

Corinth is a sea port of Greece and the disciples living there in the first century were subject to many pressures, and these are reflected in Paul's letters to them. Being a port, the vices of mankind were most apparent there and the city was also full of idolatry. Furthermore, the Greeks, who were the leaders in human learning at that time, considered their knowledge and wisdom superior to that of any other people, and they rejected the gospel as "foolishness". The Corinthian disciples had many problems for the apostle to solve and many questions for him to answer, and most of his two letters consist of his solutions and answers.

Some among the disciples denied the resurrection of the dead, which is the essential hope of Christians, and others queried the kind of body that the raised person would possess. Paul dealt with these matters in Chapter 15 which we read in Week 1 and which is one of the most encouraging and stimulating chapters in the Bible. This week we will read another five chapters in these two letters.

**Week 21****1 Corinthians 1****Day 141**

The apostle as usual addresses the disciples as "saints" <sup>v.2</sup> because all God's people are such. Like all true disciples they were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" <sup>v.7</sup> and the apostle hoped they would live lives which would make them "blameless" in that day. <sup>v.8</sup> They had been "called unto the fellowship of God's Son" <sup>v.9</sup> which consists of a unity of people. It is God's will that this unity be preserved <sup>v.10</sup> but these disciples were splitting into factions, identifying themselves with different leaders, i.e. Paul, Cephas (Peter) and Christ. <sup>v.12</sup> This was wrong as only Christ was crucified for us and it is into his name we are baptized. <sup>v.13</sup> The apostles were simply Christ's servants. Therefore Paul was glad that he had baptized few of them, in case it was claimed he baptized in his own name. The believer must be baptized but it matters not who actually immerses him or her in the water. Therefore Paul said "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel". <sup>v.17</sup> This verse is often quoted to support the contention that there is no requirement to be baptized! Christ commanded: "Believe the gospel and be baptized" and Paul was sent to preach the gospel, but not especially to immerse people himself for this could be done by others. When Jesus himself baptized people, it was not he but his disciples that actually immersed them (John 4:2).

The Greeks prided themselves in their wisdom, and the writings of their philosophers such as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle are admired by men today, but the Greeks' wisdom prevented them from accepting the wisdom of God because they thought it foolish. <sup>v.23</sup> However, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". <sup>v.21</sup> A crucified saviour

was “foolishness” to the Greeks because they exulted in the heroes of their mythology, and so they rejected the gospel.<sup>v.23</sup> The gospel was also a stumblingblock to the Jews because they could not accept that their Messiah would suffer and be crucified. But true disciples believe that both the suffering and the glory of Christ are essential to the purpose of God.<sup>Lu.24:26</sup> The statement: “we preach Christ crucified” is also often misunderstood as “Jesus crucified”.<sup>v.23</sup> Many people claim the crucified Jesus is their saviour but, sadly, do not know either the meaning of his title “Christ” or the promises of God concerning his rulership in Israel. They therefore do not believe he will return to sit on the throne of the LORD over Israel or “the gospel of the kingdom of God” which is essential for salvation.

Because men trusted in their own wisdom and could not accept the simple truths concerning Jesus, not many wise or prominent men believed.<sup>v.26</sup> However, the purpose of God is not designed for man’s glory, but for his own: “according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”.<sup>v.31</sup>

## **Week 21**

## **1 Corinthians 2**

## **Day 142**

Paul did not bring “the wisdom of men” to the disciples, but “the testimony of God”,<sup>v.1</sup> as he declared: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”.<sup>v.2</sup> This verse is also often misapplied by many who think the gospel consists only of the crucifixion of Jesus, but Paul taught it is essential to believe both that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) and that he was crucified for us.

Unfortunately, many rely on their own reasoning instead of the “testimony of God” of which they remain largely ignorant. It was the same ignorance which led the zealously religious Jews to crucify Jesus.<sup>v.8</sup> This ignorance was prophesied in Isaiah (ch.64:4) and is quoted here by the apostle.<sup>v.9</sup> The statement that “the things God hath prepared for them that love him hath not entered into the heart of man”<sup>v.9</sup> does not mean we cannot know these things but that man cannot discern them because of his own natural thinking. These things are a “mystery” (meaning a secret) but this secret was known to the apostles by God’s Spirit, and is now made known to us by their writings.<sup>v.10</sup>

The apostles did not speak “man’s wisdom” but what “the Holy Spirit teacheth”,<sup>v.13</sup> and we are in the very privileged position of having the words of God in our possession so that, by comparing scripture with scripture, we can know the mind of the Lord<sup>v.16</sup> and develop in ourselves “the mind of Christ”.<sup>v.16</sup>

Paul shows in this chapter the remarkable fact that the events recorded in the Old Testament are “typical” of God’s purpose in Christ. The word “ensample” <sup>v.11</sup> is “type” in the original Greek, meaning the impression made, for example, by a typewriter character on paper. The people of Israel were baptized in the Red Sea as they came out of Egypt to begin their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land <sup>vs.1-2</sup> and this typifies the disciples of Christ being baptized as they come out of the world to begin a journey through life to the Kingdom of God in the same land. On this journey the teaching of Jesus is our meat and drink, and this is represented by the manna in the wilderness and the water that came out of the rock, for the Rock is Christ. <sup>vs.3-4</sup> Few of the Exodus generation remained faithful during their journey towards the land, but perished in the wilderness. <sup>v.5</sup> Therefore Paul warned the disciples not to make the same mistakes. Do not “be idolaters”. <sup>v.7</sup> Do not “commit fornication”. <sup>v.8</sup> Do not “tempt Christ or murmur”. <sup>vs.9-10</sup> We may be tried during our days of probation, as they were, but: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”. <sup>v.13</sup>

The Corinthian disciples had a particular problem in that their city was full of idols to which the citizens made continual sacrifices. This meant that cheap meat was available in the market, “the shambles” <sup>v.25</sup>. Should the disciples eat this meat which had been sacrificed to idols? Certainly they should not eat in the idol’s temple. <sup>v.21</sup> The “devils”, imaginary gods of the Greeks, were nothing and the sacrificing had no effect on the meat. Therefore the disciples would not be defiled by eating it, but the conscience of others might be affected if they saw them doing so. Therefore the apostle counselled them to refrain from eating that meat if anyone was offended by it. We do not have this particular problem today; nevertheless the principle can guide our actions. Many things may be permissible, but we should refrain from them if it causes others to stumble in the faith. <sup>v.23</sup> The apostle’s instruction is excellent, <sup>vs.31-32</sup> and we should follow his example. <sup>v.33</sup>

Chapter breaks occasionally interrupt the line of reasoning, as here where the apostle continues his exhortation to follow his example. <sup>v.1</sup> More information is given in the scriptures about Paul than the other apostles because he is set forth by Jesus as an example for us to follow. Paul also gave instructions concerning the ordinances of Christian worship, and he deals with two of these in this chapter saying: “the rest will I set in order

when I come”.<sup>v.34</sup> Firstly, it was incumbent on the disciples to reflect the relationship between God, Christ, and his disciples by their head dress. Men should worship with heads uncovered and women with heads covered, to show that “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God”.<sup>v.3</sup> If men and women disregard this ordinance they “dishonour” their head, so that Christ and his Father are dishonoured. It is unfashionable today to make this distinction between men and women, but true disciples will abide by this simple instruction to “honour Christ and his Father”.

The second ordinance is the one Jesus instituted the night he was betrayed.<sup>v.23</sup> He desires his disciples to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him, till he comes.<sup>v.26</sup> The first disciples did this every first day of the week, and since then faithful disciples have met each Sunday to break bread and drink wine to show they love him and long for his return. Jesus said of the bread: “This is my body broken for you”, and of the wine: “This is my blood shed for you”, employing a common figure of speech by which the bread and wine represent his body and blood. Unfortunately, many people are fooled into believing that when blessed by priests the bread and wine are transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus! The truth is simple and straightforward: Jesus wishes his disciples to show their love for him by breaking bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him. We are required, not only to keep this ordinance, but also to do so in a decent order for if we “eat and drink unworthily we shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”.<sup>v.27</sup>

The apostle had to reprimand the Corinthians for the manner in which they conducted themselves at the “Lord’s supper”: “Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse”;<sup>v.17</sup> “this is not to eat the Lord’s supper”.<sup>v.20</sup> Therefore Paul instructed them in this letter how to behave when coming together to worship God: “Let all things be done decently and in order”.<sup>14:40</sup>

## **Week 21**

## **2 Corinthians 6**

## **Day 145**

Paul wrote his second letter to the disciples to comment on their responses to his first letter and to deal with some who set themselves up in opposition to him. Self-appointed leaders in the churches opposed the apostle, and today his authority as spokesman for Christ is also often disregarded. For example, he is dismissed as a misogynist because he commanded that women were “to keep silence in the churches” (1Cor.14:34). This may seem anachronistic by spiritual leaders of the churches today but it is a commandment of Christ to be obeyed: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (ch.14:37).

Because of this attitude towards him, Paul had to recount and emphasise his deeds and suffering in the service of Christ. He was a “worker” for Christ and he besought these disciples not to receive God’s favour in vain, which would be the case if they were led away from the truth by unfaithful leaders. By belief and baptism they had come into God’s favour, and Paul exhorted them to do the Lord’s will that they might finally receive the gift of eternal life. Now is the time of opportunity: now, during our lifetimes, we can learn the commandments of Christ and obey them: “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”.<sup>v.2</sup>

The disciples of Christ have entered into fellowship with him and with God, but they do not remain in fellowship if they join together with unbelievers. Therefore Paul exhorted: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”.<sup>vs.14-16</sup> The vital lesson is that true disciples must separate themselves from the world. If we do this God promises to receive us and be our Father, making us his children: “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”.<sup>vs.16-18</sup>

## **Week 21**

## **Galatians 1**

## **Day 146**

Galatia is a region of Asia Minor (now part of Turkey) in which the apostle Paul preached the gospel <sup>Acts 16:6</sup> and established congregations of believers. Later, however, these disciples were influenced by false teachers to believe a different gospel.<sup>v.6</sup> Of course, it was not really another gospel but a perversion of the true gospel of Christ.<sup>v.7</sup> This was very serious because rejection of the true gospel, or belief of a false one, results in never-ending death. Therefore the apostle expressed this in the strongest terms: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”.<sup>v.8</sup> Paul wanted to emphasise this very strongly, so he repeated it.<sup>v.9</sup> We should take careful note of this. The only way to be blessed by God is by believing the true gospel which was preached by the apostles concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ <sup>Acts 8:12</sup> and obeying his commandments.

The world is full of people claiming belief in the gospel but who know nothing of the kingdom of God and are ignorant of the significance of the name “Jesus Christ”. We should make sure that we believe the true gospel, and not “another gospel”, no matter who propounds it. Disciples in the apostle’s day were led astray by men who set themselves up as authorities in opposition to him and maligned him. This forced him to counteract their influence by listing his qualifications as an apostle of

Christ. He did not receive his knowledge of the gospel from men but by the direct “revelation of Jesus Christ”.<sup>vs.11-12</sup> It was this that brought such a dramatic change in his life, from a persecutor of Christians to a preacher of the gospel of Christ, so that disciples declared: “He which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God”.<sup>vs.23-24</sup>

## **Week 21**

## **Galatians 2**

## **Day 147**

A principal element of the gospel is “the grace of Christ”.<sup>ch.1:6</sup> This contrasts with the provisions of God under the Law of Moses which required Israel to obey every commandment perfectly. No person was able to do this, so God introduced another means of salvation, and this was by his grace (favour). By this, men and women are saved if they believe the gospel, are baptized into Christ, and obey his commandments. The contrast is expressed here by the apostle.<sup>v.16</sup>

However, most of the disciples at that time were Jews who had been brought up under the Law of Moses, and some of them introduced the false doctrine that the Gentile disciples had to keep the Law as well as the commandments of Christ. These men were “false brethren unawares brought in”, and the effect of their teaching was disastrous. It brought the disciples into slavery to the law<sup>v.4</sup> and if true would mean: “Christ is dead in vain”<sup>v.21</sup>

The particular demand of these false teachers was that the Gentile Christians be circumcised like the Jews. Circumcision was introduced by God in the days of Abraham, and later he incorporated it in his Law through Moses. It involved a literal cutting off of the flesh and represented the cutting off of the lusts and thinking of the flesh out of the lives of the disciples. We do not have a controversy about circumcision today, but the insistence that the Gentile Christians keep the Law of Moses persisted through the centuries and is still felt now. It is commonly thought that the ten commandments of the Law should be kept by Christians, but these formed the core of the Law of Moses from which the disciples were freed by Christ. Nine of these commandments were reiterated by him, but the Sabbath law was not. However, for centuries the churches imposed the Sabbath law on the people of Christendom and enforced their edict, with severe penalties on any who did anything other than attend church on Sundays. True disciples treat every day as a day to serve the Lord, as well as meeting on the first day of the week to remember Jesus, not because of the Sabbath law (in any case the Sabbath day was Saturday), but because Jesus wishes it.

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The book of Deuteronomy is a set of speeches which Moses made to Israel during the last few months of his life. This was at the end of the fortieth year of wandering in the wilderness just before the people crossed the river Jordan into the Promised Land.<sup>1:3</sup> Moses himself was not permitted to enter the land but died on mount Nebo on the eastern side of the river before Joshua took Israel into the Promised Land.

In his speeches Moses recounts some of the events during the forty years wandering, reiterates God's commandments, reassures them of the blessings to flow from their obedience, warns them of the curses to come with disobedience, and exhorts them to obey God and to choose life instead of death.

**Week 22****Deuteronomy 1****Day 148**

Moses recounted how nearly forty years earlier God had told Israel at Horeb (Mount Sinai) to go towards the land he had promised to Abraham and his seed - the land of Canaan right up to the River Euphrates.<sup>vs.7-8</sup> He explained how he found the burden as leader of such a multitude of people to be very great and how chiefs of the twelve tribes were appointed to assist him. They were to act as judges of Israel and were commanded to exercise impartial justice.<sup>v.17</sup> He described how at Kadesh, on the southern border of the Promised Land, the people requested that spies go in first to report on the land and its people.

Moses then recounted the disastrous results which came from this. Ten of the spies discouraged the people, despite finding the land was abundantly fruitful and desirable. The people murmured and desired to return to Egypt, preferring slavery to facing the giants and people of the land. Only Caleb and Joshua were faithful, and they exhorted the people to trust in God. But Israel persisted in their rebellion and God declared that none of that generation would enter the land, but their children would do so forty years later.<sup>v.39</sup> They were commanded to return into the wilderness but, too late, they realized their error <sup>v.41</sup> and attempted to enter the land, but they were repulsed by the Amorites.<sup>v.44</sup>

There are many lessons in this record for us: to believe God's promises; to trust in him; not to be faithless or murmur; and to be like Joshua and Caleb. Of Caleb God said: "he hath wholly followed the LORD" and he is an admirable example to emulate for he successfully entered into his inheritance in the land when his contemporaries were dead.<sup>Jos.14:6-14</sup>

The route by which the people entered into the Promised Land was east of the Dead Sea and then westward across the River Jordan. This involved encompassing the land of Israel's relatives: the Edomites (descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother) and the Moabites and Ammonites (descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew). Interestingly, in view of Israel's fear of the giants, all these peoples had destroyed giants who had lived east of the Jordan to take their land. These giants were a distinct race of men who were exceedingly large, about nine feet tall, and known by different names: Anakim in the Promised Land,<sup>v.11</sup> Emims in Moab, Horims in Edom, and Zamzummims in Ammon. These giants were destroyed by the other nations but individuals remained for some centuries. Og king of Bashan <sup>3:1</sup> was one of these, as was Goliath, the Philistine champion overcome by David.<sup>1Sam.17:23</sup> It is ironic that the faithless relations of Israel were able to dispossess these giants while Israel themselves were afraid to try!

Israel were specifically forbidden to take possession of the land on the east of the Dead Sea and Jordan which God had given to the children of Edom, Moab and Ammon. However the Amorites, under their king Sihon, had recently crossed the Jordan and driven the Moabites out of the plain of Moab. When these Amorites refused Israel's request to pass through to Canaan, "the land which the LORD their God giveth them", <sup>v.29</sup> and attacked Israel who defeated them and possessed their land. In due course it became the inheritance of the tribe of Reuben who specifically requested this land for themselves.

Og, king of Bashan, was a giant <sup>v.11</sup> who fought against Israel, and was overthrown. Having defeated both Sihon and Og, Israel gained possession of all Gilead and Bashan on the east of Jordan. This land was good for cattle so Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh requested that the land become their inheritance instead of territory within the Promised Land of Canaan. At first Moses thought this was a rebellion like the one forty years before when Israel refused to enter the land, but the petitioners quickly explained they were willing to enter Canaan with the rest of Israel to take possession of the Promised Land, but afterwards they wished to return eastward across the Jordan. Their request was granted on condition they kept this promise.<sup>vs.18-20</sup>

Moses was distraught that he was not permitted to cross the river Jordan into the Promised Land, and he petitioned God to be allowed to do so.<sup>v.25</sup> His request was refused but he was told that before he died he would see the land from the top of the mountain range, Pisgah. From there, looking



across the Jordan, he would see the northern, southern, eastern, and western parts of the Promised Land.<sup>v.27</sup> He could not enter into the land <sup>v.27</sup> and his place as leader would be taken by Joshua who would take the people across the Jordan. Moses, despite his disappointment, was to encourage and strengthen Joshua for the task before him.<sup>v.28</sup> We can see a reason in God's purpose for Moses not entering the land in that he was typical of Jesus who ascended to Heaven, just as Moses ascended the mountain, after his "wilderness journey". Jesus will come again to his inheritance of the Promised Land, and Moses will be there for the apostles saw him with Jesus in vision of that future time.<sup>Mat.17:3</sup>

## **Week 22**

## **Deuteronomy 6**

## **Day 151**

Moses was most concerned that Israel should prosper after his death when they entered the Promised Land. He knew this depended on their obedience to God and so he repeated the commandments, exhorting them to keep them always in their minds: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up".<sup>vs.6-7</sup>

The greatest of all the commandments is cited here: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might".<sup>vs.4-5</sup> Jesus quoted these words when asked which was the greatest commandment in the Law of Moses, and it is the most important commandment for us to keep also. We show our love to God by believing what he says and obeying his commandments. One vital fact about God is that he is One.<sup>v.4</sup> This is clearly stated here, quoted by Jesus, and emphasised in the response his words evoked: "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he".<sup>Mk.12:32</sup> This essential truth has been corrupted by popular Christianity in that God has been changed into a trinity of Gods, supposedly three Gods in one. This idea of the trinity comes from the pagans whose gods Israel were warned against: "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (for the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth".<sup>vs.14-15</sup>

In the beginning God established the family relationship in human life, and he is pleased if parents bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord".<sup>Eph.6:4</sup> Abraham was commended for this <sup>Gen.18:19</sup> and Israel were commanded to teach God's truth to their children.<sup>vs.2,7,20</sup> We also may please him by preserving family life in the Lord and teaching our children the ways of God.

The Promised Land was occupied by seven nations v.1 who had become increasingly wicked, and God had waited four hundred years for “their iniquity to become full”. <sup>Gen.15:16</sup> Israel were especially warned against making political or marital alliances with them. Israel were “a holy people”, a nation separated by God from the other nations of the earth. <sup>v.6</sup> Christians are invited to become members of this special nation and are so described by Peter: “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”. <sup>1Pet.2:9</sup>

God did not choose Israel for their size of population but because of his love for them and because of the promises he had made to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>vs.7-8</sup> God is severe to the wicked, <sup>v.10</sup> but when people love and obey him he is loving and merciful to them. His attitude to people can affect their children in succeeding generations, in the case of Abraham to a thousand generations. <sup>v.9</sup> The promise of God was made to Abraham and his seed, which is Christ <sup>Gal.3:16</sup> and if we become Christ’s by belief and baptism we are counted as Abraham’s seed and are blessed by God, even though we live thousands of years after him. This is conditional on our being like Abraham in our love and obedience to the LORD.

Israel were commanded to obey the LORD: “Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them”. <sup>v.11</sup> If they did so they would successfully inherit the land and live safely therein. Likewise, if we obey God’s commandments we will inherit the land with Jesus and live with him for ever.

The whole universe, including the earth, is God’s but he has chosen a particular part of this planet to be designated “his land”. He often refers to it as “my land” e.g. Ezek.38:16; Joel 3:2. It is called “the LORD’s land” (Hos.9:3) and “the holy land” (Zech.2:12) and, because it is the land promised to Christ as the seed of Abraham, it is also called “Immanuel’s land” (Isa.8:8). This was the land Israel were about to enter and the LORD’s special attention and care for it was emphasised to them. <sup>v.12</sup>

The land was completely different from any land they had experienced during their lifetime. Egypt was irrigated by the River Nile <sup>v.10</sup> and since leaving Egypt the people had been in the barren wilderness, but Canaan was a flourishing land <sup>v.11</sup> watered by the rain from heaven. Rain was essential for its fertility and if the people were obedient God would bring them rain and bless them. <sup>vs.13-15</sup> If, contrariwise, they were disobedient God would withhold the rain and eventually remove them out of the land. <sup>vs.16-17</sup>

Thus hundreds of years later Israel were expelled for their disobedience and it became so barren that people could not believe it ever had been “a land flowing with milk and honey”. Nevertheless, as part of God’s purpose, the Jews have returned to the land. Israel is once more a nation therein, and it has begun to flourish again. It will flourish even more when Christ returns to it as Israel’s king, for people will then say: “This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden” (Ezek.36:35).

God promised to drive out the nations <sup>v.23</sup> and give Israel all the territory promised to Abraham: from the river Euphrates in the north to the wilderness in the south; and from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea (the uttermost Sea).<sup>v.24</sup> Through Moses, God set before Israel a blessing and a curse,<sup>v.26</sup> and Moses exhorted them to choose the blessing by obedience.<sup>v.27</sup> In the scriptures we also have blessing and cursing set before us. Like Israel we are exhorted to chose God’s blessing.

## **Week 22**

## **Deuteronomy 18**

## **Day 154**

The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to be priests to do his service <sup>v.5</sup> therefore they did not have any inheritance in the land.<sup>v.2</sup> Consequently, the other tribes were required to provide for them. The priests were to have meat from the sacrifices and the firstfruits of all crops. Hopefully, with so many priests in their midst, faithfully serving the true God, the people would be protected from the abominable religious practices of the other nations,<sup>vs.10-13</sup> such as sacrificing their children to their pagan gods: “making his son or his daughter pass through the fire”.<sup>v.10</sup>

Moses was a prophet of the LORD and typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he said to Israel: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken”.<sup>v.15</sup> At Sinai (Horeb <sup>v.16</sup>) the people had asked that God should not speak directly to them but through Moses,<sup>v.16</sup> therefore God promised them a greater Prophet “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”.<sup>vs.18-19</sup> This is quoted in the New Testament and applied to Jesus <sup>Acts 3:22-24</sup> who did not speak his own words but his Father’s, and it is a requirement that we accept his words. Of them who reject God’s words which he spoke, Jesus said: “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”.<sup>Jn.12:48</sup> Of them that receive his words, he said: “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”.<sup>Jn.14:23</sup>

Jesus was a true prophet of God, as were Moses and many others, but there have also been many false prophets. How can we distinguish between the two? Israel were given a test to apply: “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him”. <sup>vs.21-22</sup> We can apply this test to those who claim to speak God’s words today, and we can also apply another test, given to Israel later, to ensure we believe God's truth: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”. <sup>Isa.8:20</sup>

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In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul continued to exhort the disciples to recover themselves from their departure from the true Gospel, by contrasting the liberty they had gained through belief of the gospel with the slavery into which they were falling by returning to the Law of Moses. The last two chapters exhort the disciples to obey the commandments of Christ, and this is a characteristic of Paul's letters in that he firstly deals with doctrinal matters and then instructs the disciples in the way of righteousness.

We shall also read the first half of Paul's letter to the Ephesians which is the doctrinal part of that letter. While he wrote to the Galatians in a time of controversy, his letter to the disciples in Ephesus, a principal city of Asia Minor, gives a quiet exposition of the purpose of God in Christ and of the privileged position in that purpose to which the disciples had attained, even though they were Gentiles and not naturally God's people.

**Week 23****Galatians 3****Day 155**

These disciples in Galatia had foolishly allowed themselves to be led astray from the truth by false brethren who had bewitched them into thinking they had to keep the Law of Moses.<sup>v.1</sup> Salvation cannot be obtained by "the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith".<sup>v.5</sup> Paul therefore shows from the scriptures<sup>v.8</sup> and the example of Abraham<sup>v.6</sup> that faith, i.e. belief, is essential for salvation: "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness".<sup>v.6</sup> Therefore only those who believe the gospel are the children of Abraham.<sup>v.7</sup> It is essential that we become Abraham's children because it was to him and his seed that God made the promises.<sup>v.16</sup> The apostle here is quoting from Genesis where, as we have seen, it is recorded that God promised to give Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan. This seed is Christ,<sup>v.16</sup> but a great multitude of people will inherit the promises with him if they become the seed of Abraham by belief and baptism into Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise".<sup>vs.27,29</sup>

The good news is that God has made exceeding great and precious promises and by these we may inherit the Promised Land, be raised from the dead, and be partakers of the divine nature to live for ever. This gospel was preached to Abraham<sup>v.8</sup> "so that they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham".<sup>v.9</sup> We may think that the gospel is found in the New Testament alone, whereas it was introduced in the very first book of the Bible. It is good news welcomed by multitudes throughout the ages who will be constituted Abraham's seed after resurrection, according to God's promise that Abraham's seed would be multitudinous like the stars of heaven.

The purpose of the Law of Moses was to regulate the nation of Israel while they dwelt in the land, and it was like a tutor slave (translated “schoolmaster” <sup>v.24</sup>) who looked after a child in Roman households. This however was only temporary until Christ came to release them from bondage. The Law was a curse because no-one could keep it perfectly and it brought death. <sup>v.10</sup> So Christ came not only to redeem us from sin but also from “the curse of the law”. <sup>v.13</sup> He did this by being made a curse for us. <sup>v.13</sup> Although Jesus kept the law of Moses perfectly, he was executed by the Romans in a way that brought the curse of the Law upon him <sup>v.13</sup>. Therefore when he died, not only were our sins laid upon him to be borne away, but also the curse of the Law was also laid on him: “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ”. <sup>v.14</sup>

How marvellous is the purpose of God! Not only does he, through Christ, save us from our sinful natures which kill us and hold us in the grave, but he also releases us from the Law which none of us could keep. He makes Gentiles heirs of the glorious promises he made to Abraham and Christ, which will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to raise the faithful to live and reign with him in the kingdom of God in the Promised Land. How wise of us to believe and do what God requires that we may be included in the great multitude of saints.

## **Week 23**

## **Galatians 4**

## **Day 156**

A child in a rich family in those days would be under slaves, even if he was the heir of a great estate, <sup>vs.1-2</sup> and Israel under the Law were in bondage like this. <sup>v.3</sup> However, the period of bondage would end, and in the case of Israel this was when God’s Son came <sup>v.4</sup> to redeem them that were under the Law. <sup>v.5</sup> The Son of God was made of a woman. <sup>v.4</sup> He only came into existence when he was born to Mary, as explained to her before his birth: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”. <sup>Luke 1:35</sup>

He was also born under the Law of Moses <sup>v.4</sup> to redeem those under the law <sup>v.5</sup> so that the faithful can become the adopted sons of God and able to call him Abba, Father. <sup>v.6</sup> Being the sons of God, the disciples are also “heirs of God through Christ” and will therefore receive all that God has promised his children.

These disciples in Galatia were putting all this in jeopardy by returning to the Law, “observing days, and months”, etc. <sup>v.10</sup> meaning the apostle’s work in saving them was in vain. <sup>v.11</sup> Instructively, Paul shows that God foreshadowed these relationships within Abraham’s family. He had two sons. <sup>v.22</sup> The elder, Ishmael, was the son of a bondwoman, Hagar (Agar), and represented Israel under the Law of Moses while his mother

represented the city of Jerusalem which existed then. Ishmael did not inherit the promises of God, showing that salvation would not come by the Law. The younger son, Isaac, born because of God's promise to Abraham and by his intervention to enable an elderly couple to have a child, represented the children of promise while his mother, Sarah, represented the new Jerusalem in which righteousness will dwell, to be established by heavenly intervention.<sup>v.28</sup>

The record of the life of Abraham and his sons was an allegory <sup>v.24</sup> to point forward to the future. Those who strive to keep the law of Moses are cast out like Ishmael was,<sup>v.30</sup> but those who believe, as Abraham and Isaac did, are set free from both sin and the Law, for they are the children of the free.<sup>v.31</sup>

## **Week 23**

## **Galatians 5**

## **Day 157**

The apostle's conclusion from his arguments that disciples have been made free from the Law is that they should: "Stand fast therefore in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage".<sup>v.1</sup> Some were zealously urging the disciples to be circumcised as required under the Law,<sup>vs.2-3</sup> but if they did so it would "profit them nothing".<sup>v.2</sup> They would have to keep the whole law,<sup>v.3</sup> Christ would not save them,<sup>v.4</sup> and they would have fallen from grace.<sup>v.4</sup> Erroneous doctrines like this, if not killed off immediately, would spread through the whole Christian body, just as leaven permeates a whole loaf of bread.<sup>v.9</sup> Therefore the disciples had to resist wrong doctrine with all their might.

They had been set free by Christ, therefore they were exhorted to "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another".<sup>v.13</sup> To love God is the greatest commandment, and the second, said Jesus, is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".<sup>v.14</sup> It may be thought that this commandment was introduced by Jesus, but it was in fact part of the Law of Moses in the Old Testament. Jesus quoted it, and the apostle applies it here. The word of God is Spirit, and we should be influenced by this instead of by our flesh for the two are in opposition to one another.<sup>v.17</sup> The flesh results in the evils listed here, <sup>vs.19-21</sup> which we see all about us today, and "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God".<sup>v.21</sup>

Christ's disciples are required to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law".<sup>vs.22-23</sup> One who manifests these virtues in his life, and who has crucified the flesh,<sup>v.24</sup> will inherit the kingdom of God.

The apostle exhorted the disciples to help each other,<sup>vs.1-2</sup> not to exalt themselves,<sup>v.3</sup> and to test their own work. An important principle of God is that we shall be judged according to our own deeds: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”<sup>v.7</sup> The natural way to live our lives is to satisfy the desires of our flesh, but the wise way is to satisfy God. There are two contrasting destinies: “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”<sup>v.8</sup>

The apostle therefore urges all of us to do the deeds God wishes us to do: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”<sup>vs.9-10</sup> They who do this are “the Israel of God”<sup>v.16</sup> It is Israel that will be saved and therefore it is imperative to become part of Israel, not by keeping the law of Moses, but by believing the gospel, being baptized into Christ, and obeying the commandments. We shall be members of the Israel of God <sup>Gal.6:16</sup> and obtain salvation.

The apostle wrote this letter to the disciples in the city of Ephesus, calling them "saints",<sup>v.1</sup> emphasising the high calling they had received to become part of the purpose of God. God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and he has exalted the disciples into the “heavens in Christ”<sup>v.3</sup> In other words, by association with Jesus they are prospectively exalted with him. God knows everything that is to happen in the future and often speaks of it as though it has already occurred. For example, he chose the disciples of Christ before the foundation of the world (“age”, in the original Greek).<sup>v.4</sup> This does not mean that the disciples existed before the foundation of the Mosaic age but that God knew them then through his foreknowledge. They were part of his predestinated purpose<sup>v.5</sup> and therefore he made them “accepted in the beloved” Jesus<sup>v.6</sup> and made known unto them the secret (mystery) of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself.<sup>v.9</sup> In due course he will gather all his saints together<sup>v.10</sup> to receive with Christ the promised inheritance.<sup>v.11</sup>

These early disciples received the power of the Holy Spirit enabling them to do miraculous deeds. This Holy Spirit is promised to all the saints<sup>v.13</sup> and they will receive it when Christ returns. However the gift of the Spirit in those early days was “the earnest [guarantee] of the saints’ inheritance”<sup>v.14</sup> What they could do then by the Holy Spirit on a small scale, e.g. heal the sick, will be done on a far greater scale when the Spirit endowed saints rule the world with Christ.



The prayer of Paul <sup>v.16</sup> for the disciples was that they might be filled with the wisdom and knowledge of God and, in particular, they might be enlightened to “know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”. <sup>v.18</sup> He speaks here of the exaltation of Christ and then immediately, in the next chapter, of the disciples’ position. Of Christ he says: “God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” <sup>vs.20-22</sup>.

## **Week 23**

## **Ephesians 2**

## **Day 160**

A complete transformation of the disciples lives had occurred as a result of their learning and obeying the truth. Previously they, like all men and women naturally, had been motivated by sin, the spirit of disobedience, which pervades the world, including its rulers, <sup>v.2</sup> fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. <sup>v.3</sup> Then they were the “children of wrath” <sup>v.3</sup> and “dead in sins”, <sup>v.5</sup> but God is merciful and loving, and he exalted them with Christ, <sup>v.6</sup> that “in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace toward us through Christ Jesus”. <sup>v.7</sup> They were a new “creation in Christ” to do good works. <sup>v.10</sup>

These disciples were Gentiles in the flesh, <sup>v.11</sup> and previously they were “without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”. <sup>v.12</sup> After their baptism they were “in Christ Jesus” brought “near by the blood of Christ”, and they were “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God”. <sup>vs.13,19</sup> We see how important it is to be related to Israel in order to become members of God’s family.

God promised King David that his seed, Christ, would reign on his throne for ever and would build God’s house. Jesus will build a temple at Jerusalem, and God showed its design to Ezekiel, <sup>ch.40-42</sup> but “house” also means “family” and the saints constitute the household of God. The cornerstone of this house is Jesus himself, the foundation stones are the apostles and prophets, and the other elements of the temple are individual saints. <sup>vs.20-21</sup> This house is growing all the time, as more people believe and are baptized, but eventually the building will be complete, forming a “habitation of God through the Spirit”. <sup>v.22</sup> This is God’s intention, therefore it is said to the saints: “Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord... and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”. <sup>1Cor.6:16-18</sup>

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and he worked and suffered for them.<sup>v.1</sup> To him God had revealed his secret,<sup>v.4</sup> previously hidden,<sup>v.5</sup> that the Gentiles would be fellowheirs with the saints to inherit the promises with Israel.<sup>v.6</sup> He therefore “preached among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all see what is the fellowship of the secret”.<sup>vs.8-9</sup> What God promises through Christ could not be searched out by men: it had to be revealed, as it was through the apostle. Only by being “fellows” with the people of Israel can any Gentiles inherit the blessings.

God is developing his whole family to bear his name <sup>v.15</sup> and therefore the apostle exhorted the disciples to be such that they would be accepted as part of this family. He prayed that they would be strengthened in the truth,<sup>v.16</sup> “that Christ would dwell in them by faith”, that they would be “rooted and grounded in love”,<sup>v.17</sup> and be able to appreciate the love of Christ which is four dimensionally comprehensive.<sup>v.18</sup> The apostle then concluded this doctrinal part of his letter by exulting the glory of God who “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”,<sup>v.20</sup> for the same power that then resided in the disciples will in due course raise the dead and put all things under the feet of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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The book of Joshua records the entry of the people of Israel into the Promised Land and their first years there. They had been organised in the wilderness into a nation, and in the land they formed the kingdom of God. God himself was their king; the territory of the kingdom was God's land, Canaan; the citizens of the kingdom were God's people of Israel; the law governing the kingdom was God's law through Moses; and the rulers were the judges appointed by God.

Joshua led the people into the land and he was the first judge in the kingdom. His is "Yah hoshua" in Hebrew and means "Yah saves". This is the same name as Jesus, who is the LORD's appointed saviour, as God instructed Joseph before Jesus' birth: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins".<sup>Mat.1:21</sup> Joshua and Jesus look like different names because they have come to us through different languages: the first through the Hebrew of the Old Testament; the second through the Greek of the New. Joshua having the same name as Jesus alerts us to his being typical of Christ so that when we read the events in this book we look out for representation beforehand of the character and work of Jesus.

With Moses dead,<sup>v.1</sup> Joshua was instructed by the LORD to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land <sup>v.2</sup> with the assurance they would inherit all of it.<sup>v.3</sup> God defined the land when he promised it to Abraham,<sup>Gen.15:18</sup> and its borders were confirmed to Israel before they crossed the River Jordan.<sup>Num.ch.34</sup> Israel would enter the land and expand southward to the wilderness, northward to the River Euphrates, and westward to the great (Mediterranean) sea.<sup>v.4</sup>

Joshua also received assurance that God would be with him as he had been with Moses <sup>v.5</sup> and he was exhorted to "be strong and of a good courage". This exhortation was repeated four times to Joshua on this occasion <sup>vs.6,7,9,18</sup> and Joshua himself later used the same words to encourage all the people of Israel when facing attacks from their enemies in the land.<sup>10:25</sup> This exhortation is vital for all God's people in all ages.

The successful occupation of the land depended on Joshua and the people listening to the word of God and obeying his commandments, therefore he was urged to do so: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success".<sup>v.8</sup> This is God's requirement of all his people in all ages: that they attend to his word and obey his commandments. His commandments for us have not

come through Moses but through the Prophet like him,<sup>Deu.18:18</sup> the Lord Jesus Christ. How wise to heed his word and obey it! The final part of the chapter deals with the obligation on the two and a half tribes who had taken land on the east of Jordan to go with their brethren into the Promised Land to help them also gain their inheritance. Joshua reminded them of this requirement which was stated by Moses,<sup>v.13</sup> and they agreed to fulfil their word.<sup>v.16</sup>

## **Week 24**

## **Joshua 2**

## **Day 163**

Joshua sent two spies across the Jordan to investigate the state of the nations in the land. The nearest principal city was Jericho and the spies went there and entered the house of a prostitute, Rahab.<sup>v.1</sup> When their presence was made known to the king a search was made for them throughout the city, including Rahab's house. However, she hid them on the flat roof under sheaves of flax <sup>v.6</sup> and sent the soldiers away on a vain search. She did this because she had heard the great works God had done for Israel in Egypt and the wilderness <sup>v.10</sup> and she knew that they would successfully overthrow the people of the land.<sup>v.9</sup> Therefore she hid these two men and received the promise of life for herself and her family.<sup>vs.12-14</sup>

She is highly commended in the New Testament for her faith and actions: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace".<sup>Heb.11:31</sup> "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" <sup>Jas.2:25</sup> She is set forth as an example for us to follow, for God's requirement is always the same: believe him and demonstrate our faith by acting consistently with it. Rahab was saved when Israel destroyed Jericho and it seems she later married an Israelite and was an ancestor of Jesus.<sup>Mat.1:5</sup>

Rahab's house was sited on the wall of Jericho and when the coast was clear she let the two men down out of the city by a scarlet rope.<sup>v.15</sup> The spies promised to save her life, and the lives of her family, but only if she hung this scarlet rope out of her window when Israel attacked Jericho.<sup>vs.18-</sup>

<sup>19</sup> This is reminiscent of the requirement on Israel in Egypt to paint the blood of a lamb on their doorposts so that they escaped when the angel of death afflicted the firstborn. The responsibility to do this simple act rested upon Rahab herself, and her life depended on her compliance. Jesus has given us the simple commandment to "believe and be baptized".<sup>Mark 16:16</sup> and the responsibility rests upon us. We too can believe and obey, and save our lives.

The spies then returned to Joshua with their report.<sup>v.23</sup> While Joshua was responding to the exhortation to "be strong and of a good courage" the hearts of the inhabitants of the land melted and courage forsook them.<sup>v.11</sup> Therefore Joshua rejoiced and praised the LORD.<sup>v.24</sup>

This chapter records the crossing of the River Jordan into the Promised Land. This event was exhilarating for the people of Israel and is highly significant in God's representation of his purpose through Christ. Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt, were baptized in the Red Sea, journeyed through the wilderness, and finally crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land with Joshua. This represents the way of salvation for the disciples of Jesus. Spiritually they escape from the world, are baptized, travel through life as on a wilderness journey, and finally enter the Promised Land with Jesus. With this in mind, it is interesting to observe the detail given in this chapter of the crossing the Jordan. This river flowed from the city of Adam <sup>v.16</sup> down into the Dead Sea and well illustrates the condition of mankind: starting with the first man Adam and ending as multitudes of the dead.

How can this process be broken so that men and women can escape from death and live for ever? Expressed metaphorically: how can men and women cross the River Jordan into the land and gain everlasting life? Only by God's intervention, and he has done this through Jesus, just as he did long ago through Joshua. Jesus has passed into eternal life and he will lead the people of God across Jordan into the Promised Land. Jesus was raised from the dead and became immortal nearly two thousand years ago, and it is therefore interesting to note that the people were "about two thousand cubits" behind the ark of the covenant.<sup>v.4</sup> The ark with its contents and its lid (the mercyseat) represent Jesus, and he has gone ahead of us into life; and all the signs indicate that now, nearly two thousand years later, we are very near the time when he will return to lead his people into the Promised Land and everlasting life.

Israel was commanded to erect a memorial to their crossing the River Jordan and they did this by setting twelve great stones, one for each tribe, in the midst of the river where the priests had stood with the ark. This was to be a sign to their children in the future,<sup>v.6,21</sup> and also a sign to all people of the earth.<sup>v.24</sup> God performed these great acts, including drying up the Red Sea and the River Jordan, to save Israel and to demonstrate to mankind that he, the God of Israel, is supreme. Most now dismiss these events as myths but soon similar deeds will be performed in the earth by Jesus, and then all will be convinced because the knowledge of God's glory will cover the earth.<sup>Hab.2:14</sup> Jesus will be greatly exalted in that day, just as Joshua was exalted then: "On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life".<sup>v.14</sup>

Israel crossed the river Jordan exactly forty years from the day they took the Passover lamb in Egypt on the tenth day of the first month.<sup>v.19</sup> Thus we see that God executes his purposes exactly according to his own predetermined timetable, and we can be sure that the time periods in prophecies concerning our own days will also conclude precisely. After crossing the river, Israel camped at a place they named “Gilgal”,<sup>v.19</sup> meaning “rolling”, for “the reproach of Egypt was rolled away”.<sup>5:9</sup> So in the future, when God’s people enter the land with Jesus, all the reproach of the world will be rolled away from them and they will never be tainted by it again.

## **Week 24**

## **Joshua 6**

## **Day 166**

Shortly after crossing the river Jordan the people of Israel began to take possession of the land. This involved dispossessing the inhabitants, and God had waited four hundred years from the time of Abraham until their iniquity was full.<sup>Gen.15:16</sup> This overthrow of Jericho is typical of the overthrow of the Gentile nations of our day when it will be Jesus instead of Joshua who will destroy the power of the Gentiles and cause God’s people, the saints, to inherit the land.

God was about to throw down Jericho’s walls by his power, but the people of Israel had to do their part first. The armed men were to march round the city with the priests and the ark once each day for six days blowing trumpets, but otherwise in silence. On the seventh day they were to march round seven times and then shout with loud voices, and the walls would fall down. This pattern is seen in God’s plan with mankind as revealed in the scriptures. For example, there will be six thousand years of human government in the earth followed by a seventh millennium of divine rulership. Again, the book of Revelation uses this pattern to symbolically represent the outworking of God’s plan through history from the days of the apostles onwards. There were to be six periods represented by seals of a scroll followed by a seventh seal period divided into seven periods signified by the blowing of trumpets.<sup>Rev.8:1-2</sup> The final outcome will be the same as in Joshua’s day - the overthrow of the wicked and the establishment of God’s people.

When the walls fell down by God’s power, Rahab’s house remained standing even though it was on the wall. Because of her belief, her action towards the spies, and her faithful keeping of the covenant into which she had entered, she and her family were saved alive when everyone else in the city perished. She was a Gentile, and in God’s purpose faithful Gentiles like Rahab will be saved with Israel when his judgments are poured out on the nations.

Israel were forbidden to take anything from the city for themselves: only the precious metals were to be removed for use in the house of God. It is understood that disease was rife in the city and by burning everything this was eliminated. This also has spiritual significance in that the people of God should not contaminate themselves with the polluted things of the world. In fact one man did take a goodly Babylonish garment <sup>7:21</sup> and brought death to himself and many others. We should learn from this to maintain separation and purity from the world - “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”. *Jude v.23*

Jericho was an ancient city and was rebuilt later, but a curse was placed on the builder.<sup>v.26</sup> This curse came upon a man of Bethlehem who laid the foundations of the new city and sacrificed his two sons in idol worship, burying them under the foundation stones.<sup>1Kgs.16:34</sup> In complete contrast, another Bethlehemite, even Jesus, would come in faithfulness as a greater Joshua whose fame was so immense.<sup>v.27</sup>

## **Week 24**

## **Joshua 20**

## **Day 167**

God commanded Israel to appoint cities of refuge in the land. These were places to which innocent men could flee to escape the vengeance of others in certain circumstances. Most human legal systems distinguish between murder and manslaughter, and the Law of Moses also provided for justice when individuals were killed accidentally. A murderer was punished with death by stoning at the hands of the victim's next of kin. If, however, someone killed another accidentally, such as by an axe head flying off a handle,<sup>Deut.19:5</sup> the manslayer could flee from the avenger, escaping to one of the cities of refuge and be safe until his case was dealt with. The judges would determine if murder had been committed, and if so the murderer would be executed. If the slayer was innocent he could escape death at the hands of the avenger by remaining in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. If he left the city before then the avenger could take his revenge.

This clearly represents the provision God has made for us to escape from death. We have all committed offences and are worthy of death but we can flee to him for refuge. He has provided Christ as our refuge and once we are in him by belief and baptism we are safe. If we do not enter him, or we come out of him through faithlessness, we shall certainly perish. If we faithfully remain in him we shall be safe now and we shall live for ever when he comes as God's high priest in the earth.

Six cities were designated, three on each side of the River Jordan, so that people would have a refuge in their own vicinity. Later Israel's possession of the land was extended northwards right up to the River

Euphrates.<sup>2Sam.8:3</sup> God knew this would occur, the river being his defined northern border of the land, and he therefore made provision for three more cities of refuge to be established then.<sup>Deut.19:9</sup>

## **Week 24**

## **Joshua 24**

## **Day 168**

Joshua was Israel's judge in the land for a period of about thirty years after which he died at the age of one hundred and ten.<sup>v.29</sup> The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him

<sup>v.31</sup> but thereafter they fell away into idolatry. The next generation did this despite the promise to serve the LORD only.<sup>v.21</sup> Joshua emphasised to them that they had to make a choice. They could serve either the LORD or the idols of the land, but they could not serve both.<sup>v.15</sup> He expressed his own determination to serve the LORD faithfully, and they concurred, saying "The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey".<sup>v.24</sup>

The Bible tells us of God's character and informs us that he is "an holy God and a jealous God".<sup>v.19</sup> It is not possible in his eyes for anyone to serve him and other gods at the same time. This is emphasised throughout the scriptures and applies to us also. We should ensure we know the one true and living God and serve him alone. We may think we are in no danger of serving idols but the apostles warned the disciples of the coming apostasy and Jesus identified riches as a god that people serve naturally. Therefore he said: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon".<sup>Mat.6:24</sup>

When Israel came into the land they brought with them the body of Joseph which had been embalmed in Egypt after he died. Joseph had specifically requested Israel to do this, and they faithfully complied with his wish.<sup>v.32</sup> Joseph knew that one day he would awake from the sleep of death by resurrection and, although God's power can restore a person to life however and wherever he dies and whatever happens to his body, Joseph wished to sleep in the Promised Land and be there when the resurrection day dawns. Significantly, he was buried at Shechem where his brothers, Simeon and Levi, had "killed a man", representing the cruelty of their descendants in killing the Lord Jesus Christ. As Joseph was typical of Jesus it was fitting that he should have been buried in this place.

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