

Week 37

Introduction

Titus was a Gentile who converted to Christianity and became a companion of the apostle Paul on his travels. At one point he was deliberately not circumcised by Paul to demonstrate that the requirements of the Law of Moses did not apply to the Gentiles. *Gal.2:3* In this letter, Paul warns Titus, whom he had left in Crete, *1:5* against “strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain” *3:9* and against “Jewish fables that turn from the truth”. *1:1*

Colosse was a city in Asia Minor, now part of Turkey, which Paul had not visited, but he wrote a letter to the disciples there to instruct and encourage them. These believers had to resist the “philosophy” of the Gentiles *Col.2:8* as well as Jewish contention for the Law of Moses, and Paul gave them sound advice and exhortation which is also beneficial to us today.

Week 37

Titus 1

Day 253

Titus was the apostle’s “son in the faith”, *v.4* who had the “faith of God’s elect and the truth which is after godliness”. *v.1* He also had the “hope of eternal life which God promised before the world began”. *v.2* Different Greek words are translated “world” and this one means “age”, and the age referred to is the Mosaic era which began with the Exodus, B.C.1492. Long before this, God had promised eternal life to the faithful, e.g. in the promises to Abraham four hundred years earlier. Titus, like all disciples, received this hope as a result of the preaching of the gospel. *v.3*

Titus was left in Crete *v.5* to ordain elders, overseers of the congregations, and he was able to do this by the power of God. None has this power today, so that there are no overseers now as in the first century, but we can note the required qualifications so that we all can manifest them in our lives, for they are characteristics which are acceptable to God. The overseers were to be blameless, *vs.6-7* not to be motivated by money, *v.7* to manifest love, *v.8* and to be sound in doctrine. *v.9*

This last requirement was particularly important because some were corrupting the truth and turning to fables and the commandments of men. *vs.10-14* Paul also exhorted the disciples to be pure, *v.15* warning them that having the knowledge of God, while of vital importance, would not save anyone whose works denied him. *v.16*

Week 37

Titus 2

Day 254

Paul exhorted Titus to “speak the things which become sound doctrine” and gave instructions for various categories of disciple, including aged men, *v.2* aged women, *vs.3-5* and young men; *v.6* and Titus too was to set an excellent example. *vs.7-8* In those days many were slaves and these were commanded to

be obedient to their masters.^{vs.9-10} All these disciples, whatever their station in life, were recipients of God's favour and salvation through the gospel ^{v.11} which taught them to eschew ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live righteously and godly in this present age ^{v.12} while looking in anticipation for the the glorious appearing of Jesus.^{v.13}

The application of the title "God" to Jesus is consistent with the rest of scripture which tells us that Jesus will return to the earth as "a mighty one" and a manifestation of the one true God. This is in contrast to his weakness when, alone upon the cross, he permitted himself to be murdered by wicked men, giving "himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a special people, zealous of good works".^{v.14}

Week 37

Titus 3

Day 255

The disciples were exhorted to obey the secular authorities v.1 and to live a completely different manner of life from that which they lived before knowing the Truth.^{vs.2-3} Their status before God had completely changed by his kindness ^{vs.4-6} for they had been made righteous and "heirs according to the hope of eternal life".^{v.7} This is just one of the marvellous facts about the Truth: the disciples of Christ are made righteous by his sacrifice and become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ".^{Rom.8:17} Therefore they are exhorted to "be careful to maintain good works".^{v.8}

The disciples were required to be pure in the truth by resisting false doctrine and those who peddled it. A heretic who would not receive correction was to be excluded from the fellowship.^{vs.10-11} They were to "avoid foolish questions" and disputes about unimportant matters ^{v.9} but to abound in those things which are profitable and worthy.

Week 37

Colossians 1

Day 256

The disciples in Colosse, like all true disciples of Jesus, were "saints and brethren of Christ".^{v.2} These were also faithful ^{v.2} and Paul prayed to God for them, especially when he heard of their faith, hope, and love.^{vs.3-5} Their hope was "laid up in heaven";^{v.5} stored there until the Lord Jesus Christ returns with the life that is promised to all the saints.^{3:3-4}

Jesus had declared that the "gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end would come".^{Mat.24:14} This was fulfilled in the first century, as Paul declared: the gospel had come to everyone "in all the world" ^{v.6} and had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven".^{v.23} The "world" here in the Greek is

“habitable” referring to the Roman Empire, the world of those days. The words of Jesus do not refer to the globe, to the present day, or to “the burning up of the earth” as might be thought, but to the preaching of the gospel in the days of the apostles.

Paul prayed the disciples would “be filled with the knowledge of God’s will” *v.9* and would “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work”.*v.10* They had been “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” *v.12* and God had delivered them from darkness, i.e. ignorance, and “changed their position for the kingdom of his dear Son” (as the original Greek expresses it).*v.13* We are all born “in Adam” but by belief and baptism our position can be changed before God so that we are “in Christ” and fit to live in his kingdom when it is established.

These early Christians had to resist the ideas of “Gnostics” (“gnosis” is the Greek word for knowledge) who exalted human knowledge and wisdom. These philosophers thought that the secret purpose of life was the development of people who glorified the mind and head but punished the body. Paul argues against these ideas in this letter. He shows that the true secret of God, hidden for ages, was then being made known to his saints. *vs.25-28* Jesus had died on the cross *v.20* to reconcile men and women who were previously enemies in their mind *v.21* so they can be presented to him holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight. *v.22* However, acceptance by Christ is conditional: he will only welcome us “if we continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”. *v.23*

The true secret was that God would manifest himself in a new creation of men and women, and this explains the use by the apostle of the word “creature” instead of “person”. These new creatures constitute a body, with Jesus as its head: “he is the head of the body, the church”. *v.18* It is vital in the purpose of God that Jesus is supreme, so God made him “the first-born from the dead; that in the all [the saints] he might have the pre-eminence”. *v.18*

The completed body of the saints is referred to here as “the all” who must be “in Christ”: “for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”. *v.19* Unfortunately, the translators translated “the all” as “all things”, misleading many into thinking that Paul was speaking of the creation of the universe and that Jesus was born before anything else was made! However, he does not speak of the physical universe, but of “thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers” *v.16* because the new creation is a body of people who will reign with Jesus in the new political heavens when the kingdom of God is established. When reading this chapter, changing “all things” to “the all”, meaning “all the saints”, gives a proper understanding of the message, e.g. Jesus shed his blood on the cross “to reconcile the all [the saints] unto himself”. *v.20* Jesus is the supreme head of the body of saints, “he is before the all, and by him the all

consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that among the all he might have the preeminence”. *vs.17-18*

Jesus is not only the “first-born of every creature” of the new creation *v.15* but also the manifestation of his Father, for he is “the image of the invisible God”. *v.15* The saints likewise are required to be like the Father if they are to live and reign with Christ.

Week 37

Colossians 2

Day 257

The apostle exhorted the disciples, not only to be “knit together in love” but also, in view of the beguiling and enticing words promulgated by the Gnostics *v.4*, to have “all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”. *vs.2-3* They had received the truth as it is in Jesus, so they should “walk in him”, *v.6* be “rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as they had been taught”, *v.7* and “beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men”. *v.8* They were “in Christ” by baptism *v.12* and were “complete in him who is the head of all principality and power” *v.10* “for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”, *v.9* i.e. Jesus is the head of the body, and the saints in him are members of this body, in whom God will dwell and manifest himself to the world.

Some disciples wanted to keep the law of Moses which Paul called “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us”. He explained, however, that Jesus had nailed these commandments to his cross, and blotted them out, so that laws concerning “meat and drink, and holy days and sabbaths” *v.16* no longer needed to be kept. The Law, he says, was “a shadow of things to come; but the body [casting the shadow] is of Christ”, *v.17* i.e. the ordinances of the law of Moses foreshadowed Jesus, enabling us to read the law in the Old Testament and see him represented. For example, the sacrifice of lambs without blemish prefigured the sacrifice of “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world”.

The Gnostics thought they would be rewarded for asceticism, “touch not; handle not” *v.21* “will worship, and punishing the body”. *v.23* A disciple who succumbed to this teaching was “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God”. *vs.18-19* Faithful disciples are “dead with Christ” *v.20* and having risen with him, after burial by baptism, are part of the new creation of God. As such they are required to “hold the head” which is Christ and associate closely in love with all other faithful believers as members of the one body.

The apostle exhorts the disciples: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”.^{vs.1-3} The hope of all true disciples of Jesus is to receive eternal life when Jesus returns for “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”.^{v.4} In the meantime we are required to “mortify” the flesh ^{v.5} and eschew all the wicked practices prompted by sinful flesh ^{vs.5-9} which will bring the wrath of God on the disobedient ^{v.6} and which we may have practised before knowing God’s truth.^{v.7}

The disciples of Christ are new creatures in him, having “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”.^{v.10} The old man produced “fornication, uncleanness, and lusts of various kinds” ^{v.5} as well as “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy”, etc.^{v.8} but the disciples have “put off the old man with his deeds”. ^{v.9} The new man has “put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” ^{v.12} and the new creatures in Christ should forbear one another and forgive one another, even as Christ forgave us.^{v.13} Above all things, members of the body of Christ should love one another, for love is the bond of perfectness.^{v.14}

The apostle also exhorted the disciples to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another” by this word ^{v.16} as well as to thank God for their privileged position in Christ.^{v.17} To help them live lives acceptable to God, he also gave specific instruction to wives,^{v.18} husbands,^{v.19} children,^{v.20} fathers,^{v.21} and servants.^{vs.22-25}

Paul gave particular instruction to disciples who were the masters of slaves ^{v.1} as well as general guidance to all the disciples. He commanded them to “continue in prayer with thanksgiving”,^{v.2} to walk in wisdom, and to buy up time.^{v.5} Our lives are very short and time is precious. We are wise if we “redeem the time, using it to secure for ourselves an everlasting future in the kingdom of God. Paul devoted his whole life to the service of Christ, even becoming a prisoner in Rome from where he wrote this letter.^{v.3} He also had many faithful associates to help him in his great work of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles of the Roman Empire.^{vs.7-14} Epaphras was a native of Colosse who worked tirelessly in the service of Christ on behalf of the disciples in his

home town,^{v.12} and Luke, the beloved physician,^{v.14} was a faithful companion who also wrote the gospel record in his name and *The Acts of the Apostles*.

Paul requested that this letter be read by the disciples in the nearby town of Laodicea as well as at Colosse, and no doubt it was. It was also copied and distributed throughout the world to be read by other disciples and, thankfully, it is available today together with the other scriptures so that any of us may read and learn the wisdom of God.

oooOooo

Week 38

Introduction

The Psalms at the end of the book are mostly devoted to the praise of God. Some begin: "Praise ye the LORD"; and they all glorify him. They sing of his power, his character, his mighty works, and his glorious purpose. Many foretell the marvellous future for the earth when it will be full of his glory, with Jesus reigning on his behalf over all. They also tell us how to behave now to be counted worthy of living and reigning with Christ, helping him teach and bless both Israel and all the nations.

Week 38

Psalms 95 and 98

Day 260

Both these Psalms exhort us to sing praises to the LORD, for he is "the rock of our salvation", v.1 the creator and sustainer of all things,^{vs.4-5} and entitled to our praise and thanksgiving.^{v.6} He is a great God,^{v.3} and the scriptures teach us about him so that we may exclaim with the Psalmist: "He is our God".^{v.7}

A common figure of speech in the Bible likens the people of God to sheep of which he is the shepherd.^{v.7} We are not naturally his sheep. In fact, many people in the earth are likened in the Bible to wild beasts, and others Jesus says are like goats which he will separate his sheep when he comes to give eternal life. The scriptures tell us how we can become his sheep, and of the invitation to enter his fold - and now is our day of opportunity: "Today if ye will hear his voice".^{v.7} The apostle quotes these words in his letter to the Hebrews *Heb.3:7* to show that the opportunity of salvation still remained - it was still "Today". It still remains now, and will do so until the Lord Jesus returns when he will lift up his hand "and swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven... and the earth... that there should be time no longer".*Rev.10:6-7*

The Psalmist cites the faithless example of the generation of Israel that was delivered from Egypt, who saw the mighty works of God in the wilderness but refused to enter the promised land when they had the opportunity.^{vs.8-11} The LORD therefore swore they would not enter into his rest.^{v.11} However, in the purpose of God, there still is a rest to come: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God".*Heb.4:9* Joshua led the next generation of Israel into the promised land but the apostle shows that this was not the final rest promised by God. It was, however, typical of the future rest into which Jesus will lead the people of God into the same promised land. So the apostle exhorts the disciples: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest".*Heb.4:11*

Psalm 98 exhorts the saints to sing a new song.^{v.1} The promise of God is that the faithful will sing a new song at the return of Jesus, when they are given eternal life to live and reign with him in the kingdom of God. The Psalm speaks of that glorious time when victory is gained over sin and all the enemies of the LORD: "for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand (the Lord Jesus

Christ), and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen". *vs.1-2* God will do this because of the promises he made to the fathers of Israel *v.3* and when they are fulfilled in the land all the people of the world will see it. *v.3* All the world is called upon to praise the LORD, *vs.4-9* and we can do so now, looking forward to the glorious future for "he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity". *v.9*

Week 38

Psalm 103

Day 261

The people of God have every reason to bless him, *vs.1-2* especially because he forgives all their iniquities. *v.3* The promise of God is that he will raise the saints from the dead, redeeming their life from destruction; save them from all the afflictions of the flesh, healing all their diseases by making them immortal; crown them with lovingkindness and tender mercies; and "renew their youth like the eagle's" so that they are perpetually young. *vs.3-5*

The LORD is righteous and executes justice *v.6* and his true character was made known to Israel *v.7* and thereby to us in his word. We know, therefore, he is merciful and gracious *v.8* and, although we are all sinners, he has not punished us accordingly. *v.10* The wonderful promise is that, if we are accounted his children, like a father *v.13* he will remove our sins from us as far as the east is from the west!

v.12 This marvellous outcome, however, is restricted to those who respond to God correctly, "for the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him... to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them". *vs.17-18*

We are only "dust and ashes" *v.14* and at death we pass away like the grass of the field and are not known of again. *v.15* God knows our frame, *v.14* for he made us, and we should acknowledge our mortal nature so we can embrace the hope of eternal life by resurrection from the dead. At the resurrection, if accepted by Jesus, we shall be made like the angels *Lu.20:35-36* "that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word". *v.20* The great purpose of God is to redeem a great multitude of men and women from among the nations to be, during the future age, "his hosts; ministers of his, that do his pleasure". *v.21*

We know the words of Psalm 110 are addressed to the Lord Jesus because he applied them to himself when challenging the Pharisees' understanding of who the Messiah, or Christ, was. *Mat.22:41-46* They knew he was David's son but could not explain how David addressed him as "my Lord" in this Psalm. *v.1* The answer, however, is very simple. Jesus was the Son of God as well as son of David, being born by God's Spirit coming upon Mary, so he was superior to David who therefore called him "Lord". The first "LORD" in this verse, in capital letters to indicate that the name is YAHWEH in the original, refers to God himself, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Psalm is a prophecy of what God said to Jesus when he went to heaven after his resurrection. He invited Jesus to sit at his right hand until the time comes for him to return to the earth to overcome all his enemies *v.1* Jesus has been at the right hand of his Father waiting for this time to come. *Heb.10:12-13* At his return he will reign in Jerusalem and initially rule in the midst of his enemies until they are all overcome. *v.2* Unlike the time when he was crucified through weakness, his people will be willing in the day of his power, *v.3* the saints will arise from the grave at the dawn of the new age like the dew rises in the morning. *v.3*

At God's right hand, Jesus has been a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek,

v.4 acting as a mediator for his people. This order of priesthood superseded that of Aaron under the law of Moses. Melchizedek, was a priest in the days of Abraham and the scriptures teach that it is a priesthood that never comes to an end and God has sworn to Jesus: "Thou art a priest for ever". *v.4*

Jesus will return from heaven in the day of wrath *v.5* and he will judge among the nations, overthrowing the heads of many countries. *v.6* However, the outcome will be the establishment of righteousness and peace in the earth, for Melchizedek was first a king of righteousness and then a king of peace. *Heb.7:2*

Most people are ignorant of God's purpose in Christ and many say: "Where is now thy God?" *Psa.115:2* But the God of heaven has done whatsoever he pleased *v.3* and he will be glorified. *v.1* He is not like the idols of the nations, *vs.4-8* but he is the living God and will bless the house of Israel *v.12* and all them that fear him. *v.13* We can look forward to that time of blessing at the resurrection of the dead if we learn of the true God, and believe and obey him. "The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence" *v.17* for death is the end of existence, but God's people can confidently say: "we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD". *v.18*

We know that Psalm 118 also is Messianic because Jesus applied words in it to himself. The leaders of Israel had the responsibility of building God's house, but they rejected Jesus as not fit to belong to it - he was the stone the builders refused! *v.22; Mat.21:42* However, he is the best person in God's house so the LORD has given him the highest position, making him the head stone of the corner. *v.22*

When he lived in Israel his enemies compassed him about to destroy him, and all nations will do so again, *vs.10-11* like bees, *v.12* but he will be victorious, and will not die, but live. *v.17* He is the right hand of the LORD and will be exalted and do valiantly. *v.16* At that time the righteous will rejoice in the salvation of the LORD *vs.14-15* and they are now called upon to give thanks to him because his mercy endureth for ever. *vs.1-4*

Just before his crucifixion, Jesus told Israel they would not see him again until they would say: "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD". *v.26; Mat.23:39* Faithful men and women, therefore, anticipate his return to Israel in power to do all that God has promised. In that day they will be glad for they will be invited to enter the house of the LORD with him. *Psa.122:1* Then thrones will be established in Jerusalem *v.5* - the throne of the LORD and of David upon which Jesus will reign - for the saints are invited to sit with him in his throne. *Rev.3:21* The apostles also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel for all Israel will return to the land and worship the LORD. *v.4*

God has chosen to place his name in Jerusalem, where Jesus will reign, and we are called upon to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for all that love her will prosper. *v.6* Peace and prosperity will be established there *v.7* for the sake of Jesus' brethren and companions *v.8* and because the house of the LORD will be there. *v.9*

This Psalm explains how God, who dwells in heaven, is at the same time present everywhere by his Spirit, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being". *Acts.17:28* Consequently, he knows all about every one of us, including what we do, what we say, and even what we think. *vs.1-5* Everything is made and sustained by God's Spirit which pervades the universe so that we cannot go anywhere where God is not. *vs.8-12* This is wonderful knowledge *v.6* and is consistent with what modern man has discovered. Science has shown that all matter may be converted into energy, and

vice versa, so that the whole universe consists of energy; and the scriptures declared long ago that all things consist by God's power.

God created us and we are "fearfully and wonderfully made".^{v.14} These verses may refer to our natural bodies but they probably principally refer to "the body of Christ" which is composed of people. The words are those of the Spirit of Christ describing the development of the members of his body whose names are written in the LORD's book of life.^{v.16} We should ensure that his thoughts are as precious to us as they were to Jesus^{v.17} and develop characters like his, enabling us to say: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting".^{vs.23-24}

Week 38

Psalms 145 and 146

Day 265

Psalms 145 describes the glory of the LORD during the thousand year reign of Christ when "one generation shall praise God's works to another, and shall declare his mighty acts".^{v.4} Jesus himself "will speak of the glorious honour of his majesty, and of his wondrous works"^{v.5} and "men shall abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness, and shall sing of his righteousness".^{v.7} The LORD will perform terrible acts in the earth^{v.6} in the overthrow of the wicked, so that all will know of his greatness and talk of the glory of his kingdom and power.^{v.12}

Jesus will re-establish the kingdom of God in Israel, with an imperial dominion over all nations, which will last throughout the Millennium^{v.13} for "everlasting" means "duration of the age". During this long period, the people of the earth will enjoy great blessings from the LORD^{vs.14-20} and his holy name will be blessed "for ever and ever".^{v.21} Usually the word "ever" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "olahm" meaning "hidden period". Until Jesus gave God's last message from heaven it was not known how long this period would be, but it was then revealed it would be a thousand years.^{Rev.20:2-7} The second "ever" in verse 21 is the Hebrew word "ad" meaning "beyond" so that "for ever and ever" (Heb: "olahm ad") is "the hidden period of a thousand years and beyond". Jesus will reign in God's kingdom during the Millennium at the end of which the earth will be inhabited only by righteous and immortal individuals who will then live throughout eternity.

We are wise, therefore, if we praise the LORD now while we have being^{146:1-2} for when we die, in that very day, our thoughts perish.^{v.4} There is no permanent help from men, even the highest of them,^{v.3} but we are truly happy if we have the God of Israel for our help.^{v.5} He is the creator of all things^{v.6} and able also to release prisoners from the grave.^{v.7} He loves the righteous^{v.8}

and will raise them up to live and reign with Jesus for: “The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD”.^{v.10}

Week 38

Psalms 149 and 150

Day 266

These last two Psalms also depict the future when the saints are raised from the dead and congregate together with Christ.^{v.1} Israel will be regathered into the land and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will rejoice in King Jesus.^{v.2} God’s people will rejoice in his salvation ^{v.4} and the saints, made immortal, will rejoice in glory.^{v.5} However, many nations and their rulers will resist the reign of Jesus and it will be the work of the saints to overcome them with God’s power. They will “execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints”.^{v.9}

The Psalms are songs which praise the LORD. Those who read his word in the scriptures and learn his truth are able to sing his praises in the very same words of these Psalms.^{Psa.150} We can praise the LORD in words expressing his mind, and the time will come, at the return of Jesus and the re-establishment of God’s kingdom, when everyone that hath breath will praise the LORD!

oooOooo

John wrote of Jesus in his Gospel as the Son of God. He could have written many other things about him but he said: “these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”. ^{20:31} The other gospel writers presented Jesus respectively as a king, a slave, and a man, while John presented him as God’s Son. It is in this light we must understand the statements made by Jesus, and about him, in this book: he is not a God equal with the Father, but the Son of God.

Another notable feature of this book is that John was inspired to add comments within the narrative. It is important to note this so that a distinction can be made between the words of Jesus and an explanatory comment by the Spirit through John, so the record is correctly understood.

While Luke, writing of Jesus as the Son of man, traced his human ancestry through Mary back to the first man, John, writing of him as the Son of God, recorded his divine antecedent. Although Jesus came into existence when the power of God came upon Mary, ^{Lu.1:35} he was in the mind of his Father from the very beginning: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”. ^{vs.1,14} The “Word” is “logos” in the Greek (from which we get “logic”) and means, not only the spoken word, but also the thought expressed by that word. Its use here shows that he was in the mind of God from the very beginning. Indeed the purpose of God in Christ was recorded in his word long before Jesus was born, and throughout his life Jesus showed by speech and action he was the embodiment of the Word of God.

The book of Genesis describes how God spoke and thereby created the heavens and the earth, not just by his great power, but also according to his predetermined purpose, so that “we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God”. ^{Heb.11:3; Psa.33:6} It is instructive to compare what is written here about the Word with what is written about Wisdom. Both the Word and Wisdom were with God in the beginning and both are personified, a figure of speech by which an abstract attribute is spoken of as a person: “The LORD possessed me [Wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old”, ^{Prov:8:22} and, “The same [Word] was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”. ^{vs.2-3} Of course, neither wisdom nor the word is a person, but Jesus was certainly an embodiment of both.

The Word of God in the prophets enlightened the world and brought life, v.4 and John the Baptist was one of these prophets. ^{vs.6-7} He bore witness to the

true light, enlightenment by which enables men and women to become the children of God.^{v.12} Just as Jesus was born according to God's will, so those who believe in him are born again "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God".^{v.13} Initially, of course, we are all born by the will of human parents, but God has provided that by belief and baptism we may be reborn as his children. The essential requirement is to learn God's will and do it.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah ^{v.15} but he did not know which man in Israel this was until he baptized Jesus and saw the Holy Spirit anointing him.^{vs.31-33} He then declared of Jesus: "this is the Son of God" ^{v.34} and that he was "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world".^{vs.29,36} Only a few took any notice of this witness, including Simon Peter,^{v.41} Andrew his brother,^{v.40} and Philip. Nathanael had difficulty in accepting that Jesus was the Messiah ^{vs.45-46} because Jesus came from Nazareth, whereas the scriptures prophesied the Messiah would come from Bethlehem.^{vs.45-46} Philip could not explain this apparent contradiction, although we can easily do so, therefore he told Nathanael to "Come and see".^{v.46} Some people today are put off by "apparent contradictions" but if they would "come and see" what the scriptures really say they might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel ^{v.49} and look forward to the day when angelic communication with heaven will no longer be invisible, as now, but will be openly seen when Jesus reigns in Jerusalem.^{v.51} Many will live and reign with Jesus in that day and they will all be "Israelites indeed",^{v.47} and the New Testament informs us how to become such and be acceptable to the God of Israel.

Week 39

John 2

Day 268

Jesus performed many miracles by the power of God and many people believed in him as a result.^{v.23} John records eight of these miracles, which he called "signs", and they not only prove Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,^{20:30-31} but they also illustrate his work of redemption. For example, Jesus "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works".^{Tit.2:14} The Jews thought they could purify themselves by washing with water and they had many traditions to achieve this ^{Mar.7:3-4} but Jesus taught that we can only be pure in God's sight because of the shedding of Jesus' blood and by imbibing his word. Both Jesus' blood and the Word are symbolised in the scriptures by wine, therefore Jesus illustrated the true purifying process by turning the water in the Jews' purifying jars ^{v.6} into wine.^{vs.7-11}

Jesus and his family moved from Nazareth to Capernaum on the northern shore of the sea of Galilee which then became "his own city".^{Mat.9:1} He then

went to Jerusalem and drove the moneychangers out of the temple saying: “Make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise”.^{v.16} This was at the beginning of his ministry and he did it again three years later *Mat.21:12* manifesting his zeal for God as prophesied of him in the Psalms.^{v.17}; *Psa.69:9* The Jews sought signs from him as evidence of his authority to clear the temple and, although Jesus did many miracles to prove he came from God, he cited his own resurrection from the dead and referred to the temple of his body:^{v.21} “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”.^{v.19} The Jews misunderstood his words, thinking he was speaking of the temple built by Herod the Great.^{v.20} Later his words were distorted to form a false accusation against him.^{*Mat.26:61*} The Jews were able to accomplish his crucifixion, but he was delivered from the grave according to his word, and the disciples then remembered what he had said on this occasion and believed both his word and the scripture.^{v.22}

Week 39

John 3

Day 269

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to see Jesus secretly,^{*vs.1-2*} and Jesus told him: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”.^{v.3} When Nicodemus could not understand, Jesus added: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”.^{v.5} We can readily understand this. We must be born of water by baptism now and at the return of Jesus be born of Spirit by change to immortal Spirit bodies. We shall then be physically, as well as morally, the sons of God and equal to the angels who are ministering spirits *Heb.1:14* and move like the wind.^{*vs.6-8*} Jesus often spoke “of heavenly things” ^{v.12} which people found hard to accept, and John added that no-one has ascended to heaven except Jesus who was in heaven at the time John wrote.^{v.13}

Jesus showed that his being lifted up on the cross was prefigured by Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. Just as those who looked to it recovered from the serpent’s bite *Num.21:8* so whosoever looks on Jesus will not perish but have everlasting life.^{v.15} Our natural destiny is to perish when we die but God, in love, has opened up a way of salvation through Jesus so that whosoever believes in him will not remain in the grave for ever but be brought out of it to live eternally.^{v.16} If we do not believe, we will perish.^{v.19} We are wise, therefore, if we believe the gospel, walk in the light of God’s word, and do godly deeds.^{v.21}

The Jews questioned John the Baptist about Jesus, and John told them he was superior to himself. Jesus is, as it were, the bridegroom while John was his friend.^{v.29} Jesus, furthermore, was “from above and come from heaven”

while others are “of the earth”.^{v.31} All men are descendants of Adam, who was made from the ground, so we are all of the earth. Jesus’ origin was from his Father in heaven, by the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary, so he was from above. This does not mean that Jesus personally came down from heaven, any more than it means that we sprang directly out of the earth. John is referring to our antecedents - we are earthy, Jesus is heavenly. Jesus, being God’s Son, was exalted above all other men. He spoke the words of God who gave him the Spirit without measure,^{v.34} and “the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand”.^{v.35} Note the Son is not equal with the Father, but the Father has given the Son all things. God has highly exalted his Son, so that only those who believe on the Son of God have everlasting life, potentially now^{v.36} and actually when Jesus returns.

Week 39

John 4

Day 270

Jesus left Judea and travelled through Samaria to Galilee. The Samaritans were the descendants of the people that the Assyrians brought into the land to replace the ten tribes of Israel they had taken into captivity. The Jews had “no dealings with the Samaritans” so the woman of Samaria was surprised when Jesus spoke to her,^{v.9} asking for water from the well.^{v.7} The Samaritans had adopted the Jews’ religion in a corrupted form and disputed with the Jews where God could be worshipped, in Jerusalem or at the mountain where Jacob’s well was sited.^{v.20} The woman, recognising Jesus as a prophet,^{v.19} asked his view of the matter. The answer, of course, was that God had placed his name in Jerusalem, but a great change was coming when the law of Moses would be superseded and Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Men and women could then worship God anywhere, provided they did so in spirit and in truth.^{vs.23-24}

The Samaritans worshipped ignorantly^{v.22} but this would also soon change when the gospel was proclaimed throughout the Gentile world and people would worship the LORD in truth. It is an essential part of God’s truth that “salvation is of the Jews”^{v.22} and “All Israel will be saved when the Deliverer comes out of Zion”.^{Rom.11:26} It is therefore necessary for us who wish to be saved from sin and death to become “Jews” or “Israelites indeed”. We do this by believing in Jesus and being baptized into him because we then change our status, not only from Adam’s children to God’s children, but also from Gentiles to spiritual Jews. We then must feed upon spiritual food, therefore Jesus spoke of “living water”,^{vs.10-14} the word of God which we must imbibe to live for ever, and spiritual meat. Jesus said: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work”^{v.34} and we should follow his example.

As a result of this conversation with the woman of Samaria, many Samaritans believed in Jesus^{vs.41-42} but people in his own region of Galilee had difficulty receiving his teaching.^{vs.43-44} All these people had the privilege of meeting

Jesus and receiving blessings from him, but we have not experienced this for he is far away in heaven. Nevertheless he has sent his word so that we can believe and, by belief and baptism, pass from death to life, as Jesus said: “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”.^{5:24} This is illustrated by the second miraculous sign Jesus performed, healing from a distance a nobleman’s son who was at the point of death.^{vs.46-54} Jesus sent his word and delivered him from death. In this life we are always at the point of death, but by receiving the word sent to us in the scriptures we can pass from death to life, like the nobleman’s son, and also do so literally at the resurrection, as illustrated by a later sign in this book.

Week 39

John 5

Day 271

The third miraculous sign performed by Jesus, the healing of an impotent man, represents the salvation of Israel which could not be achieved through the law of Moses. Israel’s condition in the days of Jesus is described in the scriptures as: impotent, blind, halt, and withered, like the people at the poolside.^{v.3} The law of Moses was ordained of angels ^{v.4} and if they had kept it they they would have been healed of all their diseases ^{v.4} but, because of the impotence of the flesh they could not keep the ordinances of the law.^{vs.5-7} However, Jesus came to do what the law could not do.^{Rom.8:3} He gave the impotent man instruction which when obeyed made him whole;^{vs.8-9} and he gave Israel instruction which if obeyed would give them life, provided they “sinned no more”.^{v.14} So many of them, however, preferred to cling to the law of Moses which only brought death. This is illustrated by the attitude of the Pharisees who objected to Jesus healing on the Sabbath day ^{v.10} and persecuted him.^{v.16}

They falsely accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath law. In fact, he kept the law of God perfectly, and he told them: “It is lawful to do good and save life on the Sabbath days”.^{Lu.6:9} The Pharisees falsely accused Jesus, not only regarding the Sabbath, but also that he made himself equal with God ^{v.18} Jesus immediately refuted this charge, saying: “The Son can do nothing of himself” ^{v.19} and “I can of myself do nothing”.^{v.30} Certainly his Father highly exalted him,^{vs.20-23} but Jesus always submitted himself to God’s will. The Pharisees interpreted Jesus’ declaration that he was the Son of God as making himself equal with God, but this is an incorrect interpretation which, unfortunately, many make today and join with the Pharisees in their false accusation of Jesus. He was not only the “Son of God”, but also the “Son of man”. It was because he was the Son of God that the Father gave him such power to do great works ^{v.20} including raising the dead,^{v.21} and it was because he was the Son of man, and of our nature, that he gave him authority

to execute judgment upon men.^{v.27}

Jesus saves from death those who believe and obey him - they pass from death to life ^{v.24} - and are counted “the living” by God. When he returns he will call these men and women from the grave ^{v.28} unto the resurrection of life ^{v.29} thereafter to enjoy everlasting life. Others will come out of the grave to condemnation ^{v.29} and thereafter return to the grave, being subjected to the “second death”.^{Rev.2:15} Jesus invited all who heard him to respond to his teaching and receive life, and there was abundant witness that he came from God:^{v.32} that of John the Baptist,^{vs.33-35} of the Father,^{vs.36-38} and of the scriptures which spoke of him beforehand.^{vs.39,46} Verse 37 should be a question: “Have ye neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape?”, as it refers to the baptism of Jesus when the Father’s voice proclaimed from heaven that he was his beloved Son and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the shape of a dove.^{Mat.3:16-17}

He urged the people particularly to accept the witness of the scriptures because they could give life eternal.^{v.39} They claimed to trust in the writings of Moses, v.45 the first five books of the Bible, and Moses wrote of Jesus beforehand, as we have seen in our readings from those books. But the Jews did not really believe what Moses wrote, otherwise they would have believed Jesus,^{v.46} therefore Jesus challenged: “If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”.^{v.47} Many today claim to follow Jesus but at the same time reject the Old Testament, especially Genesis which Moses wrote, but Jesus says it is not possible to receive his teaching acceptably while rejecting the writings of Moses.

Week 39

John 6

Day 272

The two miraculous signs in this chapter - the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus walking on the water - represent in marvellous outline the consequences of his teaching. The discussion which followed the miracles shows that the bread represented Jesus’ doctrine, and he fed the starving multitude in the desert to show that his word saves men and women from perishing. Jesus broke the bread and gave it to his disciples to feed the multitude; and he sent these same apostles to feed Israel with his teaching.^{Mat.10:6} Afterwards they collected fragments of the bread into twelve baskets and Jesus sent them on a ship into the sea, to represent them going forth into the sea of nations to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Jesus did not go with them but ascended a mountain to pray, to represent his presence in heaven, praying to God on their behalf as they preached the gospel.

The disciples did not find the sea tranquil, but stormy; so they also found the nations in turmoil with, as it were, the sea and waves roaring as a result of wars and persecution. “And Jesus did not come to them”;^{v.17} so for centuries the

disciples have waited among the nations for him to return. This is the night time of the world's history and the world is in the darkness of ignorance but in the middle of the night and in the midst of the storm Jesus came to his disciples, walking on the sea.^{v.19} Likewise Jesus will suddenly descend from heaven and come to his disciples to save them from all their distresses. He walked on the sea to represent the fact that all peoples will be placed under his feet when he comes. His disciples will then receive him willingly, and he will take them immediately to the promised land.^{v.21}

The multitudes followed Jesus to Capernaum, seeking more food for which they need not work, but Jesus taught them they needed to feed on the word of God. Jesus himself provided that word as "the bread of life",^{v.35} but he sometimes expressed his teaching in "hard sayings" ^{v.60} which many found difficult to receive. He said, for example, they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood.^{v.53} They took this literally and found it revolting, but we understand Jesus was expressing metaphorically the necessity of feeding upon his teaching. He did not then make it easy for them but, because they murmured,^{v.61} said something even more difficult: "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" ^{v.62}

The Son of man did not literally descend from heaven, but was begotten by God's Spirit which came from heaven and descended upon Mary, so Jesus explained: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life".^{v.63} It is the Spirit that produced and anointed Jesus, that inspired men to write the scriptures, and that will raise the saints from the dead and give them eternal life. However, many disciples found this too much to accept and deserted Jesus,^{v.66} and many people have misunderstood and misconstrued his hard sayings ever since. He even tested the loyalty of the apostles,^{v.67} knowing that one of them, being a "devil", a false accuser, would betray him,^{vs.70-71} but Peter expressed the certain fact that there is no other saviour: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God".^{vs.68-69}

Week 39

John 7

Day 273

The Jews, the inhabitants of Judea, were determined to kill Jesus, so he remained in Galilee, ^{v.1} but even his own brothers mocked him, for they did not believe.^{v.5} The Jews expected Jesus to attend the Feast of Tabernacles at this time and debated among themselves concerning his status, but secretly because they feared the Jewish leaders.^{vs.10-13} When Jesus then taught in the temple, the people were amazed at his teaching because he had not been educated in their institutions of learning.^{vs.14-15} The explanation, of course,

is that Jesus was inspired by God, so he said: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me”,^{v.16} adding that men and women will accept his teaching is God’s if they sincerely seek to do his will.^{v.17}

The Jews condemned Jesus and sought to kill him for healing on the Sabbath day even though they themselves also did certain works on the Sabbath.^{vs.19-23} Hypocritically they exonerated themselves but condemned Jesus. He instructed them to “judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”^{v.24} and this is a vital principle for us to apply in our lives. The Jews debated whether or not he was the Christ^{v.26} and some were convinced by the miracles he performed.^{v.31} One big stumblingblock in many minds was the prophecy that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem^{vs.40-42} but Jesus was “of Nazareth” in Galilee.^{v.52} We can easily explain this anomaly, but people like Nicodemus^{v.50} could offer no solution.

The Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to apprehend Jesus but they did not carry out this commission when they heard his teaching. They said: “Never man spake like this man”.^{v.46} Some of what Jesus spoke, however, was enigmatic. He declared they could not go where he was going,^{v.34} which they did not understand although they made some suggestions.^{vs.35-36} In fact Jesus would be going to heaven and no other man would go there. He also invited those thirsting after righteousness to come to him and drink, i.e. to imbibe his teaching which was by the Spirit of God.^{v.37} Furthermore, the promise to believers in those days was that they would be recipients of the Holy Spirit^{vs.38-39} and we read later, in *Acts*, how this enabled them to do similar works to those done by Jesus himself. Nevertheless, the Jewish authorities continued to oppose Jesus and to plot his death, and they would achieve this in the end, but by unjust means. Nicodemus recognised this injustice and questioned their behaviour: “Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?”^{v.51} In the event the Jews finally condemned Jesus to death without the justice which, by the law of God, they were required to apply.

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Week 40

Introduction

Isaiah was a prophet of the LORD in Judah in the years leading up to and during the time when the northern ten tribes of Israel were carried away captive by the Assyrians. This occurred when Hezekiah was king of the two tribe kingdom of Judah.^{1:1} Inspired by God, Isaiah warned, exhorted and encouraged the people to turn to righteousness and thus receive blessings from the LORD instead of cursing.

Isaiah's book and those of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel which follow speak beforehand of the Lord Jesus Christ and, like the four gospels, depict him in four aspects: as king, servant, son of man, and Son of God. Isaiah depicts him as king, and his prophecies contain marvellous visions of the future when the kingdom of God is re-established in Israel and her King, Jesus, reigns in righteousness with his saints. He wrote beforehand of both the suffering and the glory of Christ, and these prophecies provide remarkable evidence that this is the word of the living God.

Week 40

Isaiah Day 274

1

God treated the people of Israel as his children but they rebelled against him ^{v.2} becoming a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity", provoking the LORD to anger. ^{v.4} As a body they were completely corrupt,^{vs.5-6} bringing the judgments of God upon them, resulting in their being taken away captive, the whole land becoming desolate, and Jerusalem being overthrown.^{vs.7-8} Nevertheless, these were God's people and he preserved a remnant of righteous men and women whose presence saved the nation from being totally destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah ^{v.9; Gen.19} The apostle Paul quoted this ^{Rom.9:29} to show that a parallel situation had arisen in his day when the Jews were again corrupt and about to be overthrown, this time by the Romans, but a remnant would be saved, including himself and those faithful Jews who believed and obeyed Jesus.

The character of most Jews, however, was like the men of Sodom, so God addresses them as such,^{v.10} declaring that their worship of him and their sacrifices were an abomination to him because of their wickedness.^{vs.11-15} There is a vital lesson here: our worship of God will also be unacceptable unless we live righteous lives. Therefore he

calls to men and women: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow”.^{vs.16-17} The invitation of God now extends to everyone in the earth, and he says: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”.^{v.18}

The consequence of obedience then was for the Jews to remain and prosper in the land ^{v.19} and our obedience now will bring us to the same promised land, to rest with Jesus therein.^{2Thess.1:7} Disobedience would bring the Jews destruction,^{v.20} and our disobedience will bring everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.^{2Thess.1:9} Jerusalem should have been like a pure, faithful woman; but she had become a harlot ^{v.21} and therefore the judgments of God would be poured out upon the city. Nevertheless, the time will come when the people will be purified,^{v.25} a faithful ruler, even Jesus, will be installed, and Jerusalem will be renowned as “The city of righteousness, the faithful city”.^{v.26}

Week 40

Isaiah Day 275

2

Isaiah was granted a marvellous vision of the future when Jesus reigns in Jerusalem, the house of God is rebuilt there, and all nations of the earth coming up to it to worship.^{vs.1-2} They will willingly do so, with a determination to learn the ways of the God of Israel and to walk in his paths; a result of the law and the word of the LORD going forth from Jerusalem to all nations.^{v.3} Jesus with his saints will administer this law with power to judge among the nations and cause them to destroy all weapons of war, establishing perpetual peace in the earth.^{v.4} This verse is inscribed on a monument at United Nations building to express the objective of that organisation, but it has failed to achieve it. However God has plainly stated that this universal peace will be effected by Christ when he reigns in Jerusalem over all.

Such a vision should encourage us to “walk in the light of the LORD”, receiving his word and obeying it. This exhortation was given to Israel ^{v.5} but to little effect. They placed their trust in soothsayers,

money, horses, and idols ^{vs.6-9} and therefore God forsook them ^{v.6} and brought his judgments upon them and the land. ^{vs.10-21} The imagery of these verses is applicable also to our own day, for the time is very near when God will bring his judgments on the world for its wickedness. He will then arise to shake terribly the earth so that men flee into the caves of the earth for fear of the LORD and the glory of his majesty. ^{v.19} Then false worship will be abolished ^{v.18} and people will learn not to trust in men ^{v.22} but in the living God, and “the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day”. ^{v.17}

Week 40

Isaiah Day 276

5

A common metaphor in the Bible is the vineyard by which God’s people are likened to vines which should bring forth good fruit. Isaiah uses this figure, “for the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry”. ^{v.7} God cultivated Israel ^{vs.1-2} but it failed to produce the desired fruit. ^{vs.3-4} The consequence was that the vineyard, Israel, would be laid waste: ^{vs.5-6} and it remained so for centuries. Each family in Israel had its own inheritance of land so there should have been no great landowners among them, but some “joined house to house and field to field” to live alone in the midst of vast estates. ^{v.8} Therefore their houses were to be made desolate ^{v.9} and the land unproductive. ^{v.10}

Israel had given themselves over to strong drink ^{v.11} and merriment while ignoring the LORD. ^{v.12} They were excessively sinful in all their ways, ^{v.18} substituting evil for good, and calling good evil. ^{v.20} While they did not regard the work of the LORD, they sarcastically called upon the LORD to show himself. ^{v.19} They justified the wicked, robbed the righteous of their righteousness, ^{v.23} cast away the law of the LORD, and despised his word. ^{v.24} Therefore the anger of the LORD burned against them. ^{v.25} They were taken into captivity ^{v.13} and the invading armies put multitudes into hell (the grave). ^{v.14} God caused the nations to come against his people like

teaching of Jesus and his apostles. Those, however, who did accept their teaching had their “iniquity taken away, and their sin purged”^{v.7} and this is what is represented here by the experience of Isaiah.^{vs.5-8} The hope of all the saints is the restoration of the kingdom of God at the coming of the Messiah, and throughout the ages they have cried: “How long?”^{v.11} The answer given to Isaiah was: the land would be made desolate,^{v.12} after which a remnant would return ^{v.13} and all the glorious visions he had seen would become a reality. God will then save Israel, as he saved Judah in the days of Isaiah from two northern invaders.^{7:1-9} Ahaz, king of Judah, was offered a sign that God would do what he said,^{v.11} but Ahaz refused.^{v.12} Nevertheless, God gave a sign to the house of David ^{v.13} to prove he would deliver Israel from all her enemies. The sign was the birth of the Messiah to a virgin: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”^{v.14} This was fulfilled when the power of God came upon Mary and produced a child who was both son of man and Son of God, a miraculous and marvellous sign to convince us all that God will certainly do all that he has promised. Immanuel means “God with us” *Mat.1:23* and refers, not to his literal name which was “Jesus”, but to his character. He was not God himself but a manifestation of God so that any who looked upon him saw the Father.^{Jn.14:9}

Week 40

Isaiah Day 278

8

Isaiah himself was typical of Jesus so that his exclamation: “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me” are also the words of Christ.^{Heb.2:13} Jesus did not have any natural children but the disciples are counted as his seed. Isaiah’s children were “for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts” and no doubt Mahershalalhashbaz, Isaiah’s son, is typical of Jesus as he was born of a maiden ^{vs.1-3} and similar words are spoken of both him and Jesus - before each grew to a certain age Judah would be saved from her oppressors.^{7:16; 8:4} Mahershalalhashbaz means “speedy to the spoil” which was the characteristic of the Assyrians who would come against Syria,^{v.4} but they would also overflow into “Immanuel’s land”,^{v.8} called this because it is the land promised to Abraham’s seed, which is Christ.

The Assyrians would come upon Israel like a flood ^{v.7} and the Jews would suffer from these waters because they refused the spiritual water which God offered for their salvation. This is the word of God, represented here by “the waters of Shiloah that go softly”.^{v.6} These were the waters in the pool of Siloam supplied by a perpetual spring, enabling the people of Jerusalem to survive the Assyrian siege of their city. It is an appropriate metaphor therefore for the word of God which enables us to be delivered from our enemies of sin and death. We should not make the mistake of the Jews in refusing these living waters but rather drink them gratefully. The Jews were falsely urged to seek unto familiar spirits and wizards for enlightenment ^{v.19} but God says: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”.^{v.20} This is the touchstone which we should apply to everyone who professes to speak on religious matters: if they do not speak according to the Holy Scriptures, it is because they know not God’s truth.

Jesus spoke the truth to the Jews and urged them to search the scriptures, but they stumbled at him, as prophesied here: he would be “a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem”.^{v.14} To the Jews he was “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient”.^{1Pet.2:8} However, to his disciples Jesus is a sanctuary ^{v.14} and those who believe he is “a chief corner stone, elect, precious” are themselves included as living stones to form the house of God - and they shall not be confounded.^{1Pet.2:5-6}

The people of Israel sought for light where there was no light ^{v.20} and were driven into darkness,^{v.22} but Jesus would arise in their midst as a great light, as prophesied in this passage which continues into the next chapter.

Week 40

Isaiah Day 279

9

Jesus came among the people of Israel as a great light to enlighten the minds of men, and Isaiah prophesied of this event: “In Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined”.^{vs.1-2; Mat.4:12-16} Jesus began preaching the gospel in Galilee and the light of his teaching spread over the

whole land. Israel then, as most of the world now, was both in darkness and in the shadow of death, but God's truth not only enlightens but also brings salvation from death.

The Saviour brought joy to be realised in the harvest of the earth ^{v.3} when he will break the power of the oppressors of Israel, as Gideon did of old ^{v.4}; *Jud.7:19* when the Midianites were confused with noise and overcome.^{v.5} But first the Saviour had to be born, as Isaiah foretold: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given".^{v.6} When the conception of Jesus was announced, Mary was told he would reign over the house of Israel for ever upon the throne of David *Lk.1:32* in accordance with God's promise to David. Therefore Isaiah prophesied: "The government shall be upon his shoulder... of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever".^{vs.6-7} The day will soon come when God will do what he has promised and set his Son on his throne in Jerusalem to reign over his kingdom of Israel and over all nations, for "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this".^{v.7}

Jesus' "name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" ^{v.6} and these titles describe the character of his reign. This passage is often taken out of context in support of the trinity, but if it did indeed prove that Jesus was a member of the trinity "the everlasting Father" would make him "God the Father"! "Everlasting" in the original Hebrew means "age lasting" and for the duration of the future age Jesus "shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah" because God "will commit his government into his hand".^{22:21} He will be a "Wonderful" ruler, able to do wonders by God's power. He will be a "Counsellor", ruling by the wisdom of the LORD. He will be the "Mighty God", a powerful one as the words mean. And he will be the "Prince of Peace", establishing everlasting peace in the earth. In the meantime, however, Israel would be punished by the LORD for their wickedness^{vs.17-21} and would be afflicted by neighbouring countries.^{vs.11-12} Nevertheless, at the set time, Jesus will save Israel from all her enemies.

Week 40

Isaiah 11 and 25
Day 280

The character of Jesus' reign is given in Chapter 11. God declared how Jesus would arise out of David's line (Jesse was David's father) ^{v.1} and rule well because the spirit of God will rest upon him. ^{v.2} There is one Spirit but diversities of Spirit gifts ^{1Cor.12:4} and Jesus, anointed with the Spirit, ^{v.2} will manifest these attributes in his reign: "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD". ^{v.2} He will not judge according to appearances, but he will judge righteous judgment ^{Jn.7:24} for he will not need to rely on the witness of human eyes and ears. ^{v.3} All the actions of men will be open to him, including their very thoughts. He will judge with righteousness, especially for the poor and meek of the earth, and by the power of God will destroy their oppressors ^{v.4} for he will be girded with righteousness and faithfulness. ^{v.5}

In the beginning all animals fed upon the herb of the field but after the flood some animals became carnivores, and God has decreed concerning the future age: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain". ^{v.9} Consequently, in God's land, wild animals will again be herbivores ^{v.7} and lie down in peace with farm animals, and venomous snakes will be harmless. ^{vs.6-8}

Then "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea", ^{v.9} and the Gentiles will seek him. ^{v.10} There is a rest for the people of God in the promised land ^{Heb.4:9} into which the saints will be brought by Jesus, "and his rest shall be glorious". ^{v.10} The LORD will also "set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people" from the nations of the earth. ^{v.11} A remnant of Israel did return from the Babylonian captivity but soon all the survivors of Israel among the nations will be brought back to the land. Jesus will set up an ensign in the land, a flag to which the people will rally, and the people of Israel and Judah will return from all parts of the earth. ^{v.12} They will no more be divided into the two kingdoms of Ephraim and Judah, ^{v.13} but will form a united kingdom in the land.

There will be violent opposition to Israel by her enemies, especially her Arab neighbours, e.g. the Palestinians (Philistines) and Jordan (Moab). ^{v.14} and the return of Israel will be reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt. ^{v.16} The power of God will be manifest in

bringing his people into the land: he will destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea (the Red Sea) as of old and dry up the River (Euphrates).^{v.15} Thus the people of Israel will be brought miraculously into the promised land from the countries north and south which have so oppressed them in the past.

God will do wonderful things and perform in faithfulness the deeds he has promised of old, to demonstrate the truth of his word.^{25:1} He will be a refuge for his people but a terrible punisher of oppressors.^{vs.2-5} He will then make in Jerusalem a feast for all people - a feast of the very best things.^{v.6} When Jesus reigns in Jerusalem he will teach all nations the truth so that the veil of ignorance now spread over all nations will be destroyed.^{v.7} Then the saints, raised from the grave, will be freed from death for ever for: “He will swallow up death in victory”;^{v.8 1Cor.15:54} and “the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth”.^{v.8} All this will certainly occur, “for the LORD hath spoken it”.^{v.8}

May we be among those who will receive these great blessings: eternal life and places of honour with Jesus in his administration of the earth to the great benefit of Israel and the nations. We shall be included if we fulfil the conditions given us in the word of God through Jesus and his apostles, and then we shall be among the multitude of the redeemed in that day who will say: “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation”.^{v.9}