the several nations. He ruled over the full extent of land indicated in Esther 1:1. Herodotus writes concerning Hystaspes: 'The Indians, who were more numerous than any other nation with which we are acquainted, paid a tribute exceeding that of any other people' (See Esther 10:1). Herodotus speaks of the tribute he exacted from the nations 'and the isles of the sea' (see again Esther 10:1). Herodotus (Book 396), Thucydides (Book 1), and Plato all state that Darius Hystaspes subdued all the islands of the Aegean Sea, and Diodorus Siculus (Book 12) states that they were all lost again by his son Xerxes before the 12th year of his reign. The later kings of Persia held some of these islands. In view of Esther 1:1;10:1, this evidence is conclusive both for the identification of Ahasuerus as Hystaspes, and against his identification with Xerxes. It is usual to identify Ahasuerus with Xerxes because of the similarity between the old Persian name Khahayaraha, the Hebrew Achashverosh (Ahasuerus) and the Greek Xerxes. But the identification is of no force, for the word in any form, and however spelt, is simply the Persian word 'Shah' and might be applied to any monarch who sat on the throne of Persia."

## APPENDIX 3

### The Prophecy of Obadiah

<p><b>Analysis of Book</b>  <b>Vv. 1-14</b> The coming judgement on Edom by Babylon who they foolishly supported against Judah  <b>Vv. 15-21</b> Destruction of the latter day Edom (all anti-Semitic nations) resulting in the triumph of Zion</p>	<p>Obadiah's name means "Servant of Yahweh" and he is thus a type of Christ (Isa. 49:6). Little is known of the prophet but he was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah (cp. Jer. 49:7-22). If so, he probably saw the Babylonian captivity and may have lived to see the partial fulfillment of some of the things he predicted.</p>
<p><b>Obadiah</b>  <sup>1</sup> <u>The vision</u> of Obadiah. Thus saith <sup>2</sup>the Lord GOD <sup>3</sup>concerning Edom; <sup>4</sup>We have heard a <u>rumour</u> from the LORD, and an <sup>5</sup>ambassador is sent among the heathen, <sup>6</sup>Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.  <sup>2</sup>Behold, <sup>7</sup>I have made thee small among the heathen; thou art greatly despised.  <sup>3</sup>The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that <sup>8</sup>dweltest in the <sup>9</sup>clefs of the <sup>10</sup>rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, <sup>11</sup>Who shall bring me down to the ground?  <sup>4</sup>Though thou <sup>12</sup>exalt thyself <sup>13</sup>as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest <sup>14</sup>among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.    <sup>5</sup>If thieves came to thee, if <sup>1</sup>robbers by night, <sup>2</sup>(<u>how art thou cut off!</u>) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?  <sup>6</sup>How are the things of Esau <sup>3</sup>searched out! how are his <sup>4</sup>hidden things sought up!  <sup>7</sup>All the <sup>5</sup>men of thy <sup>6</sup>confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the <sup>5</sup>men that were at peace with thee have <sup>7</sup>deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a <sup>8</sup>wound under thee: there is none <sup>9</sup>understanding in him.  <sup>8</sup>Shall I not in that <sup>10</sup>day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of <sup>11</sup>the mount of Esau?  <sup>9</sup>And thy <sup>12</sup>mighty men, O <sup>13</sup>Teman, shall be <sup>14</sup>dismayed, to the end that <sup>15</sup>every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.    <sup>10</sup>For thy violence against thy <sup>1</sup>brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and <u>thou shalt be cut off for ever</u>.  <sup>11</sup>In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his <sup>3</sup>forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.  <sup>12</sup>But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in <sup>4</sup>the day of distress.</p>	<p><b>Edom to be humbled</b>  <sup>1</sup>chazown – mental sight, vision, dream. Prophets called "seers" (1 Sam. 9:9).  <sup>2</sup>Adonay Yahweh – "He who will become rulers"; see V.21.  <sup>3</sup>The nation descended from Esau – Gen. 36:1,43.  <sup>4</sup>"rumour" – shemuwah – something heard, an announcement. "We" refers to all the prophets of Israel who spoke the same message.  <sup>5</sup>Nebuchadnezzar – Jer. 25:9-11; Ezek.30:24.  <sup>6</sup>The battle cry of Babylon and confederate nations.  <sup>7</sup>In past tense as the abasement of Edom's pride was certain – Jer.49:14-16.  <sup>8</sup>shakan – lodging; permanently reside.  <sup>9</sup>chagav – to take refuge; a rift in rock. Edom was mountainous and its inhabitants carved their homes out of the rocks.  <sup>10</sup>selah – lofty, craggy rock (inaccessible). Petra was virtually inaccessible to invading armies.  <sup>11</sup>Edomites felt secure in their mountain forts even as Babylon threatened and this increased their pride.  <sup>12</sup>gabahn – to soar; be lofty.  <sup>13</sup>Cp. Jer. 49:16.  <sup>14</sup>Refers to the mistaken confidence Edom placed in Babylon at that time – Isa. 14:12-13; cp. Matt. 24:29; Rev. 12:4.  <b>Edom to be destroyed</b>  <sup>1</sup>shadad – burly; powerful, a destroyer (root of Shaddai).  <sup>2</sup>An interjection presaging doom. The invaders would not be satisfied with sufficient spoil, they would utterly destroy.    <sup>3</sup>Ginsburg – "stripped bare".  <sup>4</sup>mitspun – a secret; perhaps treasure (RSV). All Edom's treasures would be searched out and looted.  <sup>5</sup>ish = mighty men (Ps.49:2; 62:9). Babylon's mighty men would turn against Edom.  <sup>6</sup>berith – to cut a covenant. Edom made a covenant with Babylon.  <sup>7</sup>nasha – to lead astray; delude. Babylon welcomed Edom's support against Judah and then turned against its ally 4 years later.  <sup>8</sup>mazour – turning aside from truth; treachery; a plot.  <sup>9</sup>tabuwnah – intelligence. Roth. (mgn.) "No discernment of it" i.e. of Babylon's treachery.  <sup>10</sup>The first of 12 occurrences of "day" in book. 12 = Israel. Points to the day of destiny for Israel (vv.15-21).  <sup>11</sup>i.e. Mount Seir (Gen. 36:8). Seir and Esau have same meaning in Hebrew – "hairy" or "rough".  <sup>12</sup>gibbor – powerful; warrior.  <sup>13</sup>Signifies the south and refers to the territory of Edom.  <sup>14</sup>chathath – to prostrate, break down.  <sup>15</sup>ish – infers here to the mighty men of Edom (see use Ps. 49:2).  <b>Reason for Edom's destruction</b>  <sup>1</sup>Contrast "strangers" (Babylon) with whom Edom joined v.11. Edom's hatred towards Israel reached its apex in the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar and sealed their doom eternally – Ps. 137:7; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:5.  <sup>2</sup>Edom as a nation would be destroyed. It would not reappear again. Latter day Edom represents the anti-Semitic nations who attack Israel and are destroyed by Christ at Armageddon and beyond.  <sup>3</sup>chayil – wealth.    <p>Obadiah depicts the final outcome of the age-old controversy between Esau and Jacob. Edom is the name memorializing Esau's choice of "that red" pottage which confirmed his attachment to the principles of flesh (Gen. 25:30). Red (Heb. adom) means rosy or red (the colour of sin – Isa. 1:18). Adom is the root of Adam. The Hebrew dam = blood. Edom's final punishment for his fleshly and sinful hatred of Jacob will be punished by the shedding of blood. Edom represents all nations who lift their hand against God's people and as a consequence will be destroyed – Cp. Ezek. 39 with Isa. 34:1-8; 63:1-6; Ezek. 35:1-7.</p> </p>



<p><sup>13</sup>Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their <sup>5</sup><u>calamity</u>; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their <sup>5</sup><u>calamity</u>, nor have laid <u>hands</u> on their substance in the day of their <sup>5</sup><u>calamity</u>;</p> <p><sup>14</sup>Neither shouldest thou have stood in the <sup>6</sup><u>crossway</u>, to cut off those of his <sup>7</sup><u>that did escape</u>; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did <sup>8</sup><u>remain</u> in the day of distress.</p> <p><sup>15</sup>For <sup>1</sup><u>the day of the LORD</u> is near upon <sup>2</sup><u>all the heathen</u>; as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy <sup>3</sup><u>reward</u> shall return upon thine own <sup>4</sup><u>head</u>.</p> <p><sup>16</sup>For as ye have <sup>5</sup><u>drunk</u> upon my holy mountain, so shall all the <sup>2</sup><u>heathen</u> <sup>5</sup><u>drink</u> <sup>6</sup><u>continually</u>, yea, they shall <sup>5</sup><u>drink</u>, and they shall <sup>7</sup><u>swallow down</u>, and <sup>8</sup><u>they shall be as though they had not been</u>.</p> <p><sup>17</sup>But <sup>1</sup><u>upon mount Zion</u> shall be deliverance, and <sup>2</sup><u>there shall be holiness</u>; and the house of Jacob shall <sup>3</sup><u>possess</u> their possessions.</p> <p><sup>18</sup>And <sup>4</sup><u>the house of Jacob shall be a fire</u>, and <sup>5</sup><u>the house of Joseph a flame</u>, and <sup>6</sup><u>the house of Esau for stubble</u>, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be <i>any</i> <sup>7</sup><u>remaining</u> of the house of Esau; <sup>8</sup><u>for the LORD hath spoken it</u>.</p> <p><sup>19</sup>And <sup>9</sup><u>they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau</u>; and <sup>10</sup><u>they of the plain</u> the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: <sup>11</sup><u>and Benjamin shall possess Gilead</u>.</p> <p><sup>20</sup>And <sup>12</sup><u>the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess</u> that of <sup>13</sup><u>the Canaanites</u>, even unto <sup>14</sup><u>Zarephath</u>; and <sup>15</sup><u>the captivity of Jerusalem</u>, which is in <sup>16</sup><u>Sepharad</u>, <sup>17</sup><u>shall possess the cities of the south</u>.</p> <p><sup>21</sup>And <sup>18</sup><u>saviours</u> shall come up on mount Zion <sup>19</sup><u>to judge the mount of Esau</u>; and <sup>20</sup><u>the kingdom shall be the LORD'S</u>.</p>	<p><sup>4</sup>Edom's rejoicing and exultation at the overthrow of Judah and their captivity became the basis of God's irrevocable judgement.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>eyd – oppression; misfortune. Edom supported and participated in the desecration and sacking of Judah by Babylon.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>pereq – rapine; also a fork in a road. Roth. "parting of the way".</p> <p><sup>7</sup>palet – a refugee.</p> <p><sup>8</sup>sariyd – a survivor. Edom cut off survivors and would suffer the same fate v.18.</p> <p><b>Edom - type of all nations</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup>Armageddon and its aftermath – Joel 3:14; Mal. 4:5; Zech. 14:1; Zeph. 3:8.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Goyim – nations. Edom is a type of the Gentile nations as a whole. Cp. Amos 9:11-12 with Acts 15:15-17. See Isa. 34:1-8. Refers to the anti-Semitic nations led by Gog against Israel in the latter days (Ezek. 38).</p> <p><sup>3</sup>gemuwl – treatment (an act towards).</p> <p><sup>4</sup>rosh. Cp. Ezek. 38:2.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>shathar – to imbibe. Revelry of triumphalism associated with gross acts (Joel 3:3). Judgement is poetic; cp. Isa. 63:1-6; Jer. 25:15-33.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>In the sense of the cup of divine judgement passing from nation to nation – Babylon to Medo-Persia, to Greece, to Rome etc.</p> <p><sup>7</sup>luwa – to gulp.</p> <p><sup>8</sup>See v.18. All anti-Semitic nations will be destroyed like Edom of old.</p> <p><b>Deliverance in Mount Zion</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup>Christ will deliver Israel from the hand of their oppressors and convert them – Joel 2:32; Rom. 11:26-27; Isa. 46:13; 2:2-4.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Zion will become the sanctuary of Yahweh's glory – Isa. 56:7; 60:13.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>yaresh – to occupy (by driving out the previous inhabitants). The word occurs again in v.19 (twice) and v.20. Israel is to possess the Land.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>The Jews in the Land will fight with Christ against Gog – Zech. 14:14.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>The house of Ephraim regathered by Elijah will also fight against Catholic Europe as they return in the Second Exodus – Zech. 9:13-15.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>Cp. Mal. 4:1. All nations who come against Jerusalem and who oppose Christ thereafter will be consumed by fiery judgement – 2 Thess. 1:7-9.</p> <p><sup>7</sup>sariyd – see use v.14. Poetic justice.</p> <p><sup>8</sup>The elimination of Edom of old is the guarantee that latter day "Edomites" will also be totally destroyed.</p> <p><sup>9</sup>Christ and the Saints who come from Sinai will possess all nations (Esau) – Hab. 3:3; Ps. 68:17-18; Deut. 33:1-2; Song 3:6.</p> <p><sup>10</sup>Shephelah. Refers to surviving Jews who inherit in the Land and expand their borders north, south, east and west to embrace the land promised to Abraham.</p> <p><sup>11</sup>Lxx. "and Benjamin, and the land of Galaad".</p> <p><sup>12</sup>Refers to Jews outside land who will be gathered by Elijah. They will finally be settled in the land promised to Abraham – Ezek. 48.</p> <p><sup>13</sup>Translated "traders" (Isa. 23:8) and "merchant/s" (Prov. 31:24; Job 41:6). The Phoenicians were the dominant traders in Obadiah's day and even traded in Jewish slaves (Joel 3:4-7). Their latter day counterparts Gog and his confederates will also take Jews into captivity (Zech. 14:2). When Israel possesses the land Zech. 14:21 will be fulfilled.</p> <p><sup>14</sup>Notable Phoenician city signifying "Place of refining".</p> <p><sup>15</sup>V.20 reflects the two-fold division of the land and two eras of captivity. The final captivity for Jerusalem will be the Gogian (Zech. 14:2).</p> <p><sup>16</sup>A region of Assyria, hence may refer to Gog's captivity (Isa. 10:5-6,24; Mic. 5:5; Zech. 14:2). Jewish commentators say refers to Spain (Sephardic Jews).</p> <p><sup>17</sup>The tribes who dwelt near Jerusalem (Judah, Benjamin, Simeon) all have their inheritance in the southern portion of the land promised to Abraham.</p> <p><sup>18</sup>yasha – to be open, wide, free; i.e. to be safe, hence saviours. Refers to Christ and Saints (Rom. 11:25-26).</p> <p><sup>19</sup>Refers to judgement of the nations for the controversy of Zion (Isa. 34:1-8; Zech. 4:7).</p> <p><sup>20</sup>Armageddon and the subjugation of the nations associated with the redemption of all Israel culminate in the establishment of the Kingdom.</p>
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