

Thessalonica was a chief city of Macedonia, the northern part of Greece, and the apostle Paul preached the gospel to Jews and Gentiles there in the face of persecution.<sup>Acts 17</sup> He went into the synagogue of the Jews and proved to them from the scriptures: firstly, that the Messiah had to suffer and, secondly, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. But when the Jews saw that many Gentiles accepted his teaching they were envious and raised a riot against him and other believers.

It was therefore in great tribulation that these disciples accepted the Truth so that after Paul was driven out of the city and travelled on to Athens and Corinth, he was most anxious to know how they fared and he sent Timothy to find out. Immediately after Timothy returned, Paul wrote this first letter, expressing his great joy on learning of their endurance, faith, love, and obedience to the commandments of Christ.

**Week 33****1 Thessalonians 1****Day 225**

As a result of the apostle preaching the gospel in Thessalonica,<sup>v.5</sup> many men and women did what is required of all those who would be true disciples of Christ. They “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven”.<sup>vs.9-10</sup> They became “followers of the apostles and of the Lord Jesus”<sup>v.6</sup> and by their faith were examples to others throughout Greece.<sup>v.7</sup> Having received the word of God, they preached the same word to others so that from them it sounded out throughout the country and farther afield.<sup>v.8</sup>

These, mostly Gentile, disciples had received the word with great enthusiasm but also in much affliction<sup>v.6</sup> for they were persecuted by the Jews who did not believe were moved by envy against those that did. They that did receive the teaching of the apostle knew that it is God’s will that the disciples of Jesus bring forth much fruit and, in particular, show forth faith, hope and love. Paul observed while among them that they did this, so that being absent he prayed to God for them,<sup>v.2</sup> “remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father”.<sup>v.3</sup>

**Week 33****1 Thessalonians 2****Day 226**

The apostle Paul reminded the disciples in Thessalonica of the persecution they had endured when he came to them preaching the gospel because the Jews, having killed the Lord Jesus<sup>v.15</sup> and persecuted the Jewish Christians in Judea,<sup>v.14</sup> did all they could to prevent Gentiles receiving salvation.<sup>v.16</sup> But these men and women of Thessalonica received the word of the apostle and his companions, “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God”.<sup>v.13</sup> We are blessed in our day that we can read the same teaching of the apostles

in the New Testament and become disciples of Christ without fear of persecution, yet so few receive these writings unequivocally as the word of God. Not many today “acknowledge the things the apostle wrote are the commandments of the Lord”, *1Cor.14:37* but this is what is required if we are to receive the salvation offered by God.

The disciples in Thessalonica had the privilege, for a short while, of having the apostle Paul in their midst, a man who was prepared to labour for them and even to sacrifice his own life to preach to them the gospel of God that they might be saved. He was gentle towards them “even as a nursing mother is to her own children” *v.7* and “he exhorted and comforted them as a father doth his children”, *v.11* charging them that they live their lives “worthy of God, who had called them unto his kingdom and glory”. *v.12* He left them suddenly because of the Jewish persecution and he was anxious to see them again but was prevented from returning because of adversaries, *v.18* the Jews who roused the citizenry against Paul and other believers. *Acts 17:5*

We have never met the apostle Paul, but we do have his inspired writings and from these writings we can learn how to walk worthy of the Lord. And if we are counted worthy we, like the disciples in Thessalonica, will be a “joy, or crown of rejoicing, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming”. *v.19*

### **Week 33**

### **1 Thessalonians 3**

### **Day 227**

Paul had gone from Thessalonica to Berea and then on to Athens. In Athens he was anxious to know how the disciples were faring in the face of severe persecution so he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to ascertain their condition. *vs.1-3* He feared the tribulation would cause them to fall away from the truth, *v.5* but Timothy returned with good news of their faith and love. *v.6* We are generally free of violent persecution in our day but we can still follow the exemplary behaviour of these disciples and, believing the teaching of the apostle, show forth faith and love.

We shall live for ever if we “stand fast in the Lord” *v.8* and his desire is that we “increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, to the end he may establish our hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”. *vs.12-13* This is the day towards which all things are heading - the day of Christ’s return when he, as the judge appointed by God, will decide who will have eternal life. In that day there will be a great many people out of all ages who, having believed, been baptized, and walked worthy of God, will be counted blameless because their sins will be forgiven. These will be given everlasting life.

The apostle gave the disciples the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ <sup>v.2</sup> and exhorted them to keep these and to abound more and more in their walk to please God.<sup>v.1</sup> We also, through the New Testament, are instructed by the apostle how we can please God, i.e. by keeping the commandments of his Son. We must be different from other “Gentiles which know not God” <sup>v.5</sup> for God calls men and women unto holiness.<sup>v.7</sup> God teaches us in the scriptures to love other disciples <sup>v.9</sup> and there should be no limit to this love which should increase more and more.<sup>v.10</sup>

The first disciples anticipated that the Lord Jesus Christ would soon return to the earth, re-establish the kingdom of God, and give them eternal life. However, in fact, he would not return for a long time and the apostles therefore warned the disciples of this so they would not be discouraged by the apparent delay. The death of disciples before the return of Christ did not affect their eternal salvation but simply meant they would sleep <sup>v.14</sup> and know nothing of the passage of time until the day appointed by God. Therefore Paul exhorted them not to sorrow over disciples who died as those who have no hope, because they would be raised from the dead at the return of Christ: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”.<sup>v.16</sup>

Some disciples will be alive when Jesus returns, and these will not die but will be “snatched away” to be with him.<sup>v.17</sup> The natural air is the atmosphere surrounding the earth, but its mention here does not refer to this literal air but to the ruling positions over the nations to be occupied by Jesus and his disciples. This is the great comfort that disciples of Jesus have in the face of death. While others are ignorant that death is oblivion in the grave and can only have false hopes of an afterlife, the disciples of Christ can be comforted that death is simply a sleep from which they will awake at his return. They will then be joined by those disciples still alive, and together they will be elevated to the political heavens as stars to reign with Jesus,<sup>Dan.12:3</sup> the Sun of righteousness.<sup>Mal.4:2</sup>

The disciples of Christ in all ages have watched the signs of the times, hoping for the return of Jesus. God has given information about events among the nations during Christ’s absence so that disciples could know how developments in their own times fitted in the scheme of things, enabling them to anticipate his return. Even if he did not come in their lifetime, and death has laid them in the grave for a considerable period, their next conscious moment will be when Jesus is again present in the earth. The Thessalonian disciples knew the requirement to watch for the coming of Christ <sup>v.1</sup> and recognised that the Lord would come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.<sup>v.2</sup> The general

attitude will be “Peace and safety” <sup>v.3</sup> so that most people will be like those that sleep when they should be watching, or drunk when they should be sober.<sup>v.7</sup> We likewise should be vigilant not, as it were, sleeping or drunk, but like men who wait for their Lord.

The disciples are like soldiers of the Lord, therefore Paul exhorts: .“Put on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” <sup>v.8</sup> If we are good soldiers, obedient and disciplined, we will “obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” <sup>v.9</sup> “who died for us”.<sup>v.10</sup> Therefore the apostle exhorted the disciples to keep the commandments: “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all. See that none render evil for evil unto any; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” <sup>vs.14-18</sup> If we do these things, the benediction of the apostle will apply to us: “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>v.23</sup>

## **Week 33**

## **2 Thessalonians 1 and 2**

## **Day 230**

The apostle wrote this second letter to the disciples in Thessalonica to encourage them in the persecution and tribulations which they endured,<sup>v.4</sup> and he commended them for their faith and charity (love) which abounded and for their patience (endurance) in suffering. This encouragement consisted of reminding them of “the righteous judgment of God” who would count them worthy of his kingdom for which they suffered <sup>v.5</sup> and in the future they would “rest with the apostles when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven”,<sup>v.7</sup> “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day”.<sup>v.10</sup> This is the hope of all true disciples, but the righteous judgment of God will also involve recompensing tribulation on the persecutors <sup>v.6</sup> and "on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ".<sup>vs.7-9</sup> How important it is, therefore, for us to “know God and obey the Gospel”!

Paul beseeched them, in view of “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him”,<sup>2:1</sup> not to be discouraged or diverted from the faith by delay in the coming of Jesus.<sup>v.2</sup> He knew from God that there would be a falling away from the faith by Christians generally and a great apostasy would arise, headed by a succession of individuals referred to here as “the man of sin” <sup>v.3</sup> and “the wicked one”.<sup>v.8</sup> The “mystery of iniquity” was already then at work among the disciples,<sup>v.7</sup> with many believing and preaching “another gospel and another Jesus”. *Gal.1:6; 2Cor.11:4* The hindrance to the spread of this apostasy into political and ecclesiastical rulership throughout the Roman world was Paganism, but this was to be completely “taken out of the way”.<sup>v.7</sup>

In A.D.312 Constantine mobilised “Christians”, who were prepared to disobey the commandment of Jesus not to take up the sword, to join his onslaught on the Pagan authorities. He was ambitious to be the sole Emperor and when he

achieved this by force of arms he ordered his whole empire to change from Paganism to “Christianity”. Of course, the people did not “receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved” <sup>v.10</sup> but simply changed the names of their idols and mingled their mythology with the gospel.

Thus, pagans were brought wholesale into “Christianity” which was completely corrupted by idolatrous concepts. Engulfed in a “strong delusion” they believed lies, and principally they believed the original lie <sup>v.11</sup> that “dying we do not die” - the falsehood that we have immortal souls and that when we die we do not really die! But there were some who stood fast, and held the traditions which they had been taught by the apostles.<sup>v.15</sup> While the mass of “Christians” fell away into false doctrines, some remained faithful in each generation and these will be the ones who will gathered together with Christ. We should make sure that we are the faithful of this generation by obeying the true gospel and following the instructions of Jesus and his apostles.

### **Week 33**

### **2 Thessalonians 3**

### **Day 231**

Because some disciples would fall away from the doctrines and practices of the truth, Paul instructed the faithful to maintain the purity of the truth in the church by withdrawing their fellowship from those who “walked disorderly” <sup>v.6</sup> or departed from the teaching of the apostles: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed”.<sup>vs.6,14</sup>

The apostle, however, was sure the majority of disciples in Thessalonica would remain faithful and continue to obey the commandments: “We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you”.<sup>v.4</sup> He therefore exhorted them to love God with all the heart as they waited for the coming of Jesus: “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ”.<sup>v.5</sup> May we do the same: obey the gospel, continue faithfully in the way of truth as taught by the apostles, love God with all our being, and be ready for the return of the Lord, that “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” may be with us.<sup>v.18</sup>

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## Week 34

## Introduction

The book of Psalms consists of a hundred and fifty songs written by a few men under the inspiration of God. The first seventy-two were written by David and many of these, remarkably, express beforehand the suffering and the glory of Christ. Jesus himself said the Psalms spoke of him *Lk.24:44* and many of those written by David express the very thoughts of Jesus a thousand years before he thought them! David himself suffered greatly at the hands of false accusers and others who sought to slay him, even though he was righteous and did them only good, but afterwards his enemies were destroyed and he was exalted to the throne of the LORD over Israel. Jesus likewise suffered at the *hands of men, but was afterwards exalted by God to great glory, and at the set* time he will sit on the same throne of the LORD for ever. Thus the Spirit used the experiences of David and moved him to express thoughts which later would actually be in the mind of Jesus, his promised seed.

## Week 34

## Psalms 1 and 2

## Day 232

The people who are the blessed of the LORD are those who come out from the world and are separate from the wicked in every aspect of their lives: walking, standing, sitting.<sup>v.1</sup> Their delight is not in the pleasures of the world but in the law of God which is their constant meditation.<sup>v.2</sup> Such people are likened to trees who bring forth fruit to God and will therefore be enabled, by being made immortal, to be fruitful to him for ever. This is a common figure in the Bible by which the saints are called “trees of righteousness” to constitute a paradise in the future.*Isa.61:3; Rev.22:2* These people will be incorruptible, like trees whose leaves never wither.<sup>v.3</sup> In contrast, the wicked are like chaff,<sup>v.4</sup> the part of the plant discarded in the harvest and burnt, for the way of the ungodly will perish.<sup>v.6</sup>

The second Psalm is quoted in the New Testament to describe the experience of Jesus when he stood accused before the Jewish and Gentile rulers who put him to death *vs.1-3; Acts 4:25-27* and unknowingly fulfilled the LORD’s purpose.*Acts 13:27* God speaks of things that are not yet as though they were *Rom.4:17* and here declares: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” *vs.4-6* for, despite his crucifixion, Jesus will sit upon the throne of the LORD in Jerusalem.

Jesus will be the king of Israel, but he will also rule over all the other nations and these will constitute his dominions. Therefore, after his resurrection, the Father invited him to ask, not for the kingdom of Israel which was his by promise, but for all the Gentile nations.<sup>v.8</sup> (Psalm 2:8).

Jesus will be given power to overcome all who resist him <sup>v.9</sup> and therefore the rulers at the time of his return will be exhorted to be wise and accept the Son of God as the ruler of the world *vs.10-12* Our wisdom also is to serve the LORD now with fear,<sup>v.11</sup> lest we perish from the way,<sup>v.12</sup> so that we are among the blessed who put their trust in him. <sup>v.12</sup>

Only a fool would say there is no God in the face of all the evidence <sup>v.1</sup> but the world is full of such. The world knows nothing of God's purpose or his commandments so it is given over to self-gratification and wickedness. <sup>vs.1-5</sup> However, there always have been some who have believed God's word and striven to keep his commandments. These are counted by him as "the generation of the righteous" <sup>v.5</sup> and he is with them, as will be apparent to everyone when "the set time to favour Zion comes" <sup>Psa.102:13</sup> and they are raised from the dead and made immortal to reign with Jesus in Jerusalem. The longing, therefore, for all such is expressed in the final verse, when Israel will be saved from all their distresses. <sup>v.7</sup>

But who will "dwell in God's holy hill" of Zion? He or she that "walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart", <sup>15:1-2</sup> and does the other righteous acts specified in this Psalm. Such people "shall never be moved" <sup>v.5</sup> because they will be the incorruptible companions of Jesus Christ throughout the future ages.

Jesus will return with power to raise the dead and with authority from his Father to give eternal life to whoever he chooses, <sup>Jn.17:1-2</sup> and his delight is in the saints, the excellent in the earth. <sup>16:3</sup> This sixteenth Psalm expresses the thoughts of Christ before he was crucified and is for this reason quoted in the New Testament by the apostles. For example, Peter used this Psalm when he first declared to the Jews that they had just crucified the Messiah, the LORD's "Holy One". <sup>v.10; Acts 2:25-31</sup> The Psalm expressed, long beforehand, Jesus' trust in his Father <sup>vs.8-9</sup> that he would not remain in the grave: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (Hebrew: "the grave"). <sup>v.10</sup> Furthermore, Jesus knew that his body would not corrupt in the tomb for he added: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption". <sup>v.10</sup> Jesus knew he was going to die by crucifixion because God had revealed this beforehand in the scriptures, but he also knew that he would be raised from the dead to sit at God's right hand. <sup>v.11</sup>

King David wrote this Psalm a thousand years before the death and resurrection of Jesus, but Peter pointed out to the Jews that David could not have been writing of himself because he was still in his grave and his sepulchre was still there in Jerusalem. <sup>Acts 2:29</sup> Peter therefore explained God's foreknowledge to them - that David was a prophet and by the Spirit of God knew that his seed would be raised to sit on his throne, therefore, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption". <sup>Acts 2:31</sup> You should note that Jesus' soul went into the grave, because common wishful thinking is that our souls go elsewhere when our bodies are buried, but a person's soul is himself - Jesus himself went into the grave. The hope given by the gospel is resurrection from the dead.

This Psalm is also Messianic, i.e. it speaks of the Messiah (Christ) in advance. It expresses the mind of Jesus while he suffered at the hands of men when the sorrows of death compassed him about.<sup>v.4</sup> In his distress he cried to his Father<sup>v.6</sup> who delivered him from all his enemies,<sup>v.17</sup> including death. When Jesus was dying upon the cross, the crowd taunted him saying: “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God”.<sup>Mat.27:43</sup> Jesus did trust in God and was delivered by being brought out of the grave: “He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me”.<sup>vs.19-20</sup> Jesus kept the ways of the LORD and all his commandments<sup>vs.21-23</sup> therefore the LORD rewarded him accordingly<sup>v.24</sup> and he is an example to the merciful, upright, and pure<sup>vs.25-26</sup> who likewise will be rewarded. This reward will be given when Jesus is made “head of the nations”<sup>v.43</sup> for they will be with him when all people submit themselves to him.<sup>v.44</sup> Jesus is God’s appointed king according to the promise made to David that his seed would sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD for ever: “Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore”.<sup>v.50</sup>

This Psalm extols the word of God: “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes”.<sup>vs.7-8</sup>

It also tells us there is great advantage to ourselves in obeying God’s commandments: “In keeping of them is great reward”, and so much of the Bible is about this great reward. By reading it for ourselves we can learn what this reward is and come to appreciate that the things God has promised are of greater value than anything else in life, e.g. “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold”<sup>v.10</sup>.

This Psalm, like so much of the scriptures, looks forward to the time when God will replace the existing governments of the world with rulers who will confer righteousness, justice, and peace on mankind. This change of government is expressed by metaphor, as the Apostle Peter does here: “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). It is of this elevation of righteous rulers to high places in world government that the Psalm speaks: “The heavens declare the glory of God”,<sup>v.1</sup> and the stars of this new world order will publish the knowledge of God throughout all the world: “There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line (rule) is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world”.<sup>vs.3-4</sup> These words are quoted in the New Testament and applied to the preaching of the gospel by the Apostles,<sup>Romans 10:18</sup> which shows that God is speaking in this Psalm of those

men are women who will be the stars of his new constitution for "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever" (*Daniel 13:3*).

The greatest luminary in our sky is the sun and this is used to represent the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the chief ruler, will arise with healing in his beams *Malachi 4:2* to bless all nations. This Psalm tells us of the universal rulership of Christ, for as the sun: "His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof".<sup>v.6</sup>

Jesus is here represented, not only as the sun, but also as a bridegroom and as a strong man. These figures are consistently applied to Jesus in the scriptures to express God's purpose in him, e.g. his disciples are commanded to watch for his coming as a bridegroom. *Matthew 25:6*

## **Week 34**

## **Psalms 23 and 24**

## **Day 236**

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible for it expresses the trust that the faithful can have in the LORD and, like the other Messianic Psalms, it expresses the mind of Christ. God did restore his soul<sup>v.3</sup> in bringing him out of the grave, never to die any more. And all those who associate with him in the way taught in the scriptures can also look forward to resurrection and receiving the blessing described in this Psalm, including dwelling in the house of the LORD for ever.<sup>v.6</sup>

The earth is the LORD's and his purpose is to populate it with men and women who have characters like those described in Psalm 24. This multitude of the faithful from all ages will constitute a "generation that seek the face of the God of Jacob",<sup>v.6</sup> who will receive the blessing of the LORD and be counted righteous by him.<sup>v.5</sup> These blessings will be bestowed when Jesus returns from heaven with the power of God to raise the dead and overthrow the enemies of the LORD in the earth.

The scriptures foretell precisely how the nations will be placed at Jesus' coming and, in particular, how he will reveal himself after a confederacy of nations have invaded and overcome Israel. Jesus will destroy these invading armies and come to Jerusalem as the king of Israel. This Psalm expresses the dialogue between the saints and the inhabitants of Jerusalem as Jesus approaches the city. The saints will call upon the citizens to open the gates for the King to enter.<sup>v.7</sup> The Jews will naturally enquire who this "King of Glory" is<sup>v.8</sup> and they will be told that it is "YAHWEH strong and mighty, YAHWEH mighty in battle".<sup>v.8</sup> This exchange will take place twice before the gates are opened and Jesus enters to the acclaim of the people, saying: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord".*Mat.23:39* They will be in no doubt that their king is strong and mighty in battle because he will just have defeated the armies of the nations which have come against Jerusalem. YAHWEH means "he who shall be" and expresses God's intention to manifest himself in Jesus and a great multitude of saints. When Jesus returns to Jerusalem, the innumerable multitude with him will be those upon whom God has written his name of YAHWEH, making them everlasting members of his family.

The saints who will be with Jesus in the future are those who are found righteous and blameless by him at his coming. As none of us can live a life of perfect obedience, we can only be blameless if God forgives our sins and does not impute iniquity unto us.<sup>vs.1-2</sup> The apostle cites these words to prove that we cannot earn righteousness, but we can be given it by the LORD.<sup>Rom.4:6-8</sup> God may forgive anyone he chooses and he has declared in his word whom he will do so and count righteous - those who have the same faith as Abraham: "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness".<sup>Rom.4:3</sup> Abraham believed the promises and manifested his belief by obeying God's commandments. Those whom God counts the children of Abraham will have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life. They will have believed the same gospel,<sup>Gal.3:6-9</sup> been baptized into Christ, become Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise,<sup>Gal.3:27-29</sup> and by a life of obedience will have manifested a "living faith".<sup>Jas.2:17-24</sup> These will be "justified", i.e. made righteous by God.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".<sup>1Jo.1:9</sup> Therefore David prayed to God for forgiveness,<sup>v.5</sup> and we can do the same, but we must do this while there is still opportunity <sup>v.6</sup> before the time of trouble comes.<sup>v.7</sup> We must receive God's instruction <sup>v.8</sup> and not be obstinate like the mule <sup>v.9</sup> so that, trusting in the LORD,<sup>v.10</sup> we will be glad and rejoice with the righteous.<sup>v.11</sup>

Psalm 34 is also a Messianic Psalm, the righteous one being the Lord Jesus Christ. Of him it was written prophetically: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken",<sup>vs.19-20</sup> so when the Roman soldiers broke the legs of those crucified with him, he was spared.<sup>Jn.19:33-36</sup> Jesus was righteous in his life and this Psalm exhorts us to be like him. He invites us to join with him, saying: "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together".<sup>v.3</sup> We will then receive the protection of unseen angels <sup>v.7</sup> and the blessings of the LORD.<sup>vs.8-10</sup>

What must we do if we want to receive the everlasting life that God offers? <sup>v.12</sup> The apostle Peter gives the answer to this question <sup>1Pet.3:10</sup> by quoting this Psalm: "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it".<sup>vs.13-14</sup> The eyes of the LORD are always upon the righteous <sup>v.15</sup> and he hears their prayers and will deliver them from all their troubles.<sup>vs.17-19</sup> He will redeem their soul <sup>v.22</sup> for he will bring them out of the grave and give them eternal life when the wicked are removed from the earth.<sup>v.16</sup>

The time is coming when the righteous will inherit the earth, but in the meantime the wicked prosper. We are exhorted not to be distressed by this <sup>v.1</sup> for the wicked will certainly be removed: they are just like the grass which withers away in due time.<sup>v.2</sup> We should trust in the LORD, delight in him, and commit our ways to him and then, at the set time, we shall inherit the land.<sup>vs.3-7</sup> God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, which is Christ, and all the righteous will inherit it with them: “The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever”.<sup>v.29</sup>

This Psalm contrasts the destinies of the righteous and the wicked. The wicked may flourish for a short while but death and the judgments of God will remove them for ever.<sup>v.20</sup> “The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever”,<sup>v.18</sup> therefore he calls upon us to: “Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore”.<sup>v.27</sup> The truly happy are those who faithfully serve the LORD. Though troubles may come, in the end the righteous will be raised up.<sup>vs.23-24</sup> Jesus quoted this Psalm when he declared who were the blessed: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”.<sup>v.11; Mat.5:5</sup> May we believe the promises and obey God’s commandments so that we are counted among the righteous in the day of Christ’s return and receive everlasting blessings from the LORD.

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Timothy was a young man of Lystra who believed the gospel and was baptized into Christ. The apostle Paul revisited Lystra on his second journey and took Timothy with him as an assistant in the work of the Lord.<sup>Act 16:1-3</sup> Timothy appears prominently in the record, and often in Paul's letters, but eventually Paul left him at Ephesus to deal with adversaries of the truth because there was a falling away from the true gospel among the disciples in that city. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy to encourage and guide him and, because of the adversaries, we find references to Satan (Hebrew for "adversary") and devil (Greek for "false accuser"). Also, because he was the overseer of the church in Ephesus, having the Spirit gift of rulership, Paul gave guidance in his letter on the appointment of men to positions of service within the church.

**Week 35****1 Timothy 1 and 2****Day 239**

Paul had a very close spiritual relationship with Timothy, calling him his "son in the faith",<sup>v.2</sup> and wrote to help him. Timothy had been left at Ephesus because some were teaching other doctrines than the truth and turning aside to fables.<sup>v.3-4</sup> The disciples had to be reminded that only those who maintain belief in the truth, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God",<sup>v.11</sup> and maintain purity in their manner of life will be accepted by Christ at his return. Those who depart from "sound doctrine"<sup>v.10</sup> or engage in the abominations of the flesh<sup>vs.9-10</sup> will be rejected. Timothy was therefore to urge disciples to follow the example of Paul himself,<sup>v.16</sup> to "believe on Jesus Christ to life everlasting",<sup>v.16</sup> and to keep the commandments for "the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned".<sup>v.5</sup>

Some had "turned aside" from the right way and caused such conflict to arise that the disciples were urged to "war a good warfare"<sup>v.18</sup> against the errorists, "holding faith, and a good conscience".<sup>v.19</sup> Hymenaeus and Alexander<sup>v.20</sup> were principal enemies of the truth in the congregation, and were to be "delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme". Of course, this cannot be the supernatural evil being of popular belief for from such a being, if he existed, they would "learn to blaspheme" rather than not to do so! In fact, these men were removed from the congregation to protect the other disciples from the false teaching, and in the world (the adversary) they would learn not to blaspheme.

One of the errors introduced into the Christian community was that of the trinity, a fable of Paganism, whereas there is only one true God as Paul exclaimed: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever".<sup>v.17</sup> Jesus is not equal with God or a member of a trinity of gods - he is the Son of God and a son of man. This clear distinction between Jesus and his Father is repeatedly emphasised in the scriptures, e.g. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus".<sup>2:5</sup> Could it be expressed more clearly? Eternal life depends on us knowing and believing the truth about the one true, living God and about his Son Jesus Christ.<sup>Jn.17:3</sup> Jesus gave himself as a "ransom" when he sacrificed his life on the cross.<sup>v.6</sup>

Another error introduced into the congregations, and prevalent today, is that Jesus died as a “substitute”. If true, this would mean his disciples would not die, but they do; and also Jesus himself would not have been brought back to life, but he was. In fact, Jesus was a “ransom” for us: he paid the price to redeem us from sin so that both he himself and the saints could have eternal life by resurrection from the dead.

## **Week 35**

## **1 Timothy 3 and 4**

## **Day 240**

Paul instructed Timothy whom to appoint to serving positions within the congregation. “Bishops” (overseers in Greek) were those who were given the Spiritual gift of rulership (which is not available today and none can now be bishops in the New Testament sense), and “deacons” were assistants. Overseers were to be of good report but not novices, avoiding the “condemnation or the snare of the devil”.<sup>vs.6-7</sup> As we have seen throughout the New Testament, the word devil means “false accuser” and, significantly, the same Greek word is used concerning wives of deacons - that they should not be “slanderers”.<sup>v.11</sup> The greatest slanderer of all is our sinful flesh, the snare of which Paul is referring to here.

A “mystery” is a “secret known only to the initiated”, and the disciples were privileged to know the “secret of the faith” <sup>v.9</sup> and the “secret of godliness”.<sup>v.16</sup> Jesus was a manifestation of God and showed men and women what God was like, first in his character and then, after resurrection, as a partaker of the divine nature. Thus, “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels [i.e. messengers, the apostles who witnessed his resurrection and change to divine nature], preached unto the Gentiles [by the apostles], believed on in the world, received up into glory [when Jesus went to heaven]”.<sup>v.16</sup>

This was all the work of the Spirit, God’s power, which caused Jesus to be born of Mary, anointed him at his baptism, enabled him to teach God’s truth and perform miracles, raised him from the dead, changed him into immortality, and took him to heaven. This same Spirit inspired the apostles to preach the gospel and write the New Testament scriptures. The Spirit also informed the apostles that in the “latter times” of the Jewish commonwealth, at the end of the first century, there would be serious apostasy from the true faith,<sup>4:1-3</sup> and history shows how apostate Christianity forbade men to marry e.g. their priests, and forbade the eating of certain meats, e.g. fish on Fridays.<sup>v.3</sup> Therefore the disciples were urged to keep to “the words of faith and good doctrine”,<sup>v.6</sup> to “refuse profane and old wives fables”,<sup>v.7</sup> and to exercise themselves in godliness which has “promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”.<sup>v.8</sup> Timothy was also exhorted to “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”.<sup>v.16</sup>

Timothy was given instruction on how various members of the congregation should be treated. Elderly men and women were to be honoured,<sup>vs.1-2</sup> and widows were to be cared for.<sup>vs.3-16</sup> Paul perceived that younger widows in particular were causing a problem,<sup>vs.11-13</sup> even turning aside after Satan <sup>v.15</sup> i.e. going the way of the world which is the adversary of the faith. Elders who ruled well were to be doubly honoured <sup>v.17</sup> but if they sinned they were to receive exemplary rebuking.<sup>v.20</sup> Timothy, who appointed the rulers by giving them Spirit gifts through the laying on of his hands, was to give proper consideration as to who he should appoint.<sup>v.22</sup> In chapter 6, instruction is given to slaves,<sup>vs.1-2</sup> that they give good service to their masters, especially if their masters were in the faith.

All these instructions of Paul were to be fully received and put into practice: “These things teach and exhort”.<sup>v.2</sup> Many in the congregations would reject the teaching of the apostles, as is widespread now, but the apostles were the appointed spokesmen for Jesus, therefore these recalcitrant disciples were rejecting “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine which is according to godliness”.<sup>v.3</sup> They would come to “know nothing” of the truth but would substitute the “surmises of men” <sup>v.4</sup> and become destitute of the truth.<sup>v.5</sup> True disciples are commanded to withdraw themselves from such.<sup>v.5</sup>

In particular, the love of money, the root of all evil, would carry men away from the truth into perdition.<sup>vs.6-11</sup> Disciples who were rich were to use their wealth in God’s service <sup>vs.17-18</sup> and thereby provide for the time when Jesus comes and lay hold on eternal life.<sup>v.19</sup> Faithful disciples, like Timothy, were exhorted to have “godliness with contentment” <sup>v.6</sup> and to “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life”.<sup>v.11-12</sup>

In his second letter, Paul expressed his care for Timothy <sup>vs.1-5</sup> and exhorted him to use to the full the Spirit gift he received by the laying on of Paul’s hands.<sup>v.6</sup> The disciples had to preach the gospel in times of great difficulty and persecution <sup>vs.7-9</sup> but their salvation in Christ had been in God’s purpose from the very beginning.<sup>v.9</sup> If these words were taken literally they would mean that the disciples existed “before the world began” but this form of language is common in the Bible by which God, who knows everything in advance, speaks of things that are not yet as though they were. The word “world” here is “aion”, referring to the Mosaic age before which God spoke of the saints who would live in the future, e.g. the multitudinous seed of Abraham who would inherit the land with him. Unfortunately, when this form of speech is used concerning Jesus people take it to mean that he literally existed “before the world began”, whereas he was simply spoken of by God long before he was born of Mary and before he existed.

Jesus has “abolished death” in that when his disciples die they simply fall into a sleep from which they will awake at the resurrection. The good news is that life and immortality can be obtained through Jesus.<sup>v.10</sup> But, this is conditional, and one of the conditions is that disciples “hold fast the form of sound words”, learned through the apostles, “in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”.<sup>v.13</sup> Unfortunately, many of the disciples did not do this, as Paul said: “all they which are in Asia [the Roman province where Paul did much of his preaching] be turned away from me”.<sup>v.15</sup> However, there were some faithful individuals, including Onesiphorus and his family,<sup>v.16</sup> and Paul prayed that such will “find mercy of the Lord in that day”,<sup>v.18</sup> i.e. the day when Jesus returns to reward every man according to his works.

## **Week 35**

## **2 Timothy 2**

## **Day 243**

The apostle used the figure of a disciplined Roman soldier to encourage Timothy in the face of persecution and the faithlessness of other disciples. He exhorted Timothy to “be strong”,<sup>v.1</sup> to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”,<sup>v.3</sup> to keep separate from the life of the world as a soldier does of civilian life “that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”.<sup>v.4</sup> He was to be encouraged by remembering “that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to Paul’s gospel”<sup>v.8</sup> for which the apostle endured,<sup>vs.8-9</sup> that the word of God might be published and that others might “also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”.<sup>v.10</sup>

Our relationship to Jesus now affects our relationship with him in the future: “For if we be dead with him [by baptism and by mortifying ourselves], we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us”.<sup>vs.11-12</sup> Therefore the apostle exhorted: “Study [meaning, give diligence] to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”.<sup>v.15</sup> Many people wrest the scriptures, dividing the word wrongly. They take passages out of context and apply meaning to the words not intended by God, and they apply statements to the wrong people or the wrong times, undermining God’s truth. Some said “the resurrection is passed already” and overthrew some disciples’ faith.<sup>v.18</sup> Such teaching was like a cancer in the Christian body,<sup>v.17</sup> and there have been many such cancers since, such as “immortal soul possession”, “heaven and hell going”, “the trinity”, “a supernatural evil devil”. The only way to deal with a cancer in the body is to cut it out, and this is what the faithful disciples did: they withdrew fellowship from false teachers and delivered them to the adversary that they might learn not to blaspheme. It is the flesh and the thinking of the natural mind which is at enmity with God and leads men astray.

This is a false accuser who has many traps<sup>v.26</sup> to capture those who do not keep faithfully to the word of God. The only antidote is to teach them the knowledge of the truth as revealed in God’s word.<sup>v.25</sup>

The apostle knew that perilous times were coming for the disciples in the last days of the Mosaic era <sup>v.1</sup> when members of the Christian churches would fall away from the love of God to the love of themselves <sup>v.2</sup> and of pleasures.<sup>v.4</sup> These faithless and disobedient disciples would become “covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers”, and manifest the other fleshly characteristics which are the antithesis of the character of Christ whom they should emulate. They would have “a form of godliness”, but they would deny the power of God.<sup>v.5</sup> This process of apostasy began long ago but has continued throughout history, and we have the same situation today. The apostle’s instruction is to “turn away from such”.<sup>v.5</sup>

Such people would be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” <sup>v.7</sup> and they would “resist the truth” being “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith”.<sup>v.8</sup> Timothy was also told that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”.<sup>v.13</sup> Therefore he should protect himself by his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures <sup>vs.14-15</sup> because they “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”.<sup>v.15</sup> The first essential for anyone seeking to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to please his Father is to acknowledge the Bible is the word of God. It alone in our times can tell us how to live our lives, for “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”.<sup>vs.16-17</sup>

In view of the widespread apostasy from the Truth, Paul charged Timothy <sup>v.1</sup> to “preach the word” continually; to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”, because “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”.<sup>vs.2-4</sup> The disciples of Jesus should receive the word of God as instruction even if it is unpalatable to the flesh, but many disciples sought teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear, and they refused to listen to God’s word.

It may not seem to make any difference at the moment, but the time is coming when “the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom”.<sup>v.1</sup> This was the day to which the apostle anticipated for he knew that he had “fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith”.<sup>v.7</sup> He could confidently say: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day”. This is the true hope of the Christian - the return of Jesus from heaven as judge to give reward to the saints for, as the apostle said, the crown of

righteousness will be given in that day to “all them also that love his appearing”.<sup>v.8</sup> Many of the disciples were unfaithful, <sup>vs.9-16</sup> although some were loyal,<sup>vs.10-11</sup> but Paul was preserved by the Lord to preach the gospel.<sup>v.17</sup> His ultimate hope and confidence, like that of all the true disciples of Jesus, was that “the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom [to be restored to Israel at the return of Jesus]: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”.<sup>v.18</sup>

oooOooo

It is marvellous how many of the Psalms written by David describe the experiences of Jesus and express the thoughts he would have a thousand years later. God inspired David to write these songs during times of both suffering and glory to foretell the suffering and glory of Christ, including betrayal by a close friend, hatred and envy of his brethren and persecution by his enemies, but also the ultimate exaltation to glory upon the throne of the LORD over Israel. Many of the Psalms we read this week are of this “Messianic” character in that they portray the experiences of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, long after the time when David wrote the them.

**Week 36****Psalms 40 and 41****Day 246**

We know that Psalm 40 is Messianic because verses 6-8 are applied to Jesus by the apostle in his letter to the Hebrews.<sup>Heb.10:5-7</sup> In his letter the apostle proves from the scriptures that Jesus is superior to the prophets and priests under the law of Moses and that salvation is obtained through Christ, not through the law of Moses which the Jewish Christians were reluctant to relinquish. The apostle shows that this Psalm expressed beforehand the thoughts of Jesus in the days of his flesh, confidently declaring his trust in God and leading in due course to his resurrection from the grave.<sup>vs.1-4</sup>

The people of Israel made many sacrifices to God under the law of Moses but what God desired was for them to do his will and be righteous. They failed, but God raised up a man who succeeded - Jesus, who declared: “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”<sup>vs.6-8</sup> The fact that Jesus would make himself a slave to God in righteousness was “written in the book” of the scriptures beforehand and he faithfully performed his duty.<sup>vs.9-10</sup> Under the law of Moses a slave could, through love for his master, request to remain in his master’s service for the rest of his life. The slave then had the lobe of his ear bored through with an awl as a sign of his love and loyalty<sup>Exo.21:5-6</sup> and this is what is referred to by “mine ears hast thou opened” (Heb.”digged”).<sup>v.6</sup> Jesus loved his Father and willingly devoted the whole of his life to him.

The faithfulness of Jesus to God brought persecution from men <sup>v.12</sup> but he maintained his trust in his Father and prayed for deliverance,<sup>v.13</sup> for the punishment of his enemies, <sup>vs.14-15</sup> and for the blessing of those who sought the LORD.<sup>v.16</sup> God will certainly grant Jesus’ requests so we should ensure, by our actions, that we are among the great congregation who listen to Jesus’ preaching,<sup>v.9</sup> learn God’s righteousness,<sup>v.10</sup> and love his salvation <sup>v.16</sup> that we may receive the blessings for which Jesus prays.

Those who observe God’s instructions will be greatly blessed: they will be delivered from all trouble,<sup>41:1</sup> kept alive for ever,<sup>v.2</sup> and blessed upon the earth <sup>v.2</sup> when the kingdom of God is re-established and they live and reign with

Christ. Jesus himself was perfectly obedient to God but he was severely persecuted by men.<sup>v.7</sup> His contemporaries desired his death, and when they accomplished it they thought he was finished.<sup>v.8</sup> Jesus' anguish was greatly increased by the fact that he was betrayed by his "familiar friend".<sup>v.9</sup> A number of Old Testament scriptures foretold that Jesus would be betrayed to death by a close companion, so he knew in advance the role of Judas Iscariot in bringing about his crucifixion. But he also knew that God would "raise him up" from the dead <sup>v.10</sup> so that his enemies would not triumph over him,<sup>v.11</sup> and that he would live for ever before the LORD.<sup>v.12</sup>

## **Week 36**

## **Psalms 45 and 49**

## **Day 247**

David, in Psalm 45, writes of "a good matter", even about King Jesus <sup>v.1</sup> when he reigns on the throne of the LORD in Jerusalem. Jesus is fairer than other men and greatly blessed by God,<sup>v.2</sup> and he will reign in glory and majesty.<sup>v.3</sup> He will be the LORD's mighty one in the earth dispensing truth, meekness, and righteousness, but also doing terrible deeds <sup>v.4</sup> when he overthrows all the oppressors and wicked in the earth.<sup>v.5</sup> The word "God" in Hebrew means "mighty one" and this explains why Jesus is referred to as a God.<sup>v.6</sup> His throne will be established for ever by his God, the one true God who is his Father, because he loved righteousness and hated wickedness.<sup>v.7</sup> He is the LORD's Anointed and was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows", i.e. his disciples.<sup>v.7</sup> God calls Jesus "the man that is my fellow" *Zech.13:7* and also a fellow of other men.<sup>v.7</sup> This is only possible because Jesus is both "Son of God" and "son of man" by the manner of his conception and birth as described in the New Testament.

The disciples who are his fellows are as a body likened to a beautiful woman who will constitute the bride of Christ. He will greatly desire her beauty <sup>v.11</sup> which consists of the virtues of character which the saints develop by faith and obedience. We are therefore commanded now to separate ourselves in our behaviour from other men and women who give no heed to the word of God. We must change our family allegiance from the natural one inherited from Adam to the family of God <sup>v.10</sup> and prepare ourselves for the return of the king. As the children of God we must make ourselves "glorious within" <sup>v.13</sup> so that with all the saints, the bride of Christ, we may be brought unto the king.<sup>v.14</sup> David here describes the gladness of this occasion, now soon to occur, when the marriage of the Lamb takes place.

Psalm 49 expresses an important message for all people of the earth.<sup>vs.1-2</sup> This is that no person, however rich,<sup>v.6</sup> can deliver himself or a loved one from death, that he should live forever.<sup>vs.7-9</sup> The best that anyone can do, and many rich people do this, is to name lands and monuments after themselves <sup>v.11</sup> in the hope they will be remembered always. Many people believe that if they live good lives they will receive a reward and live for ever in some other world, but the truth is "man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish".<sup>vs.12,20</sup> In nature we are no different from the animals and when we die we cease to exist, but if we please God he will raise us from the dead, and

this is the hope of the saints: “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me”.<sup>v.15</sup>

No amount of money can buy this resurrection from the grave: the price of redemption from the grave is very high <sup>v.8</sup> so both rich and poor “like sheep are laid in the grave”.<sup>v.14</sup> Nevertheless a ransom has been paid to redeem the saints,<sup>v.7</sup> not gold and silver, but the precious blood of Christ.<sup>1Pet.1:18-19</sup> The saints will be raised from the dead “in the morning” <sup>v.14</sup> which is the term used in the scriptures for the time when Jesus returns as the Sun of righteousness, rising with healing in his beams <sup>Mal.4:2</sup> to end the night-time of the world’s history.

## **Week 36**

## **Psalm 51**

## **Day 248**

In this Psalm David pleads for God’s mercy for his sin. He recognised that we are all born in sin <sup>v.5</sup> because we inherit a sinful nature from Adam, and he also confessed his own personal sin.<sup>v.3</sup> What can we do to be forgiven our sins? Many people think that great sacrifices will bring God’s forgiveness, but this is not the case.<sup>v.16</sup> What God requires is “truth in the hidden parts” <sup>v.6</sup> therefore the Psalmist prayed for God to purge and wash him <sup>v.7</sup> which is done by “the washing of water by the word”.<sup>Eph.5:26</sup> God’s word can create a clean heart and a right spirit within us <sup>v.10</sup> and he will then blot out all our iniquities.<sup>v.9</sup>

The LORD will bring down the proud and exalt the humble who tremble at his word, and the sacrifices God finds acceptable are a broken spirit and a contrite heart.<sup>v.17</sup> This was David’s character. He was “a man after God’s own heart” but he was overcome by the desires of the flesh and he both committed adultery and brought about the death of the woman’s husband. These were serious sins, but David was forgiven because he humbled himself when God rebuked him, accepted the punishment God brought upon him, and was contrite. God promises to cast our sins far away and to remember them no more if we confess and forsake them. In the scriptures we are given many examples of faithful men and women of which no sins are mentioned because God has forgiven them, but David’s trespasses are recorded so that we can learn how to follow his example of contrition and obtain God’s forgiveness for our own sins. The faithful who behave contritely like David can look forward to the time when God “does good in his good pleasure to Zion and the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt”,<sup>v.18</sup> then sacrifices will be reintroduced with the rebuilding of the LORD’s temple by Jesus.<sup>v.19</sup>

## **Week 36**

## **Psalms 55 and 67**

## **Day 249**

Psalm 55 expresses the thoughts of David when he was persecuted by king Saul and many others in Israel and, under inspiration, he foretold the thoughts of Jesus when he likewise suffered at the hands of his contemporaries in Israel. In particular, David was betrayed by his trusted counsellor, a close friend, and Jesus too was betrayed by his companion and friend, Judas Iscariot. Both men were greatly distressed by this betrayal: “For it was not an enemy that

reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company”.<sup>vs.12-14</sup>

The short 67th Psalm marvellously describes the future world when Jesus returns and through him God “judges the people righteously and governs the nations upon earth”.<sup>v.4</sup> God’s way will be known upon earth and this will be the saving health of all nations.<sup>v.2</sup> The nations will then be glad and sing for joy.<sup>v.4</sup> all people will praise the LORD,<sup>v.5</sup> the earth will yield abundance of food,<sup>v.6</sup> and all the ends of the earth will fear God.<sup>v.7</sup> At the same time God will bless “us”.<sup>vs.6-7</sup> These are they who, with David, will be raised from the dead to live and reign with Christ and work with him to bring all these marvellous changes in the earth. Therefore David expressed the longing of all the saints for this wonderful future to come <sup>v.1</sup> and to see God’s power and glory which will then be in the earth.<sup>v.2</sup>

### **Week 36**

### **Psalm 69**

### **Day 250**

This Psalm also expressed beforehand the suffering of Jesus at the hands of men. We know this is a Messianic Psalm because it is applied in the *Gospels* to Jesus when they cited his prayer to God here recorded: “the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up”.<sup>v.9; Jn.2:17</sup> The enemies of Jesus, who were many and mighty, opposed him unjustly,<sup>v.4</sup> and caused him great distress.<sup>vs.1-2</sup> He was estranged even from his own siblings <sup>v.8</sup> but he endured the reproach because it was God’s will,<sup>v.7</sup> and he cried to his Father for help.<sup>vs.13-18</sup> Nevertheless some were loyal to him, especially the eleven faithful disciples and certain women, and he prayed particularly for them,<sup>v.6</sup> but even these deserted him in his last hours.

The behaviour of enemies and friends at this time broke his heart when he was left alone with none to take pity or provide comfort.<sup>v.20</sup> Deserted thus and nailed to the cross, they gave him vinegar and gall to drink.<sup>v.21</sup> This drug was intended to numb the brain and reduce the suffering, so Jesus refused to drink it because he wanted to be fully conscious of what he was doing when he fulfilled God’s will in laying down his life.<sup>Mat.27:34</sup>

His enemies who persecuted him would be punished <sup>vs.22-27</sup> and have their names blotted out of the book of life that contains the names of the righteous.<sup>v.28</sup> These are the humble who seek God <sup>v.32</sup> and recognise the superior value of Jesus’ sacrifice.<sup>v.31</sup> They will receive eternal life when “God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein”.<sup>vs.35-36</sup>

### **Week 36**

### **Psalm 72**

### **Day 251**

This last Psalm of David <sup>v.20</sup> is a prayer for God to establish Christ upon the throne of Israel to reign over his people and all the earth and to bring all the promised blessings. King Jesus will reign in righteousness and judgment <sup>v.2</sup>

and save the poor and needy by destroying all oppressors.<sup>v.4</sup> The result will be righteousness and peace,<sup>v.3</sup> and all people will then revere God throughout all generations.<sup>v.5</sup> During his reign, which will last a thousand years, righteousness will flourish and peace abound.<sup>v.7</sup>

The first dominion of the kingdom of God will be the Holy Land promised to Abraham, “from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates”.<sup>Gen.15:18</sup> The breadth of this land is “from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean” and the length is “from the desert to the river” Euphrates.<sup>Ex.23:31</sup> Thus “he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Hebrew: “land”) where the desert begins at the river of Egypt.<sup>v.8</sup> Jesus will take possession of all the promised land but will also reign over all Gentile nations which will constitute his dominions, or Empire. “Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him”.<sup>v.11</sup>

Human rulers, however benevolent, eventually die and others take their positions of power and authority. But King Jesus “shall live”, because he is immortal, and his benevolent reign will continue without interruption throughout the Millennium, and the people of the earth will pray continually for him.<sup>v.15</sup> The Father has given him a name above every name <sup>Phil.2:9</sup> and “his name shall endure for ever” and “all nations shall call him blessed”.<sup>v.17</sup> All people “shall be blessed in him” <sup>v.17</sup> and one particular blessing will be the abundance of food for the population of the earth. Crops will grow in the most unlikely places, even “in the earth upon the tops of the mountains” <sup>v.16</sup> so that, adequately fed, the inhabitants “of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth”.<sup>v.16</sup>

God has promised to do wonders in the earth when he establishes his king in Zion, and he is the only one who can transform the earth, as described in this Psalm: “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen”.<sup>vs.18-19</sup>

## **Week 36**

## **Psalm 89**

## **Day 252**

This Psalm expresses God’s determination to fulfil his promise to David: “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations”.<sup>vs.3-4</sup> His promise will be fulfilled when the seed of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, returns to sit upon David’s throne which is the throne of the LORD in Jerusalem over God’s people of Israel. God “will beat down his foes before his face” <sup>v.23</sup> and exalt him in faithfulness and mercy.<sup>v.24</sup> Jesus is God’s first-born, as Jesus proclaims: “Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation”,<sup>v.26</sup> and God will make him higher than the kings of the earth.<sup>v.27</sup>

Jesus will reign in strength <sup>v.13</sup> and in justice, judgment, mercy, and truth.<sup>v.14</sup> Knowing this glorious purpose of God, we can be included in the “Blessed that know the joyful sound”.<sup>v.15</sup> A wonderful future is in prospect for those who respond to the gospel for “they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy

countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted” *vs.15-16* to “live and reign with Christ a thousand years” *.Rev.20:6*

Unfortunately, many of the descendants of David, anointed to sit upon the throne of the LORD after him, were wicked idolaters who led Israel astray so that the people were punished and scattered out of the land. The final part of this Psalm laments this and expresses the question which all the faithful, who know of God’s promise concerning Israel and her king, have asked throughout the ages: “How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?” *v.46* Our lives are short *vs.47-48* so the passage of time until the fulfilment of God’s promise to David seems long, but the appointed day will certainly come, for God says: “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed [Christ] shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me”. *vs.35-36*

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